Final address to the elders in
Ephesus

[Text: Acts 20:13-38]

### Acts 20:13-17—Paul calls the Ephesian Elders

* Paul’s last words to the Ephesian elders. (vs 36-38).
* Only speech in the Acts which is addressed to an exclusively Christian audience.
* Paul did not invite the whole church for the meeting. He invited those who were the leaders addressed are all ‘elders’ (17), ‘pastors’ (28a) and ‘overseers’ (28b)

### Acts 20:18-21—Review of his ministry

In his speech he reminds the Ephesian elders of what they already know about his nearly three year ministry with them. (18b, 20, 34).

The other reason why he may have reviewed his ministry is they could duplicate such a ministry after he was gone.(35).

The below truths emerge as we carefully analyse his ministry.

* Paul’s ministry revolved around the ministry of the Word of God. The words Paul uses to describe his ministry are Preach, teach (vs 20), declare (vs 21), testify (vs24), preach(vs 25), proclaim (vs 27).
* The content of the word he ministered was ‘anything helpful’ (vs 20), ‘the good news of God’s grace’ (vs 24), the whole will of God (vs 27)
* The goal of his ministry was that those who heard him would turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus (vs.21).
* The audience to whom he ministered were Jews and Greeks (vs.21).
* The method of his ministry was to teach in public and privately from house to house (vs. 20).
* The term of his ministry was from the first day he met them and the whole time he was with them (vs 18).
* His attitude toward ministry was to serve the Lord with all humility and with tears. God was the one Paul sought to please, not men. Doing right in God’s sight would be above every other consideration. This applies to all men and not only for those in the ministry. (vs 19). Paul’s success was not based on his ministry methodology. His success flowed from his commitment to serving God. There was no credibility gap between the truth he proclaimed and the way he lived.

Paul’s review of his ministry in Ephesus omits any reference to the extraordinary miracles which God did through him in Acts 19:11-12. Compare with preachers today.

### Acts 20:22-27—His future suffering

In Acts 19:21, we have been told of Paul’s decision *“in the Spirit”* to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome. Here, Paul reveals that in every town prison and hardship await him. Subsequently Luke will present specific examples of the prophecies (21:4,10-11).

Paul’s overriding concern is not to survive at all costs, but rather that he may finish the race and complete his Christ-given task of bearing witness to the good news of God’s grace (24).

Paul is able to tell the elders that this parting will be final and his ministry to the Ephesians in now complete (26, 27)..

Paul’s declaration that he was innocent of the blood of all men is similar to *Ezekiel 33:7-9*

### Acts 20: 28—The church and the role of elders

Each of the three persons of the Trinity has a share in this oversight of God’s church.

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock.* Similar to what he wrote to Timothy *(1 Tim 4:12,16)* An elder must often examine his heart in the light of Scripture, confessing and repenting of all sin so that he grows in true godliness.

The second need for watchfulness is the wolves, that is, the false teachers who, Paul knows, will after his departure enter and devastate Christ’s flock (29). (Mt.7:15). So the shepherds of Christ’s flock have a double duty: to feed the sheep (by teaching the truth) and to protect them from wolves (by warning of error). As Paul wrote to Titus, He (the elder) must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (1:9). We live in a day of tolerance where good feelings take priority over sound doctrine. There are some core doctrines, where there can be no room for tolerance. (Jn. 10:12).

### Acts 20:29-31—Warning of the things to come

In 1 Timothy 1:19, 20 Paul is not just warning the ignorant or untaught. He is warning men he has personally admonished and taught for three years. Detecting wolves is not easy. (Matt. 7:15).

Paul goes on to predict something even more subtle and frightening than wolves; he warns that false teachers will arise from within the congregation! Peter says the same things Paul says: 2 Peter 2:1

These wolves are self-deceived teachers. They are self-appointed, agents of Satan. They will twist and distort God’s holy truth. They will not out-and-out deny the truth of God’s Word. They will mix truth with error, reinterpret the truth, using spiritual-sounding language. They will look and sound and seem harmless. (Jude 4).

Paul’s desire and pastoral prayer in the early sixties for believers in Ephesus (Eph. 1:18-23; 3:14-21). Twenty or thirty years later, the Lord Jesus writes to the church in Ephesus through the apostle John (Rev. 2:1-7). *You have forsaken your first love (vs 4).* Today the city of Ephesus lies in ruins, surrounded my minarets and mosques. It is evidence that the lamp stand was removed (Rev 2:5).

We must test everything (1 Thess. 5:21) and be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11).

### Acts 20:32-38—Farewell

After exhorting the Ephesian elders to be watchful both over the sheep and against the wolves, Paul commends them to God (32). He reminds them again of the example he has set them. They kneel and pray. Grieved that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.