

Title: What Should You Expect From a Pastor, Part 2

Text: Acts 20:22-38

Date: Oct 28, 2018 at FBCW

INTRO. Often, a person's final words can be meaningful, memorable, and forever etched on your heart. The Bible records a number of individuals' famous, final words:

Jacob (Heb 11:21 and Gen 49) → Patriarch of the Old Testament: *He rose out of bed, leaning on the top of his staff...blessed his sons...led the family in worship.*

David to Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-4) → Passing the baton of leadership: *I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, my son, and show yourself a man, keep your obligation to the Lord...*

Samson (Judges 16:28) → with his arms outstretched between the Temple Posts: *Lord God, strengthen me one more time...let me pay back the Philistines and die with them...*

The Repentant Thief on the Cross (Luke 23:42) → *We are being justly punished for what we did wrong, but this man has done no evil. Jesus, when you come into your Kingdom, remember me...*

Background of Acts 20:17. Last week we looked at the first part of this story. Bible teachers refer to this section as "Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders."

- Paul is traveling by ship across the Mediterranean, attempting to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost.
- As Paul is traveling, he makes a stop at the port city of Miletus.
- Paul calls for the Ephesian pastors (pastors from the Church at Ephesus) who are about 30 miles away.
- Paul had previously spent three years training and discipling these pastors.
- Ephesus had become a thriving church –
 - Starting with just 12 people who'd never even heard of the Holy Spirit.
 - To becoming a large church literally touching all of Asia (Acts 19:10).

At this important, final meeting →

- Paul is looking back at his ministry with these pastors.
- Paul is also looking ahead at their ministry and acknowledging that he will soon be gone.

We learned four big facts last week as it pertains to what you should expect from a Pastor:

- 1) The Pastor's role is important...but he's just one member of a larger team. The Church is what's most important.
 - a. Acts 20:17-18 speaks completely in plural language.
- 2) The Pastor's role is to lead the Church to serve the Lord with all her heart.

- a. We often focus on external appearances (numbers, human notions of success).
 - b. Paul's focus: humility, tears, endurance (Acts 20:19).
- 3) The Pastor must take advantage of every opportunity to preach the Word of God.
- a. *Paul taught publicly...from house to house...declared whole counsel of God* (Acts 20:20).
 - b. Paul believed the God can change anyone, anytime! That's why we preach.
 - c. What does a Pastor do? If nothing else, he preaches the Word!
- 4) The Pastor is compelled by God to fulfill his calling. He entrusts his future to God.
- a. Paul said – where I'm going and what it looks like will be hard (Acts 20:23).
 - b. My goal isn't an easy ministry...but a faithful, obedient ministry.

Today, let's look at the remaining portion (the second part) of Paul's farewell address in Acts 20:25-38.

Two more times now Paul makes reference to the fact when he was with the pastors in Ephesus that he (Paul) preached the Word of God.

- 20:25 → *I went about in Ephesus preaching the Kingdom of God...*
- 20:27 → *I did not avoid declaring to you the whole plan of God...*

This makes five times in this brief speech that Paul refers to the ministry of preaching the Word (vv 20, 21, 24, 25, 27).

Paul is really going to great lengths to demonstrate/remind these elders →

- Never lose confidence in the preaching of the Word.
- The central task of the pastor is to preach the Word!

V26. Paul stated to the elders: because I preached the Word to you, it's now up to you to decide how you are going to live (Acts 20:26).

- *Your blood is not on my hands.*
- *The responsibility of holy living is now on you.*
- You've been hearers of the Word...now it's time to become doers of the Word (James 1).

V28. Paul then moves to the real meat of the matter in Acts 20:28 – the pastor must be vigilant about guarding his own heart, and then he must also protect the heart of the church.

- For all CHRs, but especially pastors – this is the key – guard your heart! (Prov 4:23)

This is God's calling for pastors → 1) Pastor, guard your heart and 2) Pastor, guard the church!

Why must a pastor guard his heart and guard the church? (Acts 20:28)...

- If pastor isn't healthy...he can't help others. (ILLUS: airplane, get oxygen first...)
- Holy Spirit has appointed him (20:28) to this work.

- The church is so important to Jesus that he purchased it with his own blood.

TRUTH: Jesus Christ was perfectly innocent...yet he shed his blood...so that I can be forgiven (unpunished). What a message → we cherish this message!

V29. The reason we must be vigilant (Acts 20:29) – Satan is raising up savage wolves to destroy the church.

- V29; Wolves = intent upon tearing up what God has built (ILLUS: Zeke, me, coyotes off Galway Drive).
- V30; Men will rise up from among us to destroy us = elements of truth, but not full truth.
 - ILLUS: Judas Iscariot; Paul in 2 Tim 4:3, *itching ear teachers*...
- V31; be on the alert. Be vigilant! Be a night watchman!
 - Intensity of language: Night...day...tears...be alert!

Q: How can we spot these false teachers who undermine the church and lead us astray?

- Do they teach the Bible?
- Do they clearly exalt Christ?
- Are they edifying the church? (Deepening, strengthening the Gospel message).

V32. But Paul says, *“I am committing you to God’s gracious care...God is able to strengthen you and give you an inheritance the wolves can never take away.”*

FACT: There are many pressures facing ministers/shepherds:

- Weight of the responsibility.
- The attacks of the wolves.

FACT: It can feel overwhelming at times → *“I can’t do it...”* the pastor thinks to himself.

- This is correct.
- This is why Paul surrenders the pastoral team to God.
 - God is their strength (v 32). *God builds them up.*
 - God guards the result (v 32). *God gives you an inheritance.*

V33. In the last part of the story, Paul reminds them of the appropriate behavior expected from the pastors as they live among the people.

- Not coveting silver or gold (v 33).
- Work with your own hands: don’t gripe, complain, or be needy (v 34).
- Be an example of generosity: more blessed to give than receive (v 35).

Summary statement – Paul taught the pastors that the essence of shepherding is trusting in God as you guard your heart and protect the flock.

Personal for JM at FBCW → before I preach to you → I wanted to preach to myself in front of you.

- I want you to hear what the Bible says about pastoring.

- I want it to be true of me in the name of Jesus.
- I will never ask you to do something, by God's grace, I'm not actively seeking myself.
 - Three big jobs: my heart...my family...this congregation.

Big Idea. What is the Bible's instruction for a pastor? A pastor trusts in God as he guards his own heart and faithfully cares for the Lord's church.

- I'm trusting in God...I'm preaching to myself...I'm committed to helping you!

First, how does a pastor trust in God?

A) He preaches the Word (v 25, v 27).

- Kingdom rule (God is sovereign King over everything).
- God's Kingdom means = God's authority to set up a new order for the world.
- Whole plan of God (Popular Bible teaching...not so popular Bible teaching).

Every week when I stand up and preach the Bible as the Word of God – I am trusting in God.

- I can't change any of you...
- But I can preach the Bible...
- The Bible can change all of you!

B) Compelling sense of being called by God (v 28).

- Holy Spirit appointed "me" for this.
- A pastor must (compelled) do this.

C) Pastors know that God is our (v 33):

- God is our strength.
 - I don't do this in my own strength.
- God is our reward.
 - I don't do this for earthly applause.

Second, how does a pastor guard his own heart?

A) Previously Paul has said about pastor/shepherds:

- a. Serve with humility (v 19).
 - i. Jesus is the Big Deal.
 - ii. The day I think I'm a big deal...yikes.
- b. Pastors must have one big vision for their life (v 24):
 - i. Finish their course.
 - ii. The value of their lives is in their obedience to God.

B) Pastors must be careful what he allows into his heart.

- a. Language: guard (v 28) and be alert (v 31).
 - b. Safeguards: Bible...prayer...close with my wife...close with godly men.
- C) Pastors shouldn't covet material things (v 33).
- a. Be willing to preach truth even if it's troubling for rich/affluent people.
 - b. Pastor's job: focus more on people's hearts/souls...less on their possessions.
- D) Pastors stay busy, work hard – idle hands cause problems (v 34).

Third, how does a pastor care for the church?

- A) Pastor stays mindful of the wolves (v 29).
- a. I must constantly warn you when the wolves get close...
 - b. Once the wolf pounces, it's too late!
- B) Modern wolves – busyness...comparison trap (social media)...successful in the things that don't matter...self-reliance.
- C) Pastors don't let anyone distort/undermine the Word of God (v 30).
- a. “Wolf in sheep's clothing” – comes from within the flock (Matt 7:15).

Question: How can you spot a false teacher?

Answer: Anyone who puts more attention on self than on Christ.

Question: What is a real, faithful pastor?

Answer: Pushes you to know, love, fear, and serve Christ with all your heart.

- D) Pastors care for the church with their whole heart; *shedding tears* (v 31).
- a. Pastors don't view their work as a hireling or a job.
 - b. Pastors know eternity is at stake.
 - c. Pastors know people matter to God!

Twice now Paul has mentioned “tears” in the church's ministry (v 19) (v 31).

They will cry when Paul tells them he is leaving (v 37).

FACT: you can be emotional without being spiritual...but you can't be spiritual without being emotional at times.

- When I think about my Lord...the cross...His grace...heaven/hell.
- I can't help but get emotional!

Fourthly, why does pastoring faithfully matter so much? Because it's the Lord's church, purchased by His own blood (v 28).

Question: if Jesus gave the most costly, precious gift of all time – Christ’s blood – how can I view the church casually, as if it’s no big deal?

Jesus is the reason I plan to:

- Pray...give...study...invite...love...walk in fear...be humble...be intentional...faithful, etc.

CONCL: This story is about Paul’s last words, final words, his most important words – to the Ephesian pastors.

- Something powerful about last words!
- Paul’s final words drove the rest of the pastor’s lives!
 - I imagine them as old men...*remember what Paul told us?*
 - JM often thinks, “*Remember what Brother Rastus told me...?*”

FBCW, what were Jesus last words?

Matt 28:19, *All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. God, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...*

Acts 1:8, *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

This is for ALL of us → Christ’s final words...should be very important words...so that the first words I’ll hear when I walk through the pearly gates will be:

- “*Well done, Pastor Jeremy Morton...you have fought hard, you have finished well, come get your crown...*”

****Even more important than my commitment to be faithful as a pastor is → God most surely will be faithful in His commitment to all of us!

- I will fail at times.
- Christ never fails!