



Paul, His Pastor's Conference in Miletus

Paul called a pastor's conference in Acts 20:17. The elders or pastors attended the conference in Miletus, 36 miles from Ephesus. In Acts 20:17, "elders" is πρεσβύτερος (presbuteros) and means a ranking admiral of the fleet, someone in authority.

"From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." (Acts 20:17, NASB)

Content of the Pastor's Conference

The worst audience in the world can be pastors in training. Like seminary men, they can be rude and overestimate their own understanding of the Word and Bible doctrine. In Acts 20:18, "had come to them" is the aorist middle indicative of παραγίνομαι (paraginomai) and means to be present, to come near, to approach. They came to the side of and placed themselves under his apostolic authority. He began to give his credentials. This is no problem for a mature believer.

"And when they had come to him, he said to them, 'You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,' (Acts 20:18, NASB)

In Acts 20:19; "serving the Lord" is the present active participle of δουλεύω (douleuō) and means to be a slave, to serve, to do service. "With all humility" is ταπεινοφροσύνη (tapeinophrosunē) and means these men had a spiritually mature grace mental attitude and were following the Lord's commands to the letter in implicit obedience. "Tears" refers to the disappointments of the ministry. Good training for the ministry is military service for about five years and to receive about five "Dear John" letters. After that, you will have no illusions about people.

"serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;" (Acts 20:19, NASB)

"Trials" refers to testing and passing them with divine viewpoint. Everyone has pressures but there are unique ones in the ministry. For example, Paul had religious legalistic pressures always from a dedicated band of persecutors who followed him around.

Paul held nothing back. He communicated everything he knew. Some ministers can do this in a couple of weeks. Everything he gave them was profitable. He taught Bible doctrine. He repeated it. In Acts 20:20, "declaring to you" is the aorist active infinitive of ἀναγγέλλω (anaggellō) and means to declare, to announce, to make known. "Teaching you publicly" is the aorist active infinitive of διδάσκω (didaskō) and means that he taught categorically and publicly by teaching Bible doctrine and evangelism. Paul taught house to house, church to church, edifying all who wanted to hear.

"how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house," (Acts 20:20, NASB)

In Acts 20:21, "solemnly testifying" is the present middle participle of διαμαρτύρομαι (diamarturomai) and means to earnestly testify, to charge, to attest, to solemnly affirm. Paul earnestly communicated the Gospel of Jesus Christ and seeking "repentance" or μετάνοια (metanoia) of positive unbelievers present. *Metanoia* means to change one's mind toward the Savior who paid for their sins on the Cross.

"solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21, NASB)



In Acts 20:22, we see an inkling of disaster. He was receiving hindrance of the Holy Spirit in going to Jerusalem, but Paul had rationalized a “Don’t go” into a “Yes, go.” “Not knowing” is the perfect active participle of εἶδω (eidō) and means to see, to perceive by any of the senses, to notice, to discern. This was a very difficult situation, very rare for Paul, but he always knew.

“And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,” (Acts 20:22, NASB)

The real Apostle Paul is described in 2 Corinthians 5:1, 2 Corinthians 5:5, and 2 Corinthians 5:8-9.

“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Corinthians 5:1, NASB)

“Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.” (2 Corinthians 5:5, NASB)

“we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:8-9, NASB)

In Acts 20:23, God the Holy Spirit was warning Paul of his wrong direction in going to Jerusalem. There are some principles of application for us here. A change in locale does not remove pressure. If you cannot cope with pressure in one locality, you cannot cope with pressure in another locality. You cannot run away from pressure. It is inside of you. Therefore, running away does not solve anything. A change in environment does not solve problems. All problems and pressures are resolved by knowing Bible doctrine and applying it to experience.

“except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.” (Acts 20:23, NASB)

In Acts 20:24-25, Paul thought he was going to die in Jerusalem. That inkling was wrong. This was not true. He would see them on his fourth missionary journey.

“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.” (Acts 20:24-25, NASB)

Paul’s Charge to Pastors

In Acts 20:26, “I am innocent” is an idiom indicating that Paul has done absolutely everything he could do to make them spiritually self-sustaining. He had discharged his responsibility.

“Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.” (Acts 20:26, NASB)

In Acts 20:27, “I did not shrink” is the negative plus the aorist middle indicative of ὑποστέλλω (hupostellō) and means to draw back, to let down, to lower, to withdraw as a timid person. Paul hadn’t held back the communication of Bible doctrine. “Declaring” is the aorist active infinitive of ἀναγγέλλω (anagellō) and means to declare, to announce, to make known, to report. “Whole purpose” is βουλή (boulē) and means divine purpose, decree, design. Paul spelled out the purpose of God’s plan.

“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.” (Acts 20:27, NASB)

In Acts 20:28, “Be on guard” is the present active imperative of προσέχω (prosechō) and means to face



yourselves objectively. “And for all the flock” refers to the pastor-teacher’s flock, the congregation God has provided for him to teach. “Shepherd the church of God” is the present active infinitive of ποιμαίνω (poimainō) and means to feed, to tend a flock, to keep sheep, to nourish.

“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.” (Acts 20:28, NASB)

In John 21:15-17 are our Lord’s three mandates for pastor-teachers; “Tend My lambs,” “Shepherd My sheep,” and “Tend My sheep.” All are present active imperatives, mandates. To teach you must have authority. Some sheep are very hard-headed and unless you have the authority over them they will never learn. In Acts 20:28, “which He has purchased with His own blood” refers to Jesus Christ who paid the purchase price of our redemption. He fulfilled the animal sacrifices. He went to the Cross and paid for the sins of mankind.

“So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.” (John 21:15-17, NASB)

In Acts 20:29, Paul warns of unbeliever false teachers that will appear and lead many astray. “I know” is the perfect active indicative of οἶδα (oida) and means to perceive, to know. This is used as a dramatic present. “Savage wolves” is βάρυς (barus) and signifies heavy, pressure types, obligators, bullies who are rapacious, vicious. This refers to an unsaved type of false teacher.

“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;” (Acts 20:29, NASB)

False teachers walk in their own lusts such as approbation lust - the desire to be recognized and to please people, power lust, and material lust - catering to the wealthy. 2 Peter 2:10.

“and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,” (2 Peter 2:10, NASB)

False teachers downgrade Divine Institution #4 - Nationalism. False teachers tend to be internationalists, ecumenical, and they downgrade the laws of divine establishment. They are presumptuous, brassy, daring, and cheeky. They are self-willed and stuck on self. Their will is dominated by their old sin nature and their emotions. False teachers speak evil and oppose God in the Angelic Conflict. Outwardly, they seem nice. They sell you first on their personality then you buy their message because they are nice.

In Acts 20:30, we have believer false teachers. Even though some of these pastors had been trained by Paul in the best seminary ever, some of them became hooked by false teachers. “Men will arise” is the future middle indicative of ἀνίστημι (anistēmi) and means to revolt against, to benefit themselves. This is shocking.

“and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” (Acts 20:30, NASB)

“Speaking perverse things” is the present active participle of λαλέω (laleō) plus the perfect passive participle of διαστρέφω (diastrephō) and means perverted, distorted, corrupted, that which opposes the



saving purposes and plans of God. False teachers place emphasis on study under them to get the true pitch. They have human personality emphasis, activity, programs, involvement, social action, and salesmanship Christianity.

“To draw away” is the present active infinitive of ἀποσπάω (apospaō) and means to wrench away with violence, to seduce because of their personality. They sell themselves. This can be a pastor with his wrong congregation.

In Acts 20:31, “Therefore be on the alert” is the present active imperative of γρηγορεύω (grēgoreuō) and means to be alert with regard to yourself. Every pastor must be constantly alert with regard to himself. He must be alert that he sticks to the teaching of the Word. Teach everything - “All the counsel of God.”

“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.” (Acts 20:31, NASB)

If we fail to regard ourselves from the standpoint of the Word of God, then we’ll slip into a system. “Remembering” is the present active participle of μνημονεύω (mnēmoneuō) and means to be mindful of, to remember, to call to mind what was taught. They must keep on remembering the Bible doctrine that was taught to them, not Paul’s energy or personality. There is nothing is more important than Bible doctrine in the right lobe of the soul.

“I did not cease” is the aorist middle indicative of παύω (pauō) and means to make to cease or desist, to restrain a thing or person from something. This will explain the tears later on. “Admonish each one” is the present active participle of νοουθετέω (noutheteō) and means to place in the mind. This is Bible doctrine being communicated and understood and transferred by the Holy Spirit into the left lobe of the soul. The pastor-teacher’s responsibility is to get biblical information into your mind. He can’t make them exercise faith belief in the doctrine taught.

In Acts 20:32, we have Paul’s deposits of Bible doctrine. “And now I commend you” refers to all pastors who were all believers. Pastors must be believers. This is not true in this country. “Commend” is the present middle indicative of παρατίθημι (paratithēmi) and means to make a deposit. Paul did it himself by studying and communicating. Paul deposited Bible doctrine with these pastors. These men needed Bible doctrine.

“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.” (Acts 20:32, NASB)

Every believer deposits his life with the Lord. In the spiritual life, God deposits Bible doctrine in our souls and empowers us. 2 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:14.

“For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12, NASB)

“Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.” (2 Timothy 1:14, NASB)

The believer deposits with the Lord their cares, problems, frustrations, heartaches, and pressures. 1 Peter 4:19; 1 Peter 5:7; Psalms 55:22.

“Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” (1 Peter 4:19, NASB)



“casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7, NASB)

“Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.” (Psalms 55:22, NASB)

The believer deposits the Gospel with unbelievers. The believer in their spiritual life also deposits Bible doctrine with other believers. In Acts 20:32, “word of His grace” means that all of their teaching must be compatible with grace. They must be grace oriented in all that they do. It is Bible doctrine that does the job. Never get your eyes on the personality of the pastor. You are to concentrate on the content of Bible doctrine. Rom. 1:14; 2 Tim. 2:2.

“I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.” (Romans 1:14, NASB)

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2, NASB)

In Acts 20:32, “which is able” is the present passive participle of δύναμαι (dunamai) and means to be capable, strong and powerful. “To build you up” is the aorist active infinitive of οἰκοδομέω (oikodomeō) and means to grow in wisdom, to mature you. This refers to the erection of the edification complex of the soul. “Give you the inheritance” is the sum total of God’s plan for you in this life. “Among all those who are sanctified” is the perfect passive participle of ἁγιάζω (hagiazō). The greatest thing God can do for you is to make you like His Son and He does it in three phases.

First there is Positional Sanctification where God the Holy Spirit places the believer into permanent union with Christ at salvation. This is also called Baptism of the Spirit. God does 40 things for you at the moment of salvation. See category on [The 40 Things Received at Salvation](#).

Secondly, there is Experiential Sanctification and the believer grows spiritually resulting in the building of their edification complex of the soul. Thirdly, we all receive Ultimate Sanctification when we receive our resurrection body at the Rapture of the Church.

Paul’s Motivation For Holding the Pastor’s Conference

Later on, the pastors will be grateful to the first one who gave them Bible doctrine. Paul had not set his desire for any man’s money. Paul had not lusted for the principle of wealth. He had not lusted for materialistic things like nice clothes. Acts 20:33.

“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes.” (Acts 20:33, NASB)

Paul did not cater to the wealthy people in the congregation. There are ministers who do. There are some pastors who watch the wealthy people in their churches who demand special attention and catering. When Paul walked into Ephesus, there were wealthy men in the congregation and he didn’t cater to them.

Sometimes pastors have a tendency to hob-nob with the wealthy. They hob-nob with those who have wealth and eventually get a hand-out from them. This is wrong. What is envy? “I wish I had a set of wheels like that!” That can be said half in jest. You can’t communicate and covet at the same time.

That doesn’t mean pastors have to be poor. Some say that the average income of a pastor should be on par with the people in the congregation. That is malarkey. A pastor’s income has nothing to do with the principle of giving.

We’ve spent a lot of time talking about Paul working and why he did. Originally, Paul was the president



of the seminary and in that position provided the doctrine to build the men up and also the money to sustain their basic needs. Paul worked and supported the seminary students. The principle here is that the local church ought to support the pastor-teacher so that they can focus exclusively on studying and teaching categorical Bible doctrine. Acts 20:34.

“You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.” (Acts 20:34, NASB)

In Acts 20:35, “In everything I showed you” means he has made an issue out of doctrine. He also taught them a principle of grace giving. “You must help” is ἀντιλαμβάνομαι (antilambanomai) and conveys the principle of grace support. You take your turn at bat in helping someone else.

“In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'” (Acts 20:35, NASB)

“The weak” are those in need of money because of tragedy. Our Lord had said earlier that “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Giving must express the principles of grace to be true giving. The principle of grace depends upon the character of the giver.

The believer is to give motivated solely by the *epignosis* Bible doctrine in their soul, not because the needy deserve it. Often the needs are in the opposite place of deserving, obnoxious. But deserving is not the issue in giving. The issue in giving is your stability of character and grace motivation.