

Acts
“Jesus” The Sequel
III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”
Chp. 18:22-28 The royal route to Rome (3rd trip)
20:28-38

“The Ephesian Pastors Conference: Session two”

I.) Intro.

II.) Vs. 28-35 The lost art of shepherding

III.) Vs. 36-38 The love of the body

I.) Intro.

Paul’s teaching to those Ephesian shepherds centered on the “heart of the MAN. Before Paul ever speaks a word about the MINISTRY or the METHOD, he gave six characteristics that ought to make up the heart of the MAN:

1. Vs. 17-18 **Called**: The heart of a pastor is always available when the Lord calls.
2. Vs. 19a **Perspective**: He must serve the Lord before the People, thus he must have the right motive in service.
3. Vs. 19b **Humility**: His heart is one that truly esteems others higher than himself.
4. Vs. 19c **Compassion**: He ought to be broken hearted in the pastorate for the lost (Rom. 9:3) and the Church.
5. Vs. 19e **Faithfulness**: Trials are a part of ministry and faithfulness to that which God has called you to must characterize a pastor’s heart.
6. Vs. 20-21 **Teacher**: At the very core of a pastor’s heart there must be a desire to teach people that they needed to have a change of heart towards God and to redirect their trust “toward our Lord Jesus Christ”.

The greatest stumbling block to pastoring is always the pastor’s own heart. Now Paul will address in verses 28-30 the Pastors three fold MINISTRY then in verses 31-35 he will

speak on four METHODS by which he ought to serve in the ministry. Finally in verses 36-38 we see how the Church will responded.

II.) Vs. 28-35 The lost art of shepherding

Vs. 28 Remember that Paul is saying these words in verse 27 (that he had not “*shunned*” to declare the whole counsel of God), to Pastors. The word “*shunned*” is the same as the phrase in verse 20 “*kept nothing back*”. It is a sailing term that means “*to draw back or down the sails on a ship*”. Paul is saying that he made sure that he kept all the wind in the sails of the Word of God on their behalf! That being the context look at the words of verse 28; “*Therefore take heed to yourselves*”. The words “*take heed*” mean to “*hold your mind on yourselves*”. Paul is telling these pastors that before they were to be concerned with the Church they needed to make sure that they kept their own minds on their devotional lives. Far too often we **pastors fall into the trap of doing the work of the Lord at the expense of our own personal walk with the Lord. Ministry must overflow from what is already taking place in your personal devotional time with the Lord!**

Consider these three men in the Bible who happen to be three successive generations, grandfather, father and son.

- **Abraham**: Was a lover of God and along the way of his life you can see that every where he went he **built altar’s** to God (*five times*). As he did so God continued to bless him and his flocks increased so he dug wells (two times) to ensure that the flocks that God had given him would be sufficiently watered.

- **Isaac:** Abraham's son Isaac, when you observe his life, digs five wells but only one altar. In fact he names two of the wells: one he calls strife and the other he calls contention.
- **Jacob:** Isaac's son, the third generation from Abraham, builds no altars and digs no wells. **Instead he increases the flocks by craftiness and creativity.**

Follow me on this one saints:

- A pastor that loves God (builds altars for worship) and then will have to dig wells to supply water to take care of serving the sheep that God supplied because they built the altars.
- But when pastors move away from the simplicity of just wanting to worship the Lord and grow closer to him they will start wanting to see their flocks grow instead of themselves. So they build more wells than altars which just produce strife and contention.
- If this trend continues you will see pastor's move away from altar's and well's altogether. Instead they rely on new techniques of craftiness and creativity. Programs, entertainment, relevant messages, anything to try to increase the flock.

How did it get to this? It started when the servant of God left spending time at the altar and became more concerned with the flock. This led to abandoning altar building and well digging altogether. That is why Paul says first to "*take heed to yourselves*" before he says, "*and to all the flock*"!

Paul reminds them just who's Church it is:

- a. **POWER** "*Among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*": It is the Holy Spirit that has raised them up. Therefore they are to **oversee and not overbear or overlord!**

- b. POSSESSION “*Shepherd the **church of God***”: It is His Church, Jesus has ownership of it, we are His property and the leadership is to be faithful stewards of it.
- c. PRICE “*Which He **purchased with His own blood***”: Jesus paid the ultimate price for ownership of the Church, He alone has redeemed us back to the Father.

Baxter wrote in a commentary in the 1600’s three question as coming from the Lord to pastors:

- “*Did I die for them and you are not willing to look after them?*”
- “*Are they worth my blood, but not your labor?*”
- “*Did I come down from heaven to save that, which was lost, and you are not willing to go next door to seek them?*”

Next Paul uses metaphors to describe Church life. “*Shepherd, sheep and wolves*” all of which of which was familiar with the sheep industry.

Threefold ministry of the pastor

1. Vs. 28 **FEED**: Paul uses the word in verse 28 to “*shepherd*” the Church. It is a word that means to “*tend or feed*” the flock. The shepherd is given the task of leading the flock to the best pasture upon which to feed. The best pasture for growth is the word! And in verse 20 he laid out for them his method in dispensing the Word of God when he said: “*I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks*”. Paul says that pastors ought to do three things with the word:

- “*keep back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you*”: That is to say give them all-possible truth. **THE WHOLE OF THE WORD.**

- “*taught you publicly and from house to house*”: Use all-possible ways; **THE WHOLE OF THE WORK.**
- “*testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks*”: To all-possible people; **THE WHOLE OF THE WORLD.**

In Ezek. 34:2-4 the Lord rebukes the leaders of the nation because the “*shepherds of Israel feed themselves!*” They were guilty of **fleeing** the flock instead of **feeding** the flock! Folks, the only difference between a sheep and a wolf disguised as a sheep is **their diet!** You will be able to spot the wolf, as **sheep carcasses will be around them!**

2. Vs. 29-31a **WATCH:** The word “*watch*” in verse 31a means to “*stay awake or be alert*”. It was the shepherds responsibility to keep his eyes open constantly searching the horizon for any possible predators. Paul mentions two specific predators that the sheep faced:
 - a. Vs. 29 **Savage wolves:** The first danger was from without as Paul says that false teachers will slip in after he left spreading false teaching with the aim of destroying them. There are those from without the Church that want to come in and exploit it for personal gain.
 - b. Vs. 30 **Men will rise up:** The most subtle danger of all to the sheep is the one from among them that will be **ambitious and hunger for power.** This danger often happens when groups start forming around some leader’s teaching. Paul says they will “*draw away*” and the phrase literally means “**to drag away by tearing apart**”.

3. Vs. 31b **CARE**: Paul says that the pastor must go beyond watching out for things that would harm them, he must be actively involved in their lives as to keep them from that which would do them harm. Based upon this verse Paul tells us that **he cared for the Church in three ways:**
- a. **CONSISTENT** “*for three years I did not cease*”: Paul was consistently demonstrating his care for them. He did not just do it once in a while it was a part of his every day life stile.
 - b. **COMUNICATION** “*to warn everyone*”: Paul was not just around some of them he communicated with all of them as he gently admonish them. Paul was not was not selective in who he spoke with as he says that he did so with, “everyone”.
 - c. **COMPASSION** “*with tears*”: Paul allowed himself to feel what they felt. The pastor ought to care in away that lets the sheep know that he feels their hearts sorrows as well as joys.

Having looked at both the heart of the MAN and then the MINISTRY Paul now speaks of **the METHOD that the man should employ in the ministry.**

Fourfold method of the man in ministry

1. Vs. 31 **Compassionately**: Having touched on this already in dealing with how he ought to care for the sheep. Paul would write that even when he had to say something that was going to be hard for some to hear that he “**spoke the truth in love**”. The story is told of a pastor who had left a church and they got another one. Someone asked what the difference between the two of the men was? The reply from a member of the Church was, “*Well it’s kind of hard to say, as they both say the same things but in*

different ways.” Puzzled, the outsider continued, “*What do you mean, does the new pastor not preach that sinners are going to hell like the old pastor did?*” “*No, they both preach that a person apart from Jesus in their life is going to go to hell.*” “*But the new pastor can’t say it with out weeping!*”

2. Vs. 32 **Biblically**: Second, the method the pastor ought to employ in ministry is the “*Word of His grace*”. Notice that it is the “*Word of His grace*”! Programs can not build a person up nor can slick marketing techniques or entertainment. Paul commended them to keep with the Word of God’s grace constantly in their lives.
3. Vs. 33-34 **Selflessly**: The third method he ought to employ in ministry is that of being a servant. Paul did not come to be served but rather to serve and he demonstrated as much by working while he was there.
4. Vs. 35 **Graciously**: Lastly, Paul says that you ought to be gracious in ministry knowing that it is always better to give then receive. Always take the high road in ministry finding away to exalt others and not self. The focus of Paul’s ministry was on giving and not getting.

III.) Vs. 36-38 The love of the body

Finally we see just how the body of Christ responses:

- *When the heart of man is right in ministry*
- *When he has the right focus in ministry*
- *When he uses the right method in ministry*

These verse record three responses these men had to Paul.

- a. Vs. 36 **PRAYERFULLY** “*Knelt down and prayed*”: The body’s response to a pastor who serves them this way is praying with him and for him. I can’t tell

you how much it means to me to know that you all are supporting me in prayer.

- b. Vs. 37a, 38 **THANKFULLY** “*they all wept freely*”: Next I believe this response shows how thankful they were of Paul’s ministry among them. The best way other than praying for the pastor to show your thankfulness to God is grow in God’s grace.
- c. Vs. 37b **LOVINGLY** “*fell on Paul's neck and kissed him*”: I can tell if I’m doing my job right when I see you all loving each other the way you do.