

Portrait Of A Pastor – Part 1

Acts 20:13-21

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One of the hardest things for many of us to do, we've all experienced in life, is say, "Goodbye." Isn't it hard saying goodbye to people you love? Maybe it's a trip of a few days, maybe you're going to be gone for a few months, or maybe you had to go into the military and had to say goodbye to a loved one for a long time. One of the most difficult times for me wasn't that long ago. It was about six years ago, actually this month, when after 39 years I had to say goodbye to the church that as a very young man I was the founding pastor of. It started in my living room and grew into a church. I'll never forget how difficult it was to wake up that Sunday morning, to stand in the pulpit of that church, to look these precious people in the face and tell them that God was calling me to go to another church, to another ministry, and all the tears that were shed—mine and the congregation. I would actually say that in now 45 years of ministry, it was the most difficult thing that I ever did; that is, saying goodbye.

I'm thankful that God has called me here, and God's doing an awesome work. This is our home, and I'm blessed to be here, but you never know what, if the Lord tarries, that day may come—don't freak out. I'm not announcing my departure, okay?—You never know, if the Lord tarries, I won't be here forever. You won't be here forever. The day may come when I will give my farewell speech or say goodbye.

This passage is commonly called: The Farewell of Paul to the Ephesian Elders. That's a long title, but that's what it's most commonly called—Paul's Farewell to the Elders of Ephesus. I want you to look at the setting for it in verses 13-16. Paul is going back to Jerusalem on this third missionary journey (we pick it up in verse 13 with a "we" section), so Luke is traveling with him. "And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot," but notice in verse 14 he says, "And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. 15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."

Paul is dead-set on getting back to Jerusalem. He first wanted to get there for Passover, and that's come and gone. He didn't get there in time, but 50 days after Passover is the Feast of Pentecost. Now, he's bound and determined, he's set his face like flint and, "I'm on my way home, and I want to get back." Paul has been in the area of Corinth, and he's going to go back up to the area of Philippi. (Referring to map) You see Macedonia and Philippi up on the left. The northern area of Greece is Macedonia, southern Greece, Achaia, down in Corinth. They actually took a boat and traveled back up to Philippi. At the top corner up there is the Aegean Sea. You can see they went across the sea to Troas, then through Assos, to Mitylene, then by the little island of Chios. They're sailing down the coast, the west coast of Turkey. They come

to this little spot called Miletus, and north of it is Ephesus.

This meeting we're going to read about takes place in Miletus, twenty miles south of Ephesus. Then he's going to sail back to Israel and go back to the church of Jerusalem where he'll be arrested. His fourth journey is going to be as a prisoner in chains sent back to Rome. (You can take down the map now.) That's what he's describing in verses 13-16. Then, they land in the area of Miletus. There he calls to Ephesus and the pastors come from Ephesus and meet with him. He doesn't want to go into Ephesus. He wants to meet outside of Ephesus. He wants to be in a hurry. He doesn't want to spend a lot of time. He might've spent maybe a couple of days there, but it would've taken longer to go into Ephesus. He's out of the hustle and bustle of the big city in a quiet little spot, probably a beautiful picturesque spot. I've been to this location, and when you go today into Ephesus...the first time I went I was looking at the coastline, looking at the little coves, checking out the little beach area, and I was trying to imagine this group of pastors meeting on this beach with Paul who was saying to them his last goodbye.

I want you to note in verse 17, who Paul was meeting with. It says, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." We're going to discover some different terms that are used for "pastors." There's a lot of confusion today in the church as to what is an elder? What is a pastor? What is a bishop or an overseer? Are they one in the same people? What do those terms mean and what are their significance? So, he calls for the elders of the church.

The word "elder" in the Greek is presbyteros. We get our word "presbyterian" from that. We've heard of the Presbyterians. Well, they get that from this word "elders." They have, as far as the government in their church is concerned, kind of an elder rule form of church government. It speaks or conveys the idea of the pastor's maturity. By the way, this is a reference to pastors, and I'll show you that in just a moment. When we read about elders in the New Testament, we're actually talking about spiritual leaders in the church. Sometimes we differentiate a pastor from an elder, but the terms are synonymous—they are one in the same. Paul is meeting with these pastors, these presbyteros, and that conveys the idea that they're to be mature men. I'm going to show you in just a moment that I do believe that a pastor or an elder should be a man.

Secondly, notice as you jump down (we'll get it next week in verse 28) he says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you," here's the second word I want to bring to your attention, "overseers." First they are called elders, now they're called overseers. The word "overseers" is the Greek word episkopos, where we get our word "episcopalian." It has the idea of a bishop. Sometimes the word episkopos is translated bishop. The thing that's conveyed in this term or title for the same individual, the pastor, is the idea that they oversee or they have the oversight of the church. The pastor doesn't just stand in the pulpit and preach the Word, that's one of his primary responsibilities, but he also oversees. He's an episkopos; he's the overseer. He oversees the whole life and ministry of the church.

Thirdly, another word to take note of in verse 28 (again, it will be our text next week) is the word

“feed.” He says, “over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God.” The very word translated “feed” there is the word that we translate “pastor.” He uses three terms for the same individual. He uses this term “elder,” which speaks of his maturity. He uses the word “overseer,” which speaks of his ministry; and then he uses the word “feed” or pastor, which speaks of his function, that he is to shepherd the flock of God.

The word “pastor” is latin and has the idea of feeding. The word literally itself conveys the idea of feeding, but we know that the word “shepherd” or “pastor” (and pastor and shepherd are the same word) has the idea of not only feeding the sheep, but leading, protecting, watching over, and taking care of the sheep. So, if you are a shepherd, you love, take care of, protect, feed, and lead your sheep. By the way, you don’t drive the sheep, you lead the sheep. The shepherd goes before and the sheep follow. You drive livestock, but you don’t drive sheep.

These are the terms that I wanted you to be familiar with, but we use most commonly the term “pastor” which conveys the idea that they are to be teaching God’s Word. What they are to feed the sheep is the Word of God. That’s so simple, but so lost in our churches today. The pastor’s number one job, and I make no apologies to say this, is to teach the Bible—nothing more, nothing less. He’s not to go to potlucks, and I try to do my best to socialize and get involved with the dinner fellowships. If I went to every dinner fellowship, I’d never be able to preach. I’d be so full of food, and I’d be so busy. He’s not necessarily to go to the hospital, and I try to do that. It’s not necessarily to do weddings or funerals, and I do that. It’s not necessarily to do counseling. It is to preach, to herald, the Word. We’re going to see that in Paul’s ministry as we see Paul describe what it means to be a pastor. To be a pastor is to feed, and to feed is to teach the Word of God.

The qualifications (and I know I’m taking my time. We may take three weeks on this passage) for these elders, bishops, or pastors are given in two primary places of the New Testament: 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Let’s turn there. Hold your place here in the book of Acts and turn with me to 1 Timothy 3. I just want to try not to make too many comments but read verses 1-7. The focus for the qualifications for an elder, pastor, bishop, overseer are not so much as function and job but as character. He’s got to be a man of character. Start with me in verse 1. “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” That “bishop” is the overseer, the episcopal, the overseer of the work, the pastor. If he desires that, he desires a good work.

Now, without getting sidetracked, I want you to note that it’s a man desires the office of a bishop. We’re going to see it tonight as we break into Paul’s ministry and he describes it, that Paul without a fear of the consequence of sharing the truth, shared the truth. I don’t worry about what the culture is saying. I don’t really even worry about whether or not you agree with me or get mad at me or like what I’m going to say; but I see no support in the Bible for a woman being a pastor—none. I don’t see any support. It doesn’t mean she can’t serve the Lord. It doesn’t mean she can’t share God’s Word. It doesn’t mean she can’t be involved in ministry. It doesn’t mean she can’t be used by God, but it is an office in the church. As a matter of fact, there are only two offices in the church: the office of pastor, who is also called an elder, bishop,

or overseer, and the office of deacon. The word is diakonos. It means a servant, and they deal more with the manual, physical things of the church. They're serving, cleaning, sweeping up, ushering, helping around the church, serving the Lord. The church can't function without deacons, and there are women who deacon. I don't believe that there's an official office of a deaconess (the Bible is full of deaconess in the feminine), but there are no qualifications for the office of a deaconess.

In our churches today, in modern Christianity, we find women who are ordained to the ministry and preaching. We have pastors whose wives are called pastors. My wife is not Pastor Kristy, okay? She doesn't want to be called Pastor Kristy. She doesn't want to preach for me on Sunday. She's first and foremost my wife and a woman who can minister to other women, but I would never throw her into this responsibility of putting her in the pulpit to preach the Word of God to this congregation. It's very clear in the Bible that in the marriage relationship the man is the head of the woman, and the wife is to submit to her husband. So, how would that work if we brought it into the church and had women pastors, and when they get to the church the wives are the leaders and the men had to submit to them? If you had a wife that was a pastor, at home, you're the leader; but when you come to church, now your wife takes the leadership. That kind of breaks what the Bible really teaches, but in all the qualification passages (this included with Titus), it's always in the masculine, "If he," if a man, "desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

Verse 2, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband," again, this is a male, "of one wife," he should be, "vigilant, sober, of good behaviour," it's a good idea that he's in good behavior, "given to hospitality," it means loving strangers, "apt to teach," which means he has an ability to teach, "Not given to wine," it's a good idea if the pastor isn't getting drunk all the time, okay? Literally, in the Greek that means doesn't tarry long at wine. He's "no striker," not getting in fights with people all the time, "not greedy of filthy lucre," he doesn't do it for money, "but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Notice verse 6. He's "Not a novice," that phrase is newly planted or a new convert, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." I just wanted to read that to you. Mark it, and also write down Titus 1:5-9, where you also have the qualifications for a pastor, elder, or bishop; and they coincide with what we read there in Timothy. Turn back with me in your Bibles, and we'll stay here the rest of our time, to Acts 20.

Now, notice in verse 18 Luke says, "And when they were come to him," that is, the elders came to meet Paul on the beach at Miletus, "he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." Paul says, "You guys all know that when I first came here to share God's Word with you, you know how I lived, you know how I conducted myself, you know how I acted," so Paul did not isolate himself from the people. He lived among the people. I don't believe that a pastor should live up in an ivory tower and just descend on Sundays to be the oracle of God and then ascend back to his place during

the week and no one sees him, no one can touch him, no one can talk to him, that he kind of just descends back into heaven and comes down to earth, you know. I'm like you. You're going to see me at the grocery store. You're going to see me around town. You're going to see me out in my front yard. I have nothing to hide. I can't go anywhere in this community without people knowing who I am.

By the way, if you're working in a store and I come in to do something, reveal yourself to me, okay? Don't let me start getting mad because you're not giving me the right service. You say, "Oh, by the way, I go to your church." "Ohhhhhh." I've gone into Lowe's or Home Depot and bought something in a big hurry, and then after they help me they say, "Oh, by the way, Pastor John, I go to Revival." Wow, I'm glad I didn't yell at this person. My wife is always reminding me, too, "John, be on your best behavior. People are watching." If the Holy Spirit doesn't keep me in line, she keeps me in line, right? Paul says, "You know, you've seen me, you've watched me. I've lived among you for these years," and Paul was there in Ephesus for three years, the longest stay that Paul ever had in any one place.

This farewell message has three divisions. I'm going to give them to you, and then we'll take two weeks to look at them. The first section is verses 18-21, Paul's past ministry; the second division is verses 22-27, Paul's present ministry philosophy (I'm going to talk about philosophy of ministry. It's very important); thirdly, Paul's warning, we get it next Wednesday, about the future, verses 28-38. Let's look first of all at this first division, verses 18-21, Paul's past ministry. He says, "...after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: 20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

In this section that we just read, Paul is talking mainly about his ministry that took place in the past among the believers and the pastors there in Ephesus. I want to give you the qualities of a true pastor. I want to look first at his motive. Look at verse 19. Write it down. "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews." Here's his motive: serving the Lord. You might say, "Okay, so what?" That seems very basic and very elementary, but we've lost that in the church today. A minister, a pastor, is serving the Lord. Now, we serve people by serving the Lord, but our primary focus is service to God. This applies to every Christian. I'm not the only one in this church that is to be serving the Lord. You're to be serving the Lord. We're all to be serving the Lord. No matter what your occupation or profession, you are to be a servant of the Lord. Maybe you're a used car salesman, you are serving the Lord. We'll pray for you, by the way, that you try to serve the Lord as you sell those used cars, but you're doing your service to the Lord. You're serving God. This is the motive that we should have for ministry.

Pastoral ministry especially is not a self-appointment. It's a calling from God. It's a divine appointment, a divine call. No man should be in pastoral ministry who does not have a divine call from God. You don't just say, "Well, it seems like a nice job, you work one hour of the week

and just goof off the rest of the week,” and “You know it’s a respectable job. It’s an easy job. It’s a cushy job. You don’t have to get your hands dirty. You know, it’s a really nice job, so I think I’ll become a pastor.” No. You only go into the ministry because you can’t do anything else. You’re laughing. It’s not what you think. That came out wrong. It’s not because you can’t do anything else, it’s because you are so consumed with your passion and your call to preach the gospel that you can’t do anything else. You got that? It’s kind of funny, though. I have to admit, I was called at a very young age. I did construction and odd jobs. I’ve never had any kind of profession other than...the way that I made money before I went into ministry was, believe it or not, I made surfboards. I actually made and sold surfboards, and that was my passion. That’s where I was headed, and that’s what I wanted to do. I knew God had called me to preach the Word, and I discovered that as I began to share the Word and God began to use my preaching and people began to come and get saved. It was kind of like all of the sudden I realized, This is my calling! and I couldn’t get away from it. There’d been those times over the years that I’ve been discouraged or wanted to give up and go back to doing what I’ve done before, but I have to be obedient to God. I can’t do anything but follow the call of God upon my life, so you don’t self-appoint yourself. You need to be called by God.

You are not motivated for money. When Peter writes to pastors he said, “...taking the oversight thereof...not for filthy lucre,” sake. No man should ever go into ministry for money, not that there’s money in the ministry, there can be and it’s a danger. It’s one of the pitfalls of ministry, that they become motivated for money, and that becomes their focus. Jump down to verse 33, and we’ll get it again next Wednesday night, Paul says, “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.” When he’s speaking to these elders he says, “I didn’t covet your gold, your silver, or your apparel.” I mean, put that in the mouth of some televangelists today. There’s one guy on the television, whenever I flip by Christian television, every time he shows up on the screen he’s asking for money. He’s always asking for money to stay on the air so he can ask for money. “Send me your money so I can stay on the air to ask for money.” That makes a lot of sense, doesn’t it? Preach the gospel, and I’ll send you some money. I’m not going to send you money so you can stay on the air to ask for money. When God guides, God provides, but the motive (we’re talking about the motive), you never go into ministry with a motive that I’m going to get rich or make money or I’m going to do it because it’s a cushy job and I get paid for it. You do it for God’s glory, that’s your motive.

Secondly, I want you to notice his manner (verse 19). We move from his motive to his manner. Notice first of all in verse 18 the little phrase, “after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,” I was living my life among you. I want you to notice (verse 19) he says, “Serving the Lord,” and the second statement he makes, “with all humility of mind, and with many tears,” so his motive is serving the Lord, his manner is humility. A pastor is not a celebrity. A pastor is to have humility. I was talking to a group of eighth graders about a week ago. We had a Q&A time after my little talk with them. I guess I used the word “humility” in my talking, and it almost shocked me when one girl raised her hand and asked, “What is humility?” I thought, Your an eighth grader and you don’t know what humility is. That’s pretty sad. I tried to explain humility. Humility is basically you just don’t think about yourself. You’re not doing it for yourself. You’re concerned for others. You don’t have high self-esteem, you don’t have low self-esteem, you just

don't esteem yourself. It's not about you, it's about others. A person that is humble is a person that thinks of others.

Jesus was humble. He washed the disciples feet (John 13), but there's a danger in ministry that a man would be lifted up with pride. When Billy Graham talked to a group of ministers he said that there were three things you need to be aware of and wary: that you don't touch the money, that you don't have pride, and that you don't stumble because of women or the opposite sex. That's what happens so often in the ministry today. It's either pride, money, or sexual immorality where a man falls. He was warning pastors to take heed in these areas, and Paul is saying that you shouldn't have pride. We just read in the qualifications in Timothy, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

What was the devil's great sin? Pride. "I want to be like the Most High. I want to exalt myself above the throne of God. I will be lifted up above God," and God had to kick him out of heaven. One of the dangers of ministry is pride, "Look what I'm doing. Look how wonderful I am. Look at all the people that are being blessed. Look at the people that are being saved." You can be so puffed up with pride thinking that you are someone special. You know when you preach the Word and people are blessed by the Word, they do sometimes say, "Oh, Pastor Miller, you're wonderful," or "I love your preaching," or "That was a great sermon." I remember when I first started to preach, (in preparation for tonight, I flashed back to that so many years ago) and people were coming to hear me teach the Word and people starting responding, "Oh, that was awesome!" or "That was wonderful," or "Thank you for the teaching." I remember so clearly that I had to reconcile that or realize that it was a gift God gave to me and God was to get the glory and it wasn't really me. I had to realize that I don't want to take that to heart. I don't want to let that stick, so it's taken years, but I've gotten used to people saying, "Oh, that was a wonderful sermon," and I appreciate that, but I don't really want to believe it or hang onto that, okay? I'm not saying you can't tell me that (you can tell me that. It's okay), I just want to understand that the minute it comes to me, I turn it right back over to Jesus, that I give it right back to God. My prayer, when I'm preaching all the time is, "Hide me behind the Cross."

I learned a little poem years ago and I never forgot,

When telling Thy salvation free,

Let all-absorbing thoughts of Thee

My mind and soul engross;

And when all hearts are bowed and stirred,

Beneath the influence of Thy word,

Hide me behind the cross.

I love that! To realize that I'm just an instrument being used by God, not to allow yourself to get

puffed up or a big head.

The story is told of a young minister fresh out of seminary and all of his Hebrew, Greek, and his learning. Evidently, he seemed to think that he really had a gift of oratory—he was God's gift to man. He took over this new congregation. It was his first church and his first Sunday. He kind of strutted up in the pulpit very proud like, These people are going to be so impressed with my knowledge and learning. He got into the pulpit and started to preach. In just a few minutes into his sermon his mind went blank. It just completely went out, and he forgot what his thoughts were. He started to cry. He burst into tears and ran down off the platform. As he was running down off the platform, a dear, elderly saint in the front row said to a friend next to her, "If he would've gone up the way he went down, he would've went down the way he went up." Did you get that? If he would've gone up in humility and tears, then he would've came down with a different attitude. The Bible says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

One of the most important things when you are used by God is to pray, "God, keep me humble so that I can be usable." That's the reason God gave Paul a thorn in his flesh—a messenger of satan to buffet him—lest he be exalted above measure. He said, "...through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." I've found over the years that God knows how to keep us humble. He knows just when to pull the rug out from under us. He knows when to pull the props and to realize that we're nothing without Him. The motive is serving the Lord, and the manner is that we do it in all humility. Notice also in verse 19, "...with many tears." It's not that Paul was emotional. You know, some preachers cry all the time, and that's okay if that's what you are and what you do. There's a time for that kind of thing, but Paul's talking about empathy. Paul's talking about caring and feeling the people's needs. He spoke to them on a level where he was speaking with compassion.

Thirdly, I want to move to the method and his message. Notice verses 20-21, He says, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." I want you to notice this. Look at your Bible, verse 20, "I kept back nothing that was profitable," that was Paul's method and message. He had no fear of man. He kept back nothing. There are a lot of preachers today that don't want to preach on hell or don't want to preach on sin or they don't want to preach on divorce because someone may be offended. I realize that. In teaching the Word, I come to topics that I know are going to hit people right between the eyes or it's going to hit them right where they're at. It's going to be difficult or hard for them, and there could be a temptation to jump over, avoid, or water it down because I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, ruffle any feathers, or I don't want anyone to get upset; but we're going to see in a moment that a minister is a steward, and a steward is to be found faithful. I'm not going to answer to you when I get to heaven for my preaching. I'm going to answer to God, so I'm preaching to be faithful to God, not to tickle people's fancy or tell them what they want to hear. If I'm faithfully preaching what God says in His Word, and you don't like it or it convicts you of your sin, then take it up with

God. I'm just the delivery boy. Don't shoot the delivery boy. I'm just telling you what God says.

The danger today, and a lot of younger pastors that I see coming up today, is that for pragmatic reasons they water down the truth of God's Word. They want the message to be palatable, popular, and contemporary. They don't want to stand on God's Word, so they don't deliver the whole counsel of God. Paul said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." We're going to get to it in just a moment, if we move along (verse 27), "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," so he kept back nothing. He didn't pick and choose what he wanted to preach on. He didn't pick and choose, but he was balanced in his preaching. You need to watch out, too, for pastors that have a hobbyhorse—all they ever preach about is End Times. I believe the Lord's coming again, and I believe that we can understand the book of Revelation. I believe in the rapture, the Second Coming, and the Tribulation; but there's a lot of other things in the Bible, I believe, that we need to study. They focus on one area, or spiritual warfare, health and wealth, financial giving, and they won't teach the whole counsel of God. Paul says, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you," or that was for your profit or for your value.

In verse 20 Paul says, "...but have shewed you," that is, by his living example, so a pastor is not only to preach the Bible, but he has to live the Bible. It doesn't do any good if I just teach the Word of God, if I don't live it in my own life. Notice also in verse 20, "...and have taught you publicly, and from house to house," or privately. He taught in a formal setting, and he taught in an informal setting. The fact that he's teaching them indicates that he's teaching them the Scriptures; so a pastor or an elder, bishop, overseer, must study the Bible and know the Bible in order to communicate the Bible.

Notice verse 21, Paul ministered to all. He says, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks," or Gentiles, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." He preached to Jews and also to Gentiles. I want you to notice his message (verse 21). We're going to stop short of what I wanted to cover tonight because I don't want to rush through this text. I was trying to get to verse 27, but we'll get to it next week. I want you to notice what he preached, "...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." That kind of summarizes the emphasis of Paul's preaching. It wasn't all that Paul preached, but it was the meat and potatoes of Paul's preaching—that you have to repent.

The word is metanoia. It means to change your mind. It also involves a change of direction. "Repentance is to leave, / The sins we loved before, / And show that we in earnest grieve, / By doing so no more." What happens is that you do a 180. You're walking this way, you turn, and you turn the other direction and follow Christ. You're following your sin, your pleasures, your sinful lusts. You're following the way of the world, and when you become a Christian, you turn and go the opposite direction. You're living in darkness, now you're living in light. If you haven't turned from your sin, then the question is: Are you really converted? Were you really ever born again? Were you ever really saved? This is why as you're living in sin you can't just say, "Well, I'm going to try Jesus. I'm just going to check out Christianity." No. You have to see yourself a sinner, change your mind—which changes your heart and attitude—you turn around and follow

God. Paul was preaching that. He was teaching repentance toward God. The fact that this repentance is toward God indicates that it is the result of godly sorrow, not just earthly remorse, “I’m sorry I got caught,” but you’re actually sorry toward God, and you want to get right with God.

Paul was also preaching, “...faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” so Paul was preaching turn from your sin and put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Any pastor, any elder, any overseer or bishop that’s worth his salt preaches repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. That’s the meat and potatoes of their preaching. It’s not enough to just say, “You know, God loves you, and you’re okay. God wants you to have a nice car, be healthy, and want’s to make you happy, and wants to bless your marriage,” and everybody claps. “Whoa! Yes! Preach it, Brother! Whoa! That’s exciting!” and everything’s hunky-dory and, “Isn’t God good!” Yes! God is good, but He’s also holy. He’s also righteous. We’re not saved by our good works or by our good deeds.

Paul’s going to go on to talk about the preaching of the gospel of God’s grace, and I want you to know how hard it is for me to stop here right now, okay? It’s very difficult because these are some of my favorite verses in all the Bible. This farewell message gets better as it goes. It just starts to snowball. It just builds and builds until they’re all hugging and crying on the beach, and I can’t read this passage without crying myself as Paul opens his heart wide to these people among whom he’d gone to minister. One of the reasons why they wept and cried so much was because Paul had told them and they knew that this was the last time they would ever see his face on planet earth. He brought the good news to them. He brought the message of salvation to them, and their lives have been changed. They loved Paul with all their heart, but they would never see Paul again. He would never come to visit them again, so they’re crying and weeping.

My conclusion tonight was at the end of verse 27, so what I’m going to do right now is just close in prayer—you have to come back next Wednesday night, okay?