

Acts 20:13-27

Introduction

If you knew that you were meeting someone for the last time, you would think very carefully about what your final words to that person would be.

You would focus on what was really important rather than just trivial chit chat.

The Apostle Paul was in such a situation at Miletus.

This is a kind of last will and testament of the Apostle to the elders of the church at Ephesus. This is what he wants them to hear most of all.

The structure of Paul's farewell speech shows how the past and the future are connected.

He began with the past, reciting his faithfulness in teaching everything beneficial to everyone everywhere (**Acts 20:17**).

Then he looked to the future, announcing his departure for Jerusalem and his expectation that they would not see him again (**Acts 20:22-25**).

Then he drew conclusions from his past faithfulness and his future absence.

Paul rehearsed his integrity in office not so much to defend his reputation from criticism but to teach the elders through his own example, to engrave indelibly on their memories the picture of his tireless, tearful, truth-telling service as a pattern for their own ministry as shepherds of God's flock.

Summary

In Acts 20:13-27, Paul gives his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, reciting his past faithfulness in his ministry among them and announcing his departure for Jerusalem with his expectation that they would not see him again.

1. Hurried Travels vv. 13-17

Paul had spent three years in Ephesus teaching and building up the church and evangelizing the surrounding province of Asia (**Acts 19:10**). After the near riot in Ephesus, Paul left the city. He spent the winter in Corinth and is now on his way to Jerusalem, hurrying to get there by Pentecost, probably in year AD56.

Paul could not risk delay at Ephesus, so he put in at Miletus from where he summoned the elders of the church at Ephesus, so that he might charge them with their shepherding responsibilities in his absence.

2. Lord's Servant vv. 18-19a

Paul begins his farewell address to the Ephesian elders by reminding them of what they already know about him and his ministry. He served the Lord among them.

A servant exists for the service of others.

A servant of the Lord has the Lord's authority as he undertakes this service

3. Faithful Watchman vv. 19-27

When Paul declared, 'I am innocent of the blood of all of you' (**Acts 20:26**), he was drawing on the Old Testament picture of a watchman posted on the city wall to be on the lookout for impending attacks (**Ezek 3:18-19, 33:1-9**).

What the watchman does or fails to do has lasting consequences.

Paul's affirmation is his way of saying, 'I have been a faithful watchman, I have fully discharged my duty to deliver God's message.'

Notice why Paul could affirm 'I am innocent of the blood of all of you' in good conscience:

First, Paul brought a complete message (Acts 20:20; 27).

Secondly, Paul addressed a comprehensive audience vs. 21.

Thirdly, Paul was compelled by a compassionate motive vs. 19.

Fourthly, Paul preached with committed consistency, everywhere and all the time vs. 20.

Fifthly, the detailed content of Paul's message vs. 21.

Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his comprehensive ministry, constantly preaching the whole truth with urgent compassion to all sorts of people in various venues, Paul set the pace for elders who would build on the foundation he laid

If you are an elder or aspire to be one some day, note these things carefully and build them into your lives.

If you are not, do two things: Learn these things that you may pray them into your elders and take them for yourself as they apply, and imitate those who come closest to fulfilling this vision (**Heb 13:7**).