

# A Farewell To Friends - Acts 20:17-38

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] As we look at our text, if you remember, Paul has come as far as Miletus, which is in Asia. He had been forbidden to go in Asia, and then he got to spend three years in Ephesus. He just finished coming back through Macedonia. He was in Corinth for a bit. Wrote the book of Romans, and now he's come back from Troas. I mean, yeah, from Troas, where our friend Eutychus plopped out the window. And now he's down here at Miletus. And he says, I'm not going to go to Ephesus because I'd be too distracted. I just can't do it. If you want to, if you look on the map there, you can see how far Miletus is from Ephesus. That's not very far, right? It looks real close. Maps always do. So that's about 40 to 60 miles, depending. If they went across the little, across the sea, it's like about 38. If they went by foot, you're talking about 60 miles.
- [ 1 : 0 3 ] If you look on your maps, if you go on your phones and put in Ephesus, it's in Turkey. And then if you put in Miletus, you can put in, you know, the distance between there and how many miles. And Miletus right now is no longer on the coast. It's like four miles inland. Because where it used to be on a bay, the river has so much silt has filled it in that it's now just like fertile farm area. And it is not anywhere near the coast. But there are still ruins there. But anyway, Paul's at Miletus. The point being that that was probably a two-day journey. You know, you're talking like 14 hours on foot if you just took off. 14, 15 hours, 16 hours. I would find out the elders, there's plural, how many you got? Are they all fast walkers? You know, some of them like, come on, you know, I don't know. So we're talking a couple days. But either way, Paul thought it's better for me to stay here and wait for them than for me to go up there. And so the title for tonight's message, I guess, would be A Farewell to Friends, where Paul is meeting for the last time with his friends.
- [ 2 : 0 7 ] And yes, one of my favorite authors is A.A. Milne. And not the Disney version of Winnie the Pooh. If you go back and read A.A. Milne, the guy was a genius of a writer. And he should have wrote more stuff. Right up there with Lewis. But he wasn't a believer, unfortunately. But a great writer. Anyway, so let's jump in here. If you want to look at a brief outline, we have verse 17 to 21. As Paul calls these, the guys to him, he's going to kind of expound about his past. Here's Paul's past. Hey, here's what I've been to you. And then 22 to 27 is Paul's present. He says, here's what's currently happening in my life. And then 28 to 30 is his prediction of what's to come for this church. And then 31 to 38, Paul reiterates kind of, this is who I am. So this is essentially Paul's final words to the church.

2 Timothy would be the last book he'd write. He'd write it to Timothy right before he's executed. He writes a book to Ephesus. He writes a letter to them. But this is the last time he's going to see them face to face. So this is the last time you're going to see someone who you love.

[ 3 : 07 ] And they're like, these are my last words to you. And then they write you an email later. Which is going to be more impactful. You're going to remember those words. You're going to remember that. There's some interesting last words in the scripture.

Samson in Judges 16, when he pushes out those pillars, he says, let me die with the Philistines. Those are some good last words, you know? I mean, if you're going to go to the mission field, that's a cool way to go.

Let me die for you, Jesus. And then there you go. It's over. Jesus, in John 14, these aren't his last words. His last words on the cross, right? Where it is finished.

And then he has his last words before he ascended to heaven. But these are some of his final words to his followers that night before he was betrayed. When he had finished dinner, Judas had gone to betray him.

And he starts to give information to his followers that they'd never heard before. He says, let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions.

[ 4 : 02 ] If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also. You know those disciples would have replayed that after he had gone to heaven.

They would have encouraged themselves. Like, he said he's coming back. This is what he promised. Some other people you may know. Christopher Columbus, his last words before he died were, Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

We think of Columbus as discovering the new world. But his desire was to spread the gospel. He wanted to bring the gospel. It doesn't always end well. Some last words, someone who didn't know the Lord.

We have Vincent van Gogh. His last words were, the sadness will last forever. And he died. And he was right. It would last forever. And then, we all know him, D.L. Moody.

He said, I see earth receding. Heaven is opening. God is calling me. That's another good way to go. But with only a limited amount of time to speak, Paul is not going to waste his words.

[ 5 : 02 ] He's going to pack a lot in here. This is like an hour and a half message that I've spent all afternoon trying to squash it down into 40-some minutes. There's so much in here.

But it's really good. We want to see this. So, as we start in verse 17, we see Paul's past. And so, from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church.

Last time we were together, we looked at the church. What did that look like as they met in the upper room there in Troas? Paul taught long into the night, said the whole church was gathered. So, the church, it met in different places.

It met in homes. It met in public. And we're going to see a little of that. And we said there's a difference between that which is descriptive and that which is prescriptive. So, just because something is prescribed, I mean, described, doesn't mean it's prescribed.

And everywhere in the book of Acts, where they meet is described. It's described to us. There's nowhere where it says, this is how you must meet in this location. That's not the emphasis. But it was one church, even if it was multiple locations.

[ 6 : 07 ] When he's calling the elders here, whether they came from the church of Ephesus, so whether it was multiple churches, it was one church, even if it was multiple locations. As we jump into this, we're going to look at a little bit about what the Word says about church leadership.

God's order, right? We're very big on what is God's order. We said it Sunday, anytime you step outside God's order, it's what? Anybody remember? Outside God's order is confusion.

Anytime we step outside his order. So we want to be in God's order. There's two words primarily used in the New Testament for those that are in leadership in the church, and they are elder and bishop.

Elder is the Greek word presbyteros, and bishop episkopos. So you say, hello, I am a presbyteros of the church. And then you think, well, there's two different denominations out there, aren't there, that bear those names?

Presbyterian and episkopos. So the presbyterians, the presbytos, presbyteros, look at it more as a plurality of elders. Many elders ruling.

[ 7 : 12 ] And the pastor would just be one among many, right? The episkopos, those who told to the bishop, they say, well, it's the bishop. It's he who rules, and then we are all under him.

Well, what does the scripture say? 1 Timothy chapter 3, Paul says this. He says, this is a true saying. If a man desire the office of a bishop, that's our word there for episkopos, he desires a good thing.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given hospitality, apt to teach. So there Paul is saying, hey, this is the leader in the church. If you want to be this person, that is a good thing to desire.

It's a good thing. Titus then tells us about elders. In verse 5 of Titus chapter 1, when Paul writes to Titus, he says, hey, for this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set and order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders, presbyteros, in every city as I had appointed you.

Well, which is it? As we see, it's both. Verse 6, if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly, for a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God, not self-willed.

[ 8 : 24 ] And you can finish reading that out, the qualifications. And there, Paul uses them completely interchangeable. He says, hey, if any man, I left you to appoint elders. And then he says, this is what they must be for an elder, for a bishop, must be this.

So it's either or. It's not one or the other. And believe me, you can get people who will want to argue about which it is until the cows come home. This is what church government must look like.

Well, Paul uses it interchangeable, and we're going to see here in this passage, it's going to be used interchangeable as well. But this is what Paul says about God's order in the church. God does have an order.

Remember, Jesus, when the centurion came to him and he said, you don't need to come to my house. He's like, no, no, no, I'm under authority. I'm a man under authority. And I have one who goes and I say go and he comes when I say come.

And Jesus was amazed at that, at his faith, because he recognized what? That Jesus was also under God's authority. 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 12 and 13, Paul says, and we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake and be at peace among yourselves.

[ 9 : 35 ] So you're Paul saying, hey, yes, God did set up an order, but what is the point? Well, he says, this should lead to what? Peace among yourselves. This isn't to lord it over you, just like he said to the disciples.

The Gentiles lord it over one another, not you. It's to serve. Hebrews 13, 17, obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls as they that must give account that they may do it with joy and not with grief.

For what? For this is unprofitable for you. So the desire is, under God's order, there's peace and there's profit for the body. That's what it's for. Ephesians 4, 11 and 12, and he gave some apostles and prophets and evangelists and some pastor teachers.

Notice it doesn't say elders and it doesn't say bishops. We'll come back to that later. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

So is it like, well, I don't think we should have anyone who's leading this or in charge or whatever. Well, Paul says and the word says that God's order, just like in our homes, right? Man is the head of woman, Christ is the head of man, and God is the head of Christ, right?

[ 10 : 43 ] And so there's that order. And then as we submit to that order, what is there? Well, there's peace, there's profitability, and there's edification. When we get outside that order, there's confusion.

And so yes, there is order in the church. And so Paul has called these men. He called the elders, he calls the pastors, he calls them and says, hey, I want to talk to you guys. I need to talk to you about something.

And when they were coming, verse 18, he said unto them, you know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Guys, you know who I've been.

There is no denying the evidence of who Paul was. He's saying, this is who I am. That word there where it says, after what manner I have been, literally means to become. He says, guys, I didn't become anything different. Whether I was with you a short time, a long time, individually or collectively, I was the same guy and you know that.

Verse 19, serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the laying in wait, literally the plotting of the Jews.

[ 11 : 47 ] Paul's saying, you know how I served you, with humility of mind. And then he goes right into with tears and temptations. Remember, we looked, he was two and a half years at the school of Tyrannus and it seemed like, Paul, this is finally what you've been looking for, bro.

You have been just hounded by these Judaizers from one city to the next. You've been beaten, you've been accused. Finally, you have your own place here. Well, here's what he tells us here in verse 19, that this whole time, they're still there.

They're still hounding him. They're still plotting against him. And that he had wept tears over it. And he was tested and he was tried.

Paul experienced many problems and hindrances that were knowingly and even purposely caused by other godly people. They're supposed to follow the same god.

They're supposed to know the same god. They're Jews. It's like, this is the ones who Jesus came to. Just because someone or something says they're a Christian or of God, it does not mean that they are.

[ 12 : 54 ] B.B. Warfield, he was the last, I believe, principal of the, at Princeton before they kind of split the school from the theology thing.

He says, if everything that is called Christianity in these days is Christianity, then there is no such thing as Christianity. A name applied indiscriminately to everything designates nothing.

Oh, it's Christian. Well, I mean, it said it was Christian. It said it was a Christian show. You know, he said he was a Christian artist. You know, so, must be Christian, right?

Our standard, our standard is fruit, not fluency, right? Just because someone talks to Christian talk doesn't mean they're a Christian. Matthew 7, Jesus says, beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravaging wolves.

We're going to see a little about wolves later. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.

[ 14 : 08 ] Our standard is fruit, not fluency. Just because something says it's a Christian, just because something says it's of God doesn't mean it is. And here is Paul, a man who was of God, constantly being hounded and plotted against by people who also said they're of God.

Now, Paul says he served them with humility of mind. What does that look like? I think that looks like 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 21 through 23 where it speaks of how Jesus dealt with this type of trial and testing.

It says, for even here unto were you called, Peter's writing to the believers, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, reviled not again.

When he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously. Paul knew what his mission was, he knew what his calling was, and he did that.

Yes, he suffered for it, but it didn't dissuade him, and he just committed himself to him who judges justly. So Paul says, you know how I've been among you, you know how I've served the Lord, and he goes on in verse 20 and says, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you.

[ 15 : 23 ] That word kept back there means timid. He says, I wasn't timid about anything. I didn't hold it back because I was like, I don't know what this is, what a thing to think if I tell him that. Oh dear. He said, I wasn't timid about anything.

I didn't keep back anything that was profitable unto you, something that was going to add to you and bring value to you. I didn't withhold that. But I showed you, or declared unto you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, what did he do?

Testifying. Testifying. So Paul was the same in public as he was in private. He says, I taught you the same thing publicly or from house to house. There's three words in there.

The word showed, like we said, is interspersed, declared. It means to announce or tell. So Paul says, I told you these things. And then he says, I taught you. It means to teach doctrine or morals.

It's like didactic, is the Greek word. Didactic teaching means to teach doctrine or morals. He says, I told you, I taught you, and lastly, I testified to you, which is to solemnly affirm or to confirm.

[ 16 : 27 ] Paul told, taught, and testified to the truths that were given him by God. He says, I didn't hold anything back. 1 Corinthians 15, in verse 1, he says, Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you.

And you jump down to verse 3. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He's like, hey, what I received, I gave it to you.

I didn't hold anything back. I told you. I taught you. I testified to these truths. You know, Christianity has no secrets. It's not like he called these guys together and he's like, guys, this is just for you because you're the special guys.

You're the leaders, you know. Don't tell anybody these things. Shh. There's no secrets in Christianity. Jesus said in John 15, all things that I've heard of my Father, I've made known unto you.

You know, there's nothing in here that's withheld from anyone. There's not like, oh, I turned to this book and it says, do not open until 12 years in the faith. Oh, okay. And you flip the next.

[ 17 : 28 ] There's not. There's no secret knowledge, no hidden knowledge in Christianity. Everything is ours. But what there is, is there, is our choice to receive that, right?

There's so much in here, I don't know, because I just don't take the time to really understand it all. And then lastly, we touched on this last time we were together about the house churches where he says, I taught you publicly and from house to house, right?

This is a description, not a prescription. We have to distinguish between those. And I think the interesting thing to note is that the emphasis is never on where they met, but it's that they met, right?

It's not where you meet, but it's don't forsake the gathering together of the saints and all the more as you see the day approaching. That's the emphasis, not where you meet, but did you meet? We've met in a, what did you call, what did you call that first place?

That kid's going banana place. I don't know, some kind of Morton building thing. We've met in a school. We've met in houses. We've met in a farm. We've met in a municipal complex. We've met in a funeral home.

[ 18 : 38 ] We've met here. Did it really matter? Was one of those places more magical than the other? You know, that you're like, wow, this is where God's presence moving. No, you know, this place has stained glass windows.

They're kind of cool, but I don't think it adds anything to God's word, right? I don't think the Holy Spirit's like, yes, when I come through those windows. No. So, Paul says that he was, hey, I told you, I taught you, and I testified you.

Verse 21, what was it he was telling, teaching, and testifying? He says, I was doing this both to the Jews and to the Greeks, and I was telling them what? Repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was just as faithful with one group from one group to the next. Now, his method might have been different. Obviously, it was going to be different teaching the Jews as teaching the Greeks, but the message was the same.

And what was that message? Repentance towards God. You are a sinner. You need to repent towards God. You need to understand who God is. Change your mind about God.

[ 19 : 43 ] You are responsible to him. You are answerable to him. You are accountable to him. Sin must be dealt with. And then faith toward Jesus. Sin has been dealt with in Christ, in the person of Jesus.

So there's Paul's past. He says, this is who I've been. You guys need to know this. Remember this. And Paul's present. Verse 22, Now behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

So Paul didn't know the details of his future, but he knew his future was secure. He knew where his future was. True freedom is found in the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3, 17, Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Paul says, you know what? I don't know the details, but guess what? I am bound in the Spirit. Every city I go to, Paul's saying, excuse me, God is confirming to me this calling of mine.

But none of these things move me. Paul was not knocked off by, not knocked off course by circumstances or situations. None of these things are going to knock me off course.

[ 20 : 54 ] None of them move me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself. Paul recognized there is something worth giving his life for so that I might finish my course, my race, my journey with joy and the ministry which I've received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul said, my joy and my fulfillment they're found in ensuring that the church had received the fullness of sound doctrine. This is where my joy is. I want to finish this course. I want to make sure that I have done what?

That I have testified to the gospel of the grace of God. Jesus said, if any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me. He who seeks to save his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

That's what Paul's living out. But we can see from verse 24, we can see what Paul's ministry looked like, I think. Paul's ministry was what? It was determined by Jesus, wasn't it?

That which I've received of the Lord Jesus. Paul didn't decide his ministry. He didn't just go, you know what? I really feel like this. I really am good at this. I really have an affinity towards this.

[ 22 : 06 ] You know, it was determined by Jesus. The Lord put him in that. He says it was received of the Lord Jesus. Even though the Lord called him to it and the Lord appointed him to it, what did Paul have to do?

Well, he had to receive that. He had to partake in that. He'd say, okay, I received that. And it was personal. Paul says, that which I have received of the Lord Jesus. He didn't receive it from a missions board.

He didn't receive it from an organization. He didn't receive it by ordination, by someone. He said, hey, I know. I've received this personally from the Lord. This is what he has called me to. It was specific.

He says, it's his course. It's my race. I have a specific ministry. And it had an end goal. He said that I might finish it. Well, if you're running a race, by definition, it has to have a beginning and an end, right?

I just ran in a 5K last week. I'd like you to know I came in second overall in my over 40 age category. There's only one other person over 40. But there was a finish line.

[ 23 : 05 ] Thank God there was a finish line. Yes. And then it had great potential for joy. Paul says that I might finish my course with joy.

And that was Paul's ministry. He loved his ministry. We have the same opportunity. We're not going to read it right now for sake of time, but look up, you know, Hebrews 12, 1 through 3. Wherefore, seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight in the sin that does so easily be set, and let us run with patience the race set before us.

So Paul then says, And now, behold, I know that you all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more. Wherefore, I take you to record this day that I'm pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

You know, God's kingdom and God's ministry, it was more than one man. It was bigger than one man. Paul's like, I have done my part. I've preached to you the kingdom, but I'm going to go.

But the kingdom's going to continue. The work's going to continue. You've got to continue in this. And Paul says, I have a spotless record. I am completely clean. My record is spotless.

[ 24 : 20 ] Why? He says, Because I've declared unto you all of God's word. That word there where he says, for I have not shunned, that means to cower or shrink. We already saw, he said, I wasn't timid about telling you anything. And I also, I didn't cower.

I didn't shrink back from this call that I have. No matter how hard the Jews pressed on me, no matter how much they said that I was just so foolish teaching these things, or I was a heretic, I continued on to declare, whose counsel?

God's. Not Paul's ideas, Paul's opinion, not man's counsel, not the five points of whoever, or the theology of whatever. It was the counsel of God.

And then Paul, he says, so here's my past, this is who I was among you, here's my present, what's going on. And now he lays out this prediction. He says to these men, who are probably weeping at this point, that when he says to them, I'm never going to see you again in this life.

They didn't have FaceTime, right? They couldn't send pictures. He says, take heed, pay attention. That's what he's saying here. Take note, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers.

[ 25 : 31 ] That word overseers is our word, episkopos, bishop, over which the Holy Spirit has made you episkopos, to feed the church of God.

That word feed is to shepherd or to pastor. And so now here we see, we have the bishop linked with the pastor, and we know the bishop is the same as the elder and they're all starting to kind of come together and you've seen this picture here.

Oh, this is what this looks like. He says, the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed, to shepherd the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. Peter puts these things together really well for us in 1 Peter chapter 5.

He says, the elders, the presbyteros, which are among you, I exhort. Then you also say, I who also am an elder. To feed, to shepherd, to pastor, to poimeno, the Greek, the flock of God, which is among you.

Taking the oversight, the episcopate, the bishop, therefore, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. They're all together. I've heard many people say, pastor is only once in the Bible in Ephesians.

[ 26 : 39 ] That's the only place. No, it's all over the place. Are you kidding? You know, all throughout the Old Testament, you look at Ezekiel, and God talks about the shepherds, the shepherds, the shepherds. What do you think pastor is? Pastor comes from pasture, to pasture your sheep, to shepherd, to feed the sheep.

An overseer, here, we're told, by Paul in verse 28, is responsible for the care of something of great value, something so valuable that it costs the very blood of God.

He said, this is what you are to oversee. This is the church of God which has been purchased with his own blood. Feed them, care for them, oversee them. This is not something that someone just showed up and said, I'm going to do this.

Right? Because what does it say there? Over which the Holy Spirit has made you this. The Holy Spirit appointed these guys. Hebrews chapter 5, speaking of high priests, I'm not equating the pastor with a high priest, but what I'm saying is, it's the same idea that you cannot take it to yourself.

It's God who appoints. For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. So you have a man taken from men, ordained by men to do things of God on behalf of others.



[ 27 : 51 ] And no man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 12, Paul says, and I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has enabled me for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

Who put him into the ministry? Jesus. Who enabled him? Jesus. What was Paul's one duty in the ministry? Faithfulness. Paul didn't place himself, Paul didn't call himself, Paul didn't enable himself, Paul just had to be faithful.

That's all we are called to do, too, where the Lord places us. Because Corinthians tells us in chapter 12, 1 Corinthians, but all these work that one in the self same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

So he's speaking of the gifts there. That is up to the Holy Spirit to decide where he's going to give these gifts. And so Paul has said to these men, these elders, these pastors, these shepherds, these bishops, the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians, they were all there from Ephesus.

And the non-denominational pastors. Yeah, that's great. And then Paul says, why? Why do you need to care for this flock?

[ 29 : 06 ] Pay attention to them. For I know this, that after my departing, verse 29, shall grievous wolves enter in from without is where they're coming. They shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

He says, look it, there are going to be those that are going to come from without and they're not going to spare the flock. That word not sparing means like no leniency. They're not going to let up. They're not going to care what kind of harm they're causing when they come in.

Now, is that just the job of the pastor to watch out for that? No. Thankfully. Thank the Lord. Because in verse 28, he says, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.

The pastor is just as much a part of the flock. Right? So if a wolf comes in and you see the wolf, you don't go, well, I hope the pastor catches him. Oh, we just ate another sheep. That's too bad.

Not my job. Right? No, we're all in this together. The wolves will come in from without. They have a lack of care and a lack of compassion. How do you identify a wolf?

[ 30 : 06 ] A grievous wolf. Well, the word grievous literally means burdensome. So a wolf first is burdensome. They come from without, they come within, and they will lay burdens on you. It's a heavy thing they bring.

They are imposing. They come from without. It's like, who is this person? They are imposing themselves on you. They're greedy. They will not spare. It's only their own appetites that they are interested in, which leads into, they feast.

A wolf will feast on sheep instead of feed the sheep. And a wolf is cruel. No leniency. So how do you identify a wolf among you?

Well, that's what they're going to look like. There's going to be something off about them. We know that, as Jesus told us, that they're going to come wolves in sheep's clothing. So it's like, well, they look like a sheep. Yeah, well, he may call himself a Christian, but we judge by fruit, right?

And so if you look over there and that sheep, which looks like a sheep, is eating another sheep, you're like, it's probably not a sheep. Right? You're going, you're like David, you get the sheep out of his mouth, you kill that wolf.

[ 31 : 11 ] Spiritually. We don't like, could be a really bad doctrine to go off on. In verse 30, he says, then he says, so from without, you're going to have wolves and then there's some, those coming from within.

Also of your own selves, from within, shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves. So within, from within are going to come these men.

They will rise up. They will speak perverse, literally twisted things. They will take the truth and they'll twist it. Second Corinthians, chapter 11, Paul writes this in verse 14.

He says, Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it's no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

You know what that means? That means we can't judge by how someone looks. I can't, well, looks, looks like a Christian. I mean, he's from within us. You know, he said he's part of Calvary Chapel. I mean, or well, it looks like a sheep.

[ 32 : 11 ] Well, here it tells us that Satan transforms himself into a minister of light. And his ministers, his minions are going to be transformed into an angel of light. Satan doesn't come in with his little, you know, his horns and his pitchfork going, hey, hey, Christians, right?

And he gets you. No, he comes in and says, oh, brothers, sisters, let us have love and unity. And then he kind of leads you into just off the path a little bit. You're like, I don't know, but he's so nice.

He's such a nice guy. You know, he smiles a lot. What big teeth you have. But the rising of men. So we saw what grievous wolves are and here we have men who shall arise from among you.

The rising of men. What does that look like? They're self-appointed. They come in and they appoint themselves. Also men, also of your own selves shall men arise.

Nobody's, nobody's given them a calling. The Lord hasn't called them. This is, they are declaring this for themselves. They rise up and appoint themselves and they twist the truth. They speak perverse things.

[ 33 : 13 ] It's going to be a little off. It's just going to be a little off. And they're big talkers. Right? It's full of hot air. All they do is talk real big. Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. But nothing to back it up. And then they will turn men from Jesus to themselves to draw away disciples after them.

And that is like the biggest telltale sign. When it's like all of a sudden, you know, it's like we talked about there's exegesis where you want to exercise the text, excise the text, what does it say?

Eisegesis where you bring an idea and you want to find scripture to validate your idea. And then there's narcissistic where you narcissistically read everything into the text about you. And this is all about me. And that's like these men who will arise after their own self-appointment.

And it's just all about them. It's not about Jesus. Paul tells us in chapter 16 of Romans, he says, Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you've learned and avoid them.

Flag them, guys. Flag them. You know? Get your paintball gone out and put a little mark on them. Let them know. Let people know. Flag them. I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to what?

[ 34 : 25 ] The doctrine. Contrary to the teaching. Contrary to the word. And avoid them. That word avoid literally means to keep aloof from one's society. Sounds very proper, doesn't it?

Very Jane Austen. Keep aloof from one's society. So in other words, these aren't people I'm going to hang out with. These aren't people I'm going to associate with. These aren't people I'm going to be in their society. I'm not going to move within their circles.

And when I see them moving in circles over here and someone says, Hey, come join us. You know? I mean, it's for the sake of the gospel. It's like, I'm sorry because you know what you are? You're self-appointed.

You're twisted. You're a big talker and you're turning men from Jesus. So I'm not going to do that. I'm going to avoid your company. And then 2 John in chapter 1 verses 9 through 11, I just rediscovered this section of scripture again.

Don't you love that? Like sometimes you come across a scripture that just hasn't jived with you for a long time. You're like, Oh, I forgot that was in there. It's so amazing. I mean, who picks up their Bible and goes, I'm going to read 2 John.

[ 35 : 24 ] But he says, Whoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine of Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son.

If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, what doctrine? Doctrine of Christ, which has both the Father and the Son, receive him not into your house. Neither bid him God's speed, for he that bids him God's speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

So first we had, don't keep company with them in their society. Now it's like, don't bring them into your society. Do not bring them into fellowship. I'm not going to invite you over for dinner, you know, and hopefully so I can set you straight maybe when you're not teaching sound doctrine.

That doesn't mean there's not a time and a place to get together and talk with someone. Be like, hey, would you like to talk, get together sometime? But what he's saying here is we're not going to have fellowship with them. He says, Why? Neither bid them God's speed and be a partaker of their evil deeds.

So in other words, don't be like, well, you know what? Maybe it's just semantics. They just say, you know, they say they love Jesus but they don't seem to really think like Jesus was God but maybe it's semantics.

[ 36 : 29 ] Oh, God bless them. They're doing a good work over there. They're just different than us. There's plenty of people out there like that, yes. But Paul says if it's not the same doctrine, if it's not the same Jesus, if it's not the same Bible, then no.

They are not just semantically different. Listen guys, doctrine matters and it matters eternally. It matters. We can't set doctrine aside for the sake of fill in the blank, anything.

So that was Paul's prediction to this church. He said, hey guys, this is how I've lived among you. This is what's happening where I'm currently going and here's what's going to happen. Here's what's going to happen.

Pay attention to this. And now he's going to give kind of just a brief overview of you know who I am, guys. You know, Paul will say, be followers of me as I'm a follower of Christ.

Verse 31, he says, therefore, watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn or to admonish or exhort you every one night and day with tears.

[ 37 : 37 ] Remember, Paul said, you know what my manner of service was among you. You know how I served the Lord. You know how I lived. Guys, watch and remember what I told you. Watch out for the wolves and the arising of men and remember the doctrine and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn you.

Paul looked at his teaching as a warning, this idea of admonishing and exhortation every one night and days with tears. What was Paul's word of warning? It was continual.

He said, I ceased not to warn you. This was something he continually did. He didn't just do it once. He did it in community. Everybody. He says, I ceased not to warn everyone.

He was committed night and day he did this and he was very caring with tears. Paul had a word that was continual. It was for everyone.

It was committed. It was caring. Paul says, remember that word. And now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

[ 38 : 47 ] So Paul says, this word of God's grace, this doctrine is God's grace. It's God's free gift to you and it will give you a position among all of them that are sanctified or literally all them that are set apart unto God by grace.

God's grace allows you to be a partaker of grace. And what is God's grace able to do? What can it do? God's grace, well, it's able. That which is able, the word of God's grace is one, it's able.

Two, it builds to build you up. Three, it gives to give you an inheritance. And four, it's all inclusive among all them which are sanctified. All of you get to partake of the same grace with all of them.

Like we said, there's no hidden knowledge. There's no exclusivity either. We're not going to get to heaven and be like, man, that's the cool club, huh? They got all those rewards and I didn't give them as many rewards. So they get to go in, you know, past the pearly pearly gates.

I just went past the pearly gates. It's not like that at all. And you'll hear some people teach on rewards like that. That, well, if you want to get your rewards and almost like there's going to be some of us up there sitting there like, you know, with our Lincoln logs like, well, it's better than nothing.

[ 39 : 51 ] Better than hell. No. Our reward is Christ. We have an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us. That means it's incorruptible, undefiled, and it fades not away.

That means reserved in heaven for me. I can't touch that. I can't hurt that. That's God's grace. I don't know how all the rewards work, but I know they don't work how I think they work. Because like we looked at where Paul said, hey, God enabled me and God placed me in the ministry because he counted me what?

Faithful. I think of so many other qualifications and God's just like, yeah, faithful works. Verse 33 says, I've coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel.

Literally, wages, riches, and stuff. Silver is wages, gold, riches, apparel, stuff. He says, I haven't coveted your wages, your riches, or your stuff.

In fact, you know, verse 34, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and unto them that were with me. Now, Paul will other places say that, hey, don't muzzle the ox that treads out the corn.

[ 40 : 56 ] And that it's fine for those, like Peter leads about a wife, that's fine. Paul doesn't. There are those who make their living in the ministry, that's fine. Paul's chosen not to. Here he's saying, hey, I have used my own hands to meet my needs, to minister to my necessities.

I thought it was interesting his view on how he viewed working here. Paul was a hard worker and he worked very hard, but not for the fulfillment of himself, but for the needs of others.

He's like, this isn't about fulfilling my needs. Verse 35, he says, I've showed you all things how that so laboring you ought to support, literally hold up, the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus.

How he said, it is more blessed to give than receive. What's Paul saying here? He's saying, we do not labor out of need. I don't go to work because I have need, because I need to supply, but for the purpose of ministering the supply that God gives.

Philippians 4.19 says, but my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. That's just another way of what Jesus says in Luke 12, verse 29, he says, seek you not what you shall eat or what you shall drink, neither be you of a doubtful mind.

[ 42 : 08 ] For all these things do the nations of the world seek after. And your father knows that you have need of these things. Who knows you have need of these things? Your father. He says, don't seek after these things. Your father knows you have need of them.

He'll take care of you as the inference, but rather seek you the kingdom of God. Seek after that and all these things shall be added unto you. So Paul's saying, I don't have a need.

My God supplies my need. It's just he's supplying that need through my labor and my labor is being used to supply someone else's need. Great. God could choose to do it another way, but this is how he's doing it.

I go to work not to supply my needs. God supplies my needs. God is just currently supplying my needs through my work. That's great. But you know what? If that work disappeared, God's supply of my needs, does not.

So Paul's looking at this like this is an opportunity for me to be used by God to minister to the needs of others, to be God's supply to someone else. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed.

[ 43 : 08 ] Remember in verse 32, it says, I commend you to God. Here he's doing that. He kneels down and prays. He commends them to God, prays with them all. And they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him.

Ew. He was sorry, most of all, for the words which he spake. You know, I think all that just shows is, man, they had such a fellowship, such a brotherhood, such communion. They were so very real with one another.

It wasn't like, how you doing, brother? Good, good. God bless you. Have a good day. Yes, you too. Man, that's hard to get past. You know, on Sunday morning, as we end, just trying to understand that it's not like, okay, message is over, turn the TV off.

All right, there we go. Let's go our way. But like, no, like let's, yes, the message is over. What has God spoken in our hearts? Let's pray for one another. Let's encourage one another. Let's let God use us. Not just to be like, hey, we heard a good message, now it's over.

But that the Lord allows us to continue to minister to each other's needs. And so Paul, he prays for them. They have such a friendship. And they've, you know, labored together for the three years he was at Ephesus.

[ 44 : 14 ] They sorrowed most of all, verse 38, for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him onto the ship. They should see his face no more in this life, right?

They're going to see him again in the next life. The sorrow of the Ephesian pastors was for the loss of fellowship. Just as in death, their grief was the grief of separation.

However, in Christ, that separation is never permanent, is it? Paul will write in Thessalonians chapter 4, but I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep that you sorrow not.

Remember we saw that with Eutychus. He fell down and he was dead. They took him up dead. And Paul, you know, says he sleeps and he raises him up. Jesus, when he raises up Jairus' daughter, says she sleeps.

Death is not a big deal in Christ. Concerning them that are asleep that you sorrow not even as others which have no hope. So we sorrow but we have hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

[ 45 : 20 ] For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain under the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

So as Paul leaves his friends says farewell to his friends. So goodbye guys. He says hey comfort one another with these words. Doctrine matters. This is the truth. This is what Paul taught.

There are so many people today who are not comforted by what's going on in the world because they don't know their Bible and they don't believe the doctrine in there. This is comforting. The worse the world gets the greater our comfort.

Do you realize that? The worse this world gets the greater our comfort as we look for our Lord's return. He's coming. He's coming. Just like God is going to supply our needs. Guess what? I lost my job.

[ 46 : 20 ] I didn't really. But if I did oh well God's going to supply my need. Then the greater my comfort because I'm even that much more thrown upon God and his ability and his limitless resources.

Right? Doctrine matters. And Paul is reminding these Ephesians remember take heed pay attention to what you've been taught.

Guys we will see one another again. We will. But until that day look out for the wolves look out for those who take advantage of you and stay faithful in the word. What's our only part in ministry?

Faithfulness. Just to be faithful. So Lord we want to do that. We want to be faithful to your word. We want to be faithful to the calling you've given us Lord. Lord no man takes fill in the blank in ministry or in the spirit unto himself.

We don't. That right there says we can't name it and claim it. That Lord it's you who decides to divide severally to every man as you will. Lord what is the gift that you want to give us?

[ 47 : 22 ] The gift is just the transportation of the truth. That I put the truth in there. I put the truth of God's love and God's grace. I put the gospel in this gift and I use that to transport it to whoever.

To the next person Lord. To bring edification exhortation and comfort. Lord we know the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. So Lord we want to be called by you.

Equipped by you. Enabled by you. And Lord for our part we want to be faithful. And Lord even in that that is all your grace. There is no faithfulness in this vessel apart from you Lord.

Lord you give us so much and then you require so little and then you reward us so much. So Lord come quickly where our hope is not that we will see wrath not that we will live forever in separation but our hope is the return of our Savior Jesus Christ.

And until that day Lord we're going to hold fast to the doctrine you've given us. We're going to love one another well and Lord we want to be like these men Lord who Paul called who can hear and receive this instruction and take it and pass it on to someone else who can be used to guard the flock Lord who can be used to love and care for that which you shed your blood for.

[ 48 : 39 ] We love you Jesus and it's your name we pray. Amen.