

An Exegesis of Acts 20:25-32

By Joshua J Hanson

Introduction

Just starting seminary had me moving to Wisconsin and looking for work. I put my application in at a number of businesses. I applied to build cabinets from blueprints, to read, cut, assemble, and install. Those were the expectations as well as the qualifications for the job. I was interviewed on my ability to perform certain qualifications. That's what I expected. That's what they expected of me. Yet on the first day and during the first few weeks at work I was put to work on the assembly line installing hardware and wrapping cabinets. That was not what I had expected. I had expected something different. I had expected to do what I had always done, not this. It wasn't bad. It was boring. I assumed this is my test period to see if I could get the basics right. But, I was wrong and it wasn't until work had slowed that I found out the office manager assumed I was just another temp employee brought on for the recent onslaught of work. It wasn't until the owner entered the shop later to find out that neither of us was doing what was expected.

At any job there are qualifications and duties expected to perform. A pastor too has expectations and work he is to perform. At seminary you look forward to telling others about Jesus, comforting them with God's Word, but then this thing called administration falls in your lap as well as other expectations. Pastor becomes groundskeeper, janitor, carpenter, painter, plumber, electrician, mechanic, event planner, babysitter, and repairman because that's how it's always been done. But then you begin to realize that every "yes" to one item is a "no" to another. When you begin to step back and look at the lack of time and many of those items do need to be done but you aren't Seelzimmerman. Maybe you've been found working on the line when you should have been focused on your primary calling as Seelsorger.

The calling we have is as Seelsorger or as Paul puts it guardian and shepherd. A pastor as guardian protects the flock from themselves and from others. A guardian is responsible for care of himself and those around him. Without proper care and preparation he can fail to protect the flock from the danger inside and outside of the church. This guardian is just another sinner who happens to be called pastor. Thankfully we aren't entrusted to the hands of sinful Seelsorgers but we are entrusted to God, put on deposit with him, and his word. The primary purpose of this paper is exegetical with applications on the dangers of false teaching and the power of the Word to overcome such dangers.

Background of Acts 20

For three years, the Apostle Paul had been serving a growing flock of new believers in a city called Ephesus. Paul had traveled around the horn of Macedonia, Greece and back again. He is returning to Jerusalem to deliver an offering to the poor but for whatever reason he will not be stopping in Ephesus. It had been revealed to Paul, that prison and hardship awaited him (Acts 20:23). With the hope of reaching Jerusalem by Pentecost and "compelled by the Spirit" he headed to Jerusalem not knowing what would happen there.

As he continues his journey he meets with the Ephesian elders at Miletus and prepares them for their journey without him as their Seelsorger. He reminds them how he has prepared them to take charge once he has to leave them because of the circumstances. Paul has been a model to them in trials and all persecution. He has risked much for them. He was not timid about what he taught and he did not draw back in fear. More than all he wants the church prepared for the persecution that will ensue as a result of preaching the gospel.

Outline of Acts 20:25-32

Paul's situation

Setting – 17-18a

Faithfulness in ministry (Paul's conduct) – 18b-21

His plans – may not return – 22-25

Faithfulness in ministry – 26-27

Ephesian situation

Exhortation – Take care of the flock – 28-30

Be alert – 32

Commends to God's grace and faithful service – 32-35

Tears, prayers, departure – 36-38

Context

17 Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς Μιλήτου πέμψας εἰς Ἔφεσον μετεκαλέσατο τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας. **18** ὡς δὲ παρεγένοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ὑμεῖς ἐπίστασθε, ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡμέρας ἀφ' ἧς ἐπέβην εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν, πῶς μεθ' ὑμῶν τὸν πάντα χρόνον ἐγενόμην, **19** δουλεύων τῷ κυρίῳ μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ δακρῶν καὶ πειρασμῶν τῶν συμβάντων μοι ἐν ταῖς ἐπιβουλαῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, **20** ὡς οὐδὲν ὑπεστειλάμην τῶν συμφερόντων τοῦ μὴ ἀναγγεῖλαι ὑμῖν καὶ διδάξαι ὑμᾶς δημοσίᾳ καὶ κατ' οἴκους, **21** διαμαρτυρόμενος Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἑλλήσιν τὴν εἰς θεὸν μετάνοιαν καὶ πίστιν εἰς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν. **22** καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ δεδεμένος ἐγὼ τῷ πνεύματι πορεύομαι εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ συναντήσοντά μοι μὴ εἰδώς, **23** πλην ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον κατὰ πόλιν διαμαρτύρεται μοι λέγον ὅτι δεσμὰ καὶ θλίψεις με μένουσιν. **24** ἀλλ' οὐδενὸς λόγου ποιῶμαι τὴν ψυχὴν τιμίαν ἐμαυτῷ ὡς τελειῶσαι τὸν δρόμον μου καὶ τὴν διακονίαν ἣν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, **διαμαρτύρασθαι** τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ.¹

¹ Aland, K., Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., Robinson, M., & Wikgren, A. (1993; 2006). *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition (with Morphology)* (Ac 20:17–24). Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

Paul's ministry in Ephesus is over

25 Καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ οἶδα ὅτι οὐκέτι ὄψεσθε τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ὑμεῖς πάντες ἐν οἷς διῆλθον κηρύσσων τὴν βασιλείαν.

Variants: Western text adds “of Jesus” the Byzantine text adds, “of God.”

Translation: And now, pay careful attention. I myself know that you will no longer see my face. You, among whom I traveled preaching the kingdom.

- “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. – NIV84²
- “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. – NASB³
- And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. – ESV⁴
- “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. – NKJV⁵
- “I went around among you preaching the Kingdom, and now I know that none of you will see me again.” – NET

Καὶ νῦν	Takes us back to vs. 22. The reason for what will happen. Paul refers to this same thought, “I’m leaving.”
ἰδοὺ	Common interjection which calls attention to what follows. “Behold, look, or see!” Behold is not widely used today and seems dated. “Get this,” or “Pay careful attention,” gets the point across.
ἐγὼ οἶδα	Perf. act indicative 1st s – to know – Perfect with present meaning. Emphatic, “I know this...” But what does Paul know? Of what is he certain? About to find out...
ὅτι οὐκέτι	Tells us what Paul knows - content
ὄψεσθε	Fut mid ind, 2nd pl – see, ὁράω
ὑμεῖς πάντες	In very emphatic position after the verb ὄψεσθε
τὸ πρόσωπόν μου	What they will no longer see. object – my face.
διῆλθον	Aor act ind 1st s, διέρχομαι, to move within or through an area, go (through) to travel or move about <i>go about from place to place, spread</i> ⁶

² *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1984 (Ac 20:25–32). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

³ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. 1995 (Ac 20:25). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Ac 20:25–32). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ac 20:25–32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.) (244). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

κηρύσσω

Pres. act part, m nom s, κηρύσσω, Manner, to proclaim as herald, to preach. explaining his action as he was among them.

Commentary

Paul realizes his time is short but this is not a last will and testament. Instead he is closing up a ministry that on and off has spanned seven to eight years. “The remarks are more like a farewell, given without certain knowledge that he will return again” (Bock 629). It’s not that he expects to die in Jerusalem but he realizes that he now has another call. He is led by the Spirit to Jerusalem. Paul will no longer carry out work among them. They will no longer be able to see his face on a daily basis. Paul will no longer move about them preaching the kingdom. Instead, the western Mediterranean was to be his mission field (Romans 15:23-29⁷).

Did Paul meet up with the Ephesian Elders again? Did they never ever see his face again? At this time Paul does not expect to return but later twice while in Rome (Philippians 2:24 and Philemon 22) he writes of the hope of coming east again. The Pastoral Epistles show Paul did come to Ephesus again (1 Timothy 1:3; 3:14, 4:13) and Troas (2 Timothy 4:13) and Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul is not thinking he will never see them again as much as the constant seeing them in the regular ministry. His work among them was over.

Faithful to the ministry (26-28)

26 διότι μαρτύρομαι ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ σήμερον ἡμέρᾳ ὅτι καθαρὸς εἶμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος πάντων·

Translation: Because of this I do solemnly swear to you on this very day, that I am clean of the blood of all.

- Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. – NIV84
- “Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. – NASB
- I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, – ESV
- Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. – NKJV

διότι

Logical connection. Since Paul will no longer see them again. Adverbial (a combination of *διά* and *ὅτι*)

μαρτύρομαι

Pres mid ind, 1st s, to testify, assert. This is not *μαρτυρέω* this is *μαρτύρομαι* which affirms something with solemnity, testify, bear witness (BDAG). or to make a serious declaration on the basis of

⁷ **Romans 15:23-29** – But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

	presumed personal knowledge – ‘to declare, to assert, to testify’ (Louw-Nida). This is to call to witness.
ὅτι	Declarative. What Paul solemnly swears to.
τῇ σήμερον ἡμέρᾳ	Very forcible. Literally on to-day’s day; this, our parting day. ⁸ Or “on the today day,”
καθαρός	M nom s – without guilt, clean or pure with regard to any guilt regarding people’s lives. pert. to being clean or free of adulterating matter, clean, pure, pert. to being cultically/ceremonially pure, ritually pure, pert. to being free from moral guilt, pure, free(BDAG)
ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος πάντων	Robertson states, “Certainly there was never any reason for thinking καθαρός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος (Ac. 20:26) a Hebraism, since it is the pure ablative idea, and the usage is continuous from Demosthenes to late Greek writers and papyri.” “Blood” is a pregnant, metonymical term for the guilt involved in bringing about death, here eternal death. On the great judgment day none of the lost from this territory shall be able to point to Paul and say that his is guilty. (Lenski, 845) Bock states Paul is using a language of purity and worship. Paul sees his mission as tied to a proper response to God and to faithfulness in his relationship to others. His ministry is an act of worship, to be carried out faithfully” (Bock 629). Bock translates “clean of all blood guilt.” A close parallel to what Paul says here is found in Acts 18:6 where he says to the unbelieving Jews in Corinth Τὸ αἷμα ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ὑμῶν· καθαρὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν εἰς τὰ ἔθνη πορεύσομαι. Here the word is used with the preposition ἀπὸ plus the genitive form (ablatival idea of separation).
Πάντων	The sphere in which he is speaking. The Ephesian elders and the Ephesians in general.

Commentary

Paul is like Ezekiel’s trustworthy watchman (Ezekiel 3:16-21; 33:1-9). Paul is free from guilt (no blood on his hands) and no longer responsible for them. Paul not stating he is perfect, earlier in the book of Acts Saul stands guard assisting in the stoning of Stephen, but in this regard Paul is innocent. Paul reminds them how he has faithfully preached the word during his time among them. They are well equipped and prepared. He is not guilty of leaving them when they need him the most. Paul is innocent of any responsibility should the Ephesians forfeit

⁸ Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Ac 20:26). New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.

eternal life. Those who reject his preaching have no excuse. Paul has proved himself a trustworthy watchmen, but what that means is what we are about to see.

27 οὐ γὰρ ὑπεστειλάμην τοῦ μὴ ἀναγγεῖλαι πᾶσαν τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ ὑμῖν.

Translation: For I did not hesitate to proclaim to you every bit of God’s Will.

- For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. – NIV84
- For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. – NASB
- for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. – ESV
- For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. – NKJV

οὐ γὰρ	Explanatory. Paul explains why he is able to remain innocent of blood of all men.
ὑπεστειλάμην	Aor mid ind 1st s, ὑποστέλλω, to draw back or disappear from a position to be hesitant in regard to something. In middle voice, “shrink from, avoid” (BDAG). Held back, shrunken back. Paul is no ὑποστειλάμενος because he has given the churches the whole truth and not kept back anything that is συμφέρον (vs. 20 - helpful). See vs. 20 for a similar construction. What Paul states there in the positive he reflects here in the negative.
τοῦ μὴ ἀναγγεῖλαι	Aor act inf – to carry back information, to report gener. to provide information, disclose, announce, proclaim, teach (BDAG) The infinitive with τοῦ details what is being avoided. μὴ, is a “sympathetic negative” that reinforces the negative thought of the main verb
τὴν βουλήν	F acc s – That which has been purposed and planned—‘plan, intention, purpose.’ (Louw-Nida) that which one decides, <i>resolution, decision</i> (BDAG). The βουλή fills the whole content of apostolic preaching. This is the plan of God to bring salvation to the world through the Son’s sacrifice and resurrection. This plan is central. Everything is mediated and present once and for all in Christ (ἐν αὐτῷ) and everything finally derives from the βουλή τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ which finally effects the whole fullness of the event of salvation. (TDNT). There is no part of the message Paul failed to proclaim while he carried out his ministry.

Commentary

In Acts 20:26 Paul says he innocent of the blood of all. Now he tells us why. It’s because he has not held back anything from the Ephesians while he was with them. Rather Paul proclaimed to them God’s plan of salvation. This is God’s plan and his purpose for his people.

All of this is found in Christ. God's plan of salvation is in Christ alone. Those who reject God's plan reject Christ.

Paul taught them everything. He didn't soften the blow of the Law but he made them see their need for a Savior afterwards he showed them their Savior. Without ignoring or removing certain parts of teaching he places before them God's Word, God's will, what he wants for the Ephesians. Had he failed to proclaim God's will, one would not call sin, sin. Instead there would be no need for a Savior.

Paul not only says this but the entire book of Acts, his letters, and the pastorals back him up. He proclaimed the whole counsel of God, because of his faithfulness what comes next is that much more forceful. He does not ask of others what he has not done himself.

Exhortation: What he asks of us?

28 προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου.

Variants:

- P⁷⁴ A D and the Western text read "of the Lord." (which would go smoothly with the phrase 'with his own blood,' if that were the proper rendering..
- The byzantine text exhibits the conflate reading "of the Lord and God."
- Aleph and Bet "The church of God." This supports the doctrine of the trinity.

Translation: Guard yourselves and all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as guardians to shepherd/feed the church of God, which he obtained through his own blood.

- o Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. – NIV84
- o "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. – NASB
- o Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. – ESV
- o Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. – NKJV

προσέχετε

Pres act impr 2nd pl, προσέχω – to take heed, to pay attention to. Paul urges them to first take care of yourself. This is not a one-time action. This is a present, continued action, "keep on watching

	yourself. Or as BDAG, to be in a state of alert, be concerned about...with dative.
παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ ἐν ᾧ	ποιμνιον, diminutive of ποίμνη In which or of which? Many translations placed the Ephesian elders over and not part of. The reading “in which” would also take into account watching over yourself. It brings out the thought that overseers or guardians are part of the flock and are taken from the flock. The other translations lose the comfort of a pastor being part of the flock which he is to shepherd. The part of the flock of which God also cares for.
ἔθετο	Aor mid ind 3rd s, τίθημι, to appoint, put. God was the one who established and placed these overseers in his flock.
ἐπισκόπους	M acc pl – This word occurs 5x in the NT and is usually translated as overseer, guardian, bishop. This is one who has the responsibility of caring for the spiritual concerns – ‘one responsible for, one who cares for, guardian, keeper. In 1 Peter 2:25 ἐπίσκοπος is applied to Christ, and it no doubt shares certain of the meanings associated with ἐπίσκοπος as one who serves as a leader in the church – ‘church leader.’ In translating ἐπισκοπή, ἐπισκοπέω, or ἐπίσκοπος it is important to try to combine the concepts of both service and leadership. In other words the responsibility of caring for the needs of a congregation as well as directing the activities of the membership. In some translations an equivalent may be ‘helper and leader’ (Louw-Nida). However, “Bishop would give it an official flavor which would be an anachronism” (Bruce 392). Not only an anachronism but bring with it ideas of the Catholic church hierarchy. ἐπισκόπους is used in the plural here for the one church Ephesus. No one person is singled out rather the ἐπισκόπους are the same as the πρεσβυτέρους of 20:17.
ποιμαίνειν	Pres act inf, ποιμαίνω – to shepherd, to tend or feed the flock. As present infinitive this is the continuous duty as well as indicating the purpose of being an ἐπίσκοπος. To shepherd also includes the administration of a congregation (BDAG).
περιεποιήσατο	Aor mid ind 3rd s, περιποιέω - (indirect , “for oneself”) to secure, acquire (TDNT). to make secure for oneself, save/preserve (for oneself), to gain possession of someth., acquire, obtain, gain for oneself, to effect some circumstance, bring (about) (BDAG)
διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου	

means/instrument – this blood was the price. An adjective in attributive position modifying αἵματος = through his own blood

Commentary

Just what is Paul asking of these Ephesian elders? Paul describes his understanding of the pastoral office. He's asking us and them to do what I have done. He's not asking them to do anything he wouldn't do. He turns to them, "Guard yourselves." Now that Paul has fulfilled his part in ministry to the people of Ephesus, the responsibility is placed on them. If those who now have the responsibility are to carry it out then they have to begin with themselves.

Preach the whole counsel of God. If you are going to take care of others, take care of yourself because a guardian without the proper tools and training is useless. A member in the police force is always in training. He makes a big deal about training so when he exercises he runs pretending to reach and grab for his weapon. When he runs he jumps walls. When he lifts he performs the regular movements necessary to accomplish his job. Training is everything. It's no different for a Pastor. You are to be Seelsorgers, doctors of souls; your job description is to watch over the flock. But how can a Doctor know what prescription needs to be taken if he doesn't even know what is being prescribed. How can a doctor know what to prescribe without knowing his people? There is only one way we will be able to protect the flock and that is if we know the truth. If you know the truth then you also are able to spot the not so true, the not true, the completely false, and even the foolish.

Paul goes on to give a job description. This is what you are to do. Shepherd the flock of God. This goes well beyond feeding them. Feed every single one of them. Care for those who are different and opposed to you. Care for the weak, the strong, the hard headed, simple minded, the well off and the needy. Shepherd the church of God. As Seelsorger the pastor shepherds and guards the flock keeping them together, feeding the flock as he takes them to those green pastures. He recalls the straying with the law and gospel. He gathers around the word and with the word. Their task consists of being watchful and providing direction to the congregation on the basis of the redeeming work of Christ.

As guardians of the flock we have been entrusted with a heavy responsibility. The tools that we use have more power to harm than do those of a doctor. Who is up to such a task? Who would possibly begin to work when the results are life and death? Paul credits the Holy Spirit with making the Ephesian elders overseers in the church. ἔθεντο the middle voice form conveys the fact that the Holy Spirit has deliberately placed the elders as overseers.

They are not bishops who rule over but they have been placed in the trenches with the church leading the charge. Leaders lead by example. Being an "overseer" does not entitle one to rule from the pulpit and often you very well may find yourself on the assembly line. It is significant that all the πρεσβύτεροι are called ἐπίσκοποι. They are all to be ἐπισκόπους. They are to ἐπι + σκόπους – over + scope. They are elders in status, not age but in regard to their position. They are bishops in responsibility. It is also significant that this responsibility is to ποιμαίνειν (1 Peter 2:25 and 5:2f) the congregation. It is also significant that there are more several ἐπίσκοποι

in the one congregation (Philippians 1:1 also in plural).⁹ The position of guardian is one of service even as Christ said, “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:26).

God is providing, equipping, and even supporting the Ephesian elders. The emphasis is on the personal involvement and concern of God who has purchased the church for himself with his own blood. That blood is God’s which tells us something about whom Jesus is, as well as the Trinity. God calls, gathers, enlightens, builds, strengthens and even here God motivates them for the ministry. God gave his own blood to gain the church. These people are dear to God just as I. “Such a sacred form of down payment for the church makes the responsibility of the elders sacred” (Bock 630).

Why keep watch?

29 ἐγὼ οἶδα ὅτι εἰσελεύσονται μετὰ τὴν ἄφιξίν μου λύκοι βαρεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς μὴ φειδόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου,

Translation: I myself know that they will come among you after my departure, fierce wolves who will not spare the flock.

- I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. – NIV84
- “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; – NASB
- I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; – ESV
- For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. – NKJV

Note the asyndeton at the beginning of vs. 29. There is no connecting article Paul powers through speeding up and making single point.

ἐγὼ οἶδα ὅτι

Emphatic just as vs. 25

εἰσελεύσονται

Fut mid ind 3rd pl, εἰσέρχομαι – to enter, to come in.

μετὰ

W. accusative. Taken here μετὰ is used as a marker of time, after.

τὴν ἄφιξίν μου

F acc s. The point from which one moves is emphasized. This is not his death. Paul doesn’t know what awaits him in Jerusalem but even if it were death he would gladly go. Here departure.

λύκοι

M nom pl, wolf, The ferocious wolf terrorized the shepherds, attacking above all the ewes. These are not literal wolves but

⁹ . Vol. 2: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (616). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

	symbolize the wicked exploiter of the weak, who ruin, extort, and reduce their subjects to servitude and often used to describe false teachers or active enemies of the faith.
βαρεῖς	M nom pl, heavy. pert. to being a source of difficulty or trouble because of demands made. pert. to being of unbearable temperament, fierce, cruel, savage. of arrogant leaders likened to wolves who prey on sheep (BDAG).
μὴ φειδόμενοι	Pres mid, pass, part m nom pl, φείδομαι. Paul speaks of the wolves not sparing the flock. They will not be merciful. They will not save the flock from loss or discomfort. The wolves will take life without regard for the flock only focused on filling their bellies.

Commentary

Already in AD 58, Paul could warn of false teachers who would teach twisted things. These are not Judaizers but people similar to those described in the Pastorals. They attempt to draw disciples after them. They will arrive, but that does not mean they will not attack until after Paul's death but they will be attacked by those inside and outside the church. Paul looks toward the future and he is no longer able to guard the church. As guardian he keeps danger away (false teachers and wolves). This is the sheep vs. the wolves. The flock vs. dogs and we know there will be no dogs in heaven (Revelation 22:15¹⁰). This is their responsibility. Paul's warnings are valid over time the Ephesians would turn away from their first love. Heretical teachings would arise, "from among their own."

The ferocious wolf terrorizes not only the shepherds but also goes after the weak, the ewes and lambs. As guardians and shepherds over God's flock we "to feed, to instruct, to watch over, and to guide the sheep and the lambs of God's flock, remembering that Christ has bought each of them with his own blood. You are also called to protect the flock from savage wolves, who, as the Scriptures say, will try to scatter it" (CWOS, 247).

The future does not look all that promising for the Ephesian church. Their key guardian is leaving accepting another call. Who will guard the sheep now? Wolves dressed as angels of light Matthew 7:15¹¹ seem as if they will enter taking whatever whenever. Paul's prophecy came true. John's letter to the church in Ephesus, "You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen!" (Revelation 2:1-7¹²). Even though Paul will no longer be among

¹⁰ **Revelation 22:15** - Outside are the dogs...

¹¹ **Matthew 7:15** - "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

¹² **Revelation 2:1-7** - "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your

the Ephesians he continues to warn, rebuke, and encourage (1 Timothy 1:3,19-20¹³, 2 Timothy 1:15¹⁴). Apparently they did listen to Paul’s warnings. Ignatius’ (to the Ephesians 1:1 -2:1) letter to the same church a decade or two later... showed they listened.

False teaching is a real threat. What starts as, “at least they know Jesus” turns into an out of control spiral of doubt and despair. Convenience Christianity is a real threat. Lazy Christianity has a way of atrophy and eventually death as false teaching goes against God’s Word, creating doubt, anger, division, and false comfort. But a guardian does nothing if he does not give them the word. Pastors are regularly looked up often as the only ones who can rightly interpret scripture. If we present God’s Word in such a lofty way our flock will never think themselves as being able to rightly divide the truth. Part of Seelsorger is equipping so that they too can equip. You will not be there at every wolf attack but you can arm your sheep to the teeth.

30 καὶ ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ἀναστήσονται ἄνδρες λαλοῦντες διεστραμμένα τοῦ ἀποσπᾶν τοὺς μαθητὰς ὀπίσω αὐτῶν.

Translation: And from your own they will come, men speaking twisted (words) to draw away disciples after themselves.

- Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. – NIV84
- and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. – NASB
- and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. – ESV
- Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. – NKJV

καὶ ἐξ	Marker denoting separation, from, out of, away from, marker denoting the direction fr. which someth. comes, from (BDAG) Here source. The false teachers will even come from among them.
ὑμῶν αὐτῶν	Here the use is intensive, not reflexive. (Robertson)
ἀναστήσονται	Fut mid ind 3rd pl, ἀνίστημι – to rise, to rise up, arise.
ἄνδρες λαλοῦντες	Pres act part m nom pl – speak, tell, complementary.

lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

¹³ **1 Timothy 1:3,19-20** - As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer...holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

¹⁴ **2 Timothy 1:15** - You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

διεστραμμένα	Perf pass part n acc pl, διαστρέφω – to pervert, to make crooked. to cause to depart from an accepted standard of oral or spiritual values, make crooked, pervert (BDAG) teach perversions (of the truth). “To twist” – “stands in contrast to something that is straight and true.” (Bock 631)
τοῦ ἀποσπᾶν	Pres act inf, ἀποσπάω - fig. to draw away from a place or point of view. act. draw away, attract, proselyte. draw away the disciples after them (and thereby alienate them) (BDAG)
τοὺς μαθητὰς ὀπίσω αὐτῶν.	Followers, but a perverse kind of message that will gain followers for themselves and not for Jesus.

Commentary

Wherever there is truth, there will those twisting the truth. That's what had happened in Ephesus. It's bad enough when you are attacked from outside of the church but even worse when it comes from friends. The danger of false teaching is that it uses the Word of God but misrepresents its teaching. There is no real threat posed to the Christian church by those who teach something anti-biblical, anti-Christ, and anti-God. But there is great danger to the church from subtle teaching that appears to be biblical and pulls away unwary souls from the faith. Paul has a realistic sense of the danger that awaits the church and he warns them. He doesn't throw in the towel. He goes to faith, to the Word of God to hold them steady through the times.

31 διὸ γρηγορεῖτε μνημονεύοντες ὅτι τριετίαν νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν οὐκ ἐπαυσάμην μετὰ δακρύων νοουθετῶν ἕνα ἕκαστον.

Translation: So be on guard, remembering that for three years night and day I did not stop warning each one with tears.

- So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. – NIV84
- “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. – NASB
- Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. – ESV
- Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. – NKJV

γρηγορεῖτε	Pres act impv 2nd pl, γρηγορέω – Present Imperative indicates a calling to continuous watchfulness. be watchful, be on the alert, wide awake, alive. to be in constant readiness <i>be on the alert</i> (BDAG) To take care of or to look after, with the implication of
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	continuous and wakeful concern for (Louw-Nida). TDNT adds to watch or be vigilant of concern for the salvation of the community.
μνημονεύοντες	Pres act part m nom pl, μνημονεύω – remember – circumstantial participle.
ὅτι	declarative ὅτι
τριετίαν νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν	accusative of extent of time
οὐκ ἐπαυσάμην	Aor mid ind 1st s – stop cease, pause. The nominative participle carries the idea of “stop doing”
νουθετῶν	Pres act part m nom s, νουθετέω – Supplementary participle explaining what Paul had not stopped doing. Paul had not stopped counseling with God’s Word. BDAG gives to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct, <i>admonish, warn, instruct</i> . TDNT expands with νοῦν τίθημι, in the heart, mind, νουθετεῖν can mean “to impart understanding,” “to teach” but it is not a direct synonym of διδάσκειν. νουθετεῖν, describes an effect on the will and disposition, and it presupposes an opposition which has to be overcome. It seeks to correct the mind, to put right what is wrong, to improve the spiritual attitude. The basic idea is that of the well-meaning earnestness with which one seeks to influence the mind and disposition by appropriate instruction, exhortation, warning and correction.

Also – νουθεσία is the attempt to make the heretic aware of the falsity of his position, a pastoral attempt to reclaim rather than a disciplinary measure, though there is place for this if the corrective word is of no avail. (TDNT, 1021-1022)

Commentary

Paul’s uses many words to describe the ministry. Such as: “serve” (vs.19), “declare” (vs. 20,27), “teach” (vs. 20), “testify” (vs. 21,24), and “preach” (vs. 25). All of these terms are used in the same speech to characterize the general ministry of Paul. One looks at his letters and you see him continue with the corrective words of a father to his children.

Paul was at work even when it was dark. Paul pours out his heart as we see his labor over each one of the Ephesians. All of them were important. Each one of them a soul bought with the blood of God. This was personal. These were the people entrusted to his care and the many times he seriously warned them about their sin, the times that it drove him to tears, when they would not listen to him.

A Seelsorger does not throw in the towel, but it is easy to do. It’s easy to let the flock go their own way. Often they don’t want to have anything to do with you. They will say you’re

expecting too much. They will gladly go on without the help of a shepherd. It will drive you to tears but be alert even for them. They are still under your care even if misguided.

32 καὶ τὰ νῦν παρατίθεμαι ὑμᾶς τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, τῷ δυναμένῳ οἰκοδομῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν κληρονομίαν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πᾶσιν.

Translation: And now, I entrust you to God, and to the Word of his grace, to the one able to build up and to give the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

- “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. – NIV84
- “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. – NASB
- And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. – ESV
- “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. – NKJV

καὶ τὰ νῦν	Continuative καὶ, Fancy way of saying, “Now.” τὰ is accusative of respect = “as far as what concerns right now . . .”
παρατίθεμαι	Pres mid ind 1st s, παρατίθημι – to place someth. before someone, set before, to entrust for safekeeping, give over, entrust, commend, mid. entrust someone to the care or protection of someone (BDAG),
ὑμᾶς τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ τῷ δυναμένῳ	Pres pass part m dat s, δύναμαι – Attributive substantival. – Word or God? Both God and his word are able.
οἰκοδομῆσαι	Aor act inf, οἰκοδομέω – to strengthen, to build up. This is a favorite Pauline word, often translated as “edify”. God works through the word of his grace and so it is able to build up or edify. (Robertson WP)
καὶ δοῦναι	Aor act inf, δίδωμι – give, grant.
τὴν κληρονομίαν	F acc s – inheritance
τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις	Perf pass part m dat pl, ἀγιάζω – to sanctify, set apart. The participle ἡγιασμένοις is perfect passive and gives the meaning “those who are (in a) sanctified (condition).”

Commentary

Paul has entrusted them to God and to his word of Grace. In the face of ferocious wolves, false teachers inside and out, attacks at each and every stop, how could the church possibly

remain faithful to the word of God? How could there be any possible chance of survival? The nature of God's plan, the provision of the Spirit, and the presence of Jesus all lead the church in this direction. No matter how difficult things get, they can rely on God. There is hope in Paul's farewell, because he isn't placing the church into the hands of the elders. He is committing the church to God. Paul as a preacher commits the church – literally he deposits the church in the presence of God and ... the Word of his grace. In the safekeeping of God and his word, the church will not be destroyed but will grow spiritually (William & Larkin, 1995:299).

Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel. He knows it is the power of God. Only the word can build up. The Word of God holds the power to build up spiritually in life and to give an inheritance in the life to come. In the safekeeping of God and the gospel, they will not be destroyed, built up by God, sanctified by God, able and capable. As people respond to the gospel message, the church is built; as people grow in Christ the church is built.

More important than the leaders' commitment to their charge is God's faithfulness to his. For by it the leaders receive the ability to keep theirs. Don't rely on Paul. Don't rely on elders. Rely on God for their future wellbeing. Though Paul might go, God was ever with the congregation, and so was God's Word which they had received – the Word that proclaimed His grace in redeeming them and His grace in sanctifying them. To God, then, and to this Word of His, Paul solemnly committed them.

Conclusion

A Seelsorger is a caretaker of souls. That is our primary responsibility and while a pastor is also an administrator if you look around and find yourself on the assembly line and waiting on tables don't be surprised if you aren't doing what you should be. Paul gave us his example. He left the elders of Ephesus a high calling when he stood before them at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem. As shepherds of the church of God, we have an obligation to preach the whole counsel of God, to point out sin and forgiveness. It is our responsibility to guard ourselves and with the help of God we can.

Paul conclusion is better than any I could put together. And now, I entrust you to God, and to the Word of his grace, to the one able to build up and to give the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

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