

CHAPTER 20

In this chapter we have,

- I.** Paul's travels up and down about Macedonia, Greece, and Asia, and his coming at length to Troas (v. 1-6).
- II.** A particular account of his spending one Lord's day at Troas, and his raising Eutychus to life there (v. 7-12).
- III.** His progress, or circuit, for the visiting of the churches he had planted, in his way towards Jerusalem, where he designed to be by the next feast of pentecost (v. 13-16).
- IV.** The farewell sermon he preached to the presbyters at Ephesus, now that he was leaving that country (v. 17-35).
- V.** The very sorrowful parting between him and them (v. 36-38). And in all these we find Paul very busy to serve Christ, and to do good to the souls of men, not only in the conversion of heathen, but in the edification of Christians.

~~401~~ ACTS 20:1-6

PAUL'S DEPARTURE FROM EPHESUS

These travels of Paul which are thus briefly related, if all in them had been recorded that was memorable and worthy to be written in letters of gold, *the world would not contain the books that would have been written*; and therefore we have only some general hints of occurrences, which therefore ought to be the more precious. Here is,

I. Paul's departure from Ephesus. He had tarried there longer than he had done at any one place since he had been ordained to the apostleship of the Gentiles; and now it was time to think of removing, for he must *preach in other cities also*; but after this, to the end of the scripture-history of his life (which is all we can depend upon), we never find him breaking up fresh ground again, nor preaching *the gospel where Christ had not been named*, as hitherto he had done (~~450~~ Romans 15:20), for in the close of the next

chapter we find him made a prisoner, and so continued, and so left, at the end of this book.

1. Paul left Ephesus soon after the uproar had ceased, looking upon the disturbance he met with there to be an indication of Providence to him not to stay there any longer, v. 1. His removal might somewhat appease the rage of his adversaries, and gain better quarter for the Christians there. *Currenti cede furori* — *It is good to lie by in a storm.* Yet some think that before he now left Ephesus he wrote *the first epistle to the Corinthians*, and that his *fighting with beasts at Ephesus*, which he mentions in that epistle, was a figurative description of this uproar; but I rather take that literally.

2. He did not leave them abruptly and in a fright, but took leave of them solemnly: *He called unto him the disciples*, the principal persons of the congregation, *and embraced them, took leave of them* (saith the Syriac) *with the kiss of love*, according to the usage of the primitive church. Loving friends know not how well they love one another till they come to part, and then it appears how near they lay to one another's hearts.

II. His visitation of the Greek churches, which he had planted, and more than once watered, and which appear to have laid very near his heart.

1. He went first *to Macedonia* (v. 1), according to his purpose before the uproar (~~482~~Acts 19:21); there he visited the churches of Philippi and Thessalonica, and *gave them much exhortation*, v. 2. Paul's visits to his friends were preaching visits, and his preaching was large and copious: *He gave them much exhortation*; he had a great deal to say to them, and did not stint himself in time; he exhorted them to many duties, in many cases, and (as some read it) *with many reasonings*. He enforced his exhortation with a great variety of motives and arguments.

2. He staid *three months in Greece* (v. 2, 3), that is, *in Achaia*, as some think, for thither also he purposed to go, to Corinth, and thereabouts (~~482~~Acts 19:21), and, no doubt, there also he gave the disciples much exhortation, to direct and confirm them, and engage them to cleave to the Lord.

III. The altering of his measures; for we cannot always stand to our purposes. Accidents unforeseen put us upon new counsels, which oblige us to purpose with a proviso.

1. *Paul was about to sail into Syria, to Antioch*, whence he was first sent out into the service of the Gentiles, and which therefore in his journeys he generally contrived to take in his way; but he changed his mind, and resolved *to return to Macedonia*, the same way he came.

2. The reason was because the Jews, expecting he would steer that course as usual, had way-laid him, designing to be the death of him; since they could not get him out of the way by stirring up both mobs and magistrates against him, which they had often attempted, they contrived to assassinate him. Some think they *laid wait for him*, to rob him of the money that he was carrying to Jerusalem for the relief of the poor saints there; but, considering how very spiteful the Jews were against him, I suppose they thirsted for his blood more than for his money.

IV. His companions in his travels when he went into Asia; they are here named, v. 4. Some of them were ministers, whether they were all so or no is not certain. *Sopater of Berea*, it is likely, is the same with *Sosipater*, who is mentioned ^{<512>}Romans 16:21. *Timothy* is reckoned among them, for though Paul, when he departed from Ephesus (v. 1), left Timothy there, and afterwards wrote his first epistle to him thither, to direct him as an evangelist how to settle the church there, and in what hands to leave it (see ^{<508>}1 Timothy 1:3; 3:14, 15), which epistle was intended for direction to Timothy what to do, not only at Ephesus where he now was, but also at other places where he should be in like manner left, or whither he should be sent to reside as an evangelist (and not to him only, but to the other evangelists that attended Paul, and were in like manner employed); yet he soon followed him, and accompanied him, with others here named. Now, one would think, this was no good husbandry, to have all these worthy men accompanying Paul, for there was more need of them where Paul was not than where he was; but so it was ordered,

1. That they might assist him in instructing such as by his preaching were awakened and startled; wherever Paul came, the waters were stirred, and then there was need of many hands to help the cripples in. It was time to strike when the iron was hot.

2. That they might be trained up by him, and fitted for future service, *might fully know his doctrine and manner of life*, ^{<510>}2 Timothy 3:10. Paul's bodily presence was weak and despicable, and therefore these friends of his accompanied him, to put a reputation upon him, to keep him

in countenance, and to intimate to strangers, who would be apt to judge by the sight of the eye, that he had a great deal in him truly valuable, which was not discovered upon the outward appearance.

V. His coming to Troas, where he had appointed a general rendezvous of his friends.

1. They went before, and staid for him at Troas (v. 5), designing to go along with him to Jerusalem, as Trophimus particularly did, ~~<402>~~Acts 21:29. We should not think it hard to stay awhile for good company in a journey.

2. Paul made the best of his way thither; and, it should seem, Luke was now in company with him; for he says *We sailed from Philippi* (v. 6), and the first time we find him in his company was here at Troas, ~~<401>~~Acts 16:11. *The days of unleavened bread* are mentioned only to describe the time, not to intimate that Paul kept the passover after the manner of the Jews; for just about this time he had written in his first epistle to the church at Corinth, and taught, that Christ is our Passover, and a Christian life our feast of unleavened bread (~~<400>~~1 Corinthians 5:7, 8), and when the substance was come the shadow was done away. He *came to them to Troas*, by sea, *in five days*, and when he was there staid but *seven days*. There is no remedy, but a great deal of time will unavoidably be lost in travelling to and fro, by those who go about doing good, yet it shall not be put upon the score of lost time. Paul thought it worth while to bestow *five days* in going to Troas, though it was but for an opportunity of *seven days'* stay there; but he knew, and so should we, how to redeem even journeying time, and make it turn to some good account.

~~<400>~~ ACTS 20:7-12

PAUL PREACHES AT TROAS

We have here an account of what passed at Troas the last of the seven days that Paul staid there.

I. There was a solemn religious assembly of the Christians that were there, according to their constant custom, and the custom of all the churches.

1. *The disciples came together, v. 7.* Though they read, and meditated, and prayed, and sung psalms, apart, and thereby kept up their communion with God, yet that was not enough; they must come together to worship God in concert, and so keep up their communion with one another, by mutual countenance and assistance, and testify their spiritual communion with all good Christians. There ought to be stated times for the disciples of Christ to come together; though they cannot all come together in one place, yet as many as can.

2. *They came together upon the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's day* (⁶⁰⁰Revelation 1:10), the Christian sabbath, celebrated to the honour of Christ and the Holy Spirit, in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on the first day of the week. This is here said to be the day when the disciples came together, that is, when it was their practice to come together in all the churches. Note, The first day of the week is to be religiously observed by all the disciples of Christ; and it is a sign between Christ and them, for by this it is known that they are his disciples; and it is to be observed in solemn assemblies, which are, as it were, the courts held in the name of our Lord Jesus, and to his honour, by his ministers, the stewards of his courts, to which all that hold from and under him owe suit and service, and at which they are to make their appearance, as tenants at their Lord's courts, and the first day of the week is appointed to be the court-day.

3. *They were gathered together in an upper chamber* (v. 8); they had no temple nor synagogue to meet in, no capacious stately chapel, but met in a private house, in a garret. As they were few, and did not need, so they were poor, and could not build, a large meeting-place; yet they came together, in that despicable inconvenient place. It will be no excuse for our absenting ourselves from religious assemblies that the place of them is not so decent nor so commodious as we would have it to be.

4. *They came together to break bread, that is, to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper, that one instituted sign of breaking the bread being put for all the rest. The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ,* ⁶⁰⁶1 Corinthians 10:16. In the breaking of the bread, not only the breaking of Christ's body for us, to be a sacrifice for our sins, is commemorated, but the breaking of Christ's body to us, to be food and a feast for our souls, is signified. In the primitive times it was the custom of many churches to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day, celebrating

the memorial of Christ's death in the former, with that of his resurrection in the latter; and both in concert, in a solemn assembly, to testify their joint concurrence in the same faith and worship.

II. In this assembly Paul gave them a sermon, a long sermon, a farewell sermon, v. 7.

1. He gave them a sermon: he *preached to them*. Though they were disciples already, yet it was very necessary they should have the word of God preached to them, in order to their increase in knowledge and grace. Observe, The preaching of the gospel ought to accompany the sacraments. *Moses read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people, and then sprinkled the blood of the covenant, which the Lord had made with them concerning all these words,* ~~(24:7)~~ Exodus 24:7, 8. What does the seal signify without a writing?

2. It was a farewell sermon, he being *ready to depart on the morrow*. When he was gone, they might have the same gospel preached, but not as he preached it; and therefore they must make the best use of him that they could while they had him. Farewell sermons are usually in a particular manner affecting both to the preacher and to the hearers.

3. It was a very long sermon: He *continued his speech until midnight*; for he had a great deal to say, and knew not that ever he should have another opportunity of preaching to them. After they had received the Lord's supper, he preached to them the duties they had thereby engaged themselves to, and the comforts they were interested in, and in this he was very large and full and particular. There may be occasion for ministers to preach, not only *in season, but out of season*. We know some that would have reproached Paul for this as a long-winded preacher, that tired his hearers; but they were willing to hear: he saw them so, and therefore continued his speech. He *continued it till midnight*; perhaps they met in the evening for privacy, or in conformity to the example of the disciples who came together on the first Christian sabbath in the evening. It is probable he had preached to them in the morning, and yet thus lengthened out his evening sermon even till midnight; we wish we had the heads of this long sermon, but we may suppose it was for substance the same with his epistles. The meeting being continued till midnight, there were candles set up, *many lights* (v. 8), that the hearers might turn to the scriptures Paul quoted, and see *whether these things were so*; and that this might prevent

the reproach of their enemies, who said they met in the night for works of darkness.

III. A *young man* in the congregation, that slept at sermon, was killed by a fall *out of the window, but raised to life again*; his name signifies *one that had good fortune* — *Eutychus, bene fortunatus*; and he answered his name. Observe,

1. The infirmity with which he was overtaken. It is probable his parents brought him, though but a boy, to the assembly, out of a desire to have him well instructed in the things of God by such a preacher as Paul. Parents should bring their children to hear sermons as soon as they can hear with understanding (^{<40P>}Nehemiah 8:2), even *the little ones*, ^{<45P>}Deuteronomy 29:11. Now this youth was to be blamed,

(1.) That he presumptuously *sat in the window*, unglazed perhaps, and so exposed himself; whereas, if he could have been content to sit on the floor, he had been safe. Boys that love to climb, or otherwise endanger themselves, to the grief of their parents, consider not how much it is also an offence to God.

(2.) That he slept, nay, he *fell into a deep sleep when Paul was preaching*, which was a sign he did not duly attend to the things that Paul spoke of, though they were weighty things. The particular notice taken of his sleeping makes us willing to hope none of the rest slept, though it was sleeping time and after supper; but this youth fell fast asleep, he was *carried away with it* (so the word is), which intimates that he strove against it, but was overpowered by it, and at last sunk down with sleep.

2. The calamity with which he was seized herein: *He fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead*. Some think that the hand of Satan was in it, by the divine permission, and that he designed it for a disturbance to this assembly and a reproach to Paul and it. Others think that God designed it for a warning to all people to take heed of sleeping when they are hearing the word preached; and certainly we are to make this use of it. We must look upon it as an evil thing, as a bad sign of our low esteem of the word of God, and a great hindrance to our profiting by it. We must be afraid of it, do what we can to prevent our being sleepy, not compose ourselves to sleep, but get our hearts affected with the word we hear to such a degree as may drive sleep far enough. Let us *watch and pray, that we enter not into this temptation*, and by it into worse. Let the punishment

of Eutychus strike an awe upon us, and show us how jealous God is in the matters of his worship; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* See how severely God visited an iniquity that seemed little, and but in a youth, and say, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* Apply to this story that lamentation (^{<209B>}Jeremiah 9:20, 21), *Hear the word of the Lord, for death is come up into our windows, to cut off the children from without and the young men from the streets.*

3. The miraculous mercy shown him in his recovery to *life again*, v. 10. It gave a present distraction to the assembly, and an interruption to Paul's preaching; but it proved an occasion of that which was a great confirmation to his preaching, and helped to set it home and make it effectual.

(1.) *Paul fell on the dead body, and embraced it*, thereby expressing a great compassion to, and an affectionate concern for, this young man, so far was he from saying, "He was well enough served for minding so little what I said!" Such tender spirits as Paul had are much affected with sad accidents of this kind, and are far from judging and censuring those that fall under them, as if those on whom *the tower of Siloam fell were sinners above all that dwelt at Jerusalem; I tell you, nay.* But this was not all; his falling on him and embracing him were in imitation of Elijah (^{<1172>}1 Kings 17:21), and Elisha (^{<1064>}2 Kings 4:34), in order to the raising of him to life again; not that this could as a means contribute any thing to it, but as a sign it represented the descent of that divine power upon the dead body, for the putting of life into it again, which at the same time he inwardly, earnestly, and in faith prayed for.

(2.) He assured them that he had returned to life, and it would appear presently. Various speculations, we may suppose, this ill accident had occasioned in the congregation, but Paul puts an end to them all: "*Trouble not yourselves, be not in any disorder about it, let it not put you into any hurry, for his life is in him; he is not dead, but sleepeth: lay him awhile upon a bed, and he will come to himself, for he is now alive.*" Thus, when Christ raised Lazarus, he said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

(3.) He returned to his work immediately after this interruption (v. 11): *He came up again* to the meeting, they broke bread together in a love-feast, which usually attended the eucharist, in token of their communion with each other, and for the confirmation of friendship among them; and *they*

talked a long while, even till break of day. Paul did not now go on in a continued discourse, as before, but he and his friends fell into a free conversation, the subject of which, no doubt, was good, and to the use of edifying. Christian conference is an excellent means of promoting holiness, comfort, and Christian love. They knew not when they should have Paul's company again, and therefore made the best use they could of it when they had it, and reckoned a night's sleep well lost for that purpose.

(4.) Before they parted *they brought the young man alive* into the congregation, every one congratulating him upon his return to life from the dead, and *they were not a little comforted*, v. 12. It was matter of great rejoicing among them, not only to the relations of the young man, but to the whole society, as it not only prevented the reproach that would otherwise have been cast upon them, but contributed very much to the credit of the gospel.

ACTS 20:13-16

THE RECOVERY OF EUTYCHUS

Paul is hastening towards Jerusalem, but strives to do all the good he can by the way, *os en parodo*, “as it were by the by.” He had called at Troas, and done good there; and now he makes a sort of coasting voyage, the merchants would call it a trading voyage, going from place to place, and no doubt endeavouring to make every place he came to the better for him, as every good man should do.

I. He sent his companions by sea to Assos, but he himself was *minded to go afoot*, v. 13. He had decreed or determined within himself that whatever importunity should be used with him to the contrary, urging either his ease or his credit, or the conveniency of a ship that offered itself, or the company of his friends, he would foot it to Assos: and, if the land-way which Paul took was the shorter way, yet it is taken notice of by the ancients as a rough way (Homer, Iliad 6, and Eustathius upon him, say, it was enough to *kill one* to go *on foot* to Assos. — *Lorin. in locum*); yet that way Paul would take,

1. That he might call on his friends by the way, and do good among them, either converting sinners or edifying saints; and in both he was serving his great Master, and carrying on his great work. Or,

2. That he might be alone, and might have the greater freedom of converse with God and his own heart in solitude. He loved his companions, and delighted in their company, yet he would show hereby that he did not need it, but could enjoy himself alone. Or,

3. That he might inure himself to hardship, and not seem to indulge his ease. Thus he would by voluntary instances of mortification and self-denial *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*, that he might make his sufferings for Christ, when he was called out to them, the more easy, ^{<412>}2 Timothy 2:3. We should use ourselves to deny ourselves.

II. At Assos he went on board with his friends. There they *took him in*; for by this time he had enough of his walk, and was willing to betake himself to the other way of travelling; or perhaps he could not go any further by land, but was obliged to go by water. When Christ sent his disciples away by ship, and tarried behind himself, yet he came to them, and they took him in, ^{<415>}Mark 6:45, 51.

III. He made the best of his way to Jerusalem. His ship passed by *Chios* (v. 15), touched at *Samos* (these are places of note among the Greek writers, both poets and historians); they tarried awhile at *Trogyllium*, the sea-port next to Samos; *and the next day they came to Miletus*, the sea-port that lay next to Ephesus; for (v. 16) he had determined not to go to Ephesus at this time, because he could not go thither without being urged by his friends whose importunity he could not resist, to make some stay with them there; and, because he was resolved not to stay, he would not put himself into a temptation to stay; *for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem on the day of pentecost*. He had been at Jerusalem about four or five years ago (^{<418>}Acts 18:21, 22), and now he was going thither again to pay his continued respects to that church, with which he was careful to keep a good correspondence, that he might not be thought alienated from it by his commission to preach among the Gentiles. He aimed to be there by the feast of pentecost because it was a time of concourse, which would give him an opportunity of propagating the gospel among the Jews and proselytes, who came from all parts to worship at the feast: and the feast of pentecost had been particularly made famous

among the Christians by the pouring out of the Spirit. Note, Men of business must fit themselves, and it will contribute to the expediting of it, to set time (with submission to Providence) and strive to keep it, contriving to do that first which we judge to be most needful, and not suffering ourselves to be diverted from it. It is a pleasure to us to be with our friends; it diverts us, nothing more; but we must not by it be diverted from our work. When Paul has a call to Jerusalem, he will not loiter away the time in Asia, though he had more and kinder friends there. This is not the world we are to be together in; we hope to be so in the other world.

◀ACTS 20:17-35

PAUL'S ADDRESS TO THE ELDERS OF EPHEBUS

It should seem the ship Paul and his companions were embarked in for Jerusalem attended him on purpose, and staid or moved as he pleased; for when he came to Miletus, he went ashore, and tarried thee so long as to send for the elders of Ephesus to come to him thither; for if he had gone up to Ephesus, he could never have got away from them. These elders, or presbyters, some think, were those twelve who received the Holy Ghost by Paul's hands, ~~◀ACTS~~ Acts 19:6. But, besides these, it is probable that Timothy had ordained other elders there for the service of that church, and the country about; these Paul sent for, that he might instruct and encourage them to go on in the work to which they had laid their hands. And what instructions he gave to them they would give to the people under their charge.

It is a very pathetic and practical discourse with Paul here takes leave of these elders, and has in it much of the excellent spirit of this good man.

I. He appeals to them concerning both his life and doctrine, all the time he had been in and about Ephesus (v. 18): *“You know after what manner I have been with you, and how I have done the work of an apostle among you.”* He mentions this as a confirmation of his commission and consequently of the doctrine he had preached among them. They all knew him to be a man of serious, gracious, heavenly spirit, that he was no designing self-seeking man, as seducers are; he could not have been carried on with so much evenness and constancy in his services and sufferings, but by the power of divine grace. The temper of his mind, and

the tenour both of his preaching and conversation, were such as plainly proved that God was with him of a truth, and that he was actuated and animated by a better spirit than his own. — He likewise makes this reference to his own conduct as an instruction to them, in whose hands the work was now left, to follow his example: “*You know after what manner I have been with you, how I have conducted myself as a minister; in like manner be you with those that are committed to your charge when I am gone* (^{<small>1000</small> Philippians 4:9), *what you have seen in me that is good do.*”}

1. His spirit and conversation were excellent and exemplary; they knew after what manner he had been among them, and how he had had his conversation towards them, in simplicity and godly sincerity (^{<small>1001</small> 2 Corinthians 1:12), how holily, justly, and unblamably he behaved himself, and how gentle he was towards them, ^{<small>1002</small> 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 10.}}

(1.) He had conducted himself well all along, *from the very first day that he came into Asia* — at all seasons; the manner of his entering in among them was such as nobody could find fault with. He appeared from the first day they knew him to be a man that aimed not only to do well, but to do good, wherever he came. He was a man that was consistent with himself, and all of a piece; take him where you would he was the same at all seasons, he did not turn with the wind nor change with the weather, but was uniform like a die, which, throw it which way you will, lights on a square side.

(2.) He had made it his business to serve the Lord, to promote the honour of God and the interest of Christ and his kingdom among them. He never served himself, nor made himself a servant of men, of their lusts and humours, nor was he a time-server; but he made it his business to serve the Lord. In his ministry, in his whole conversation, he proved himself what he wrote himself, Paul *a servant of Jesus Christ*, ^{<small>1003</small> Romans 1:1.}

(3.) He had done his work *with all humility of mind* — *meta pases tapeinophrosynes*, that is, in all works of condescension, modesty, and self-abasement. Though he was one that God had put a great deal of honour upon, and done a great deal of good by, yet he never took state upon him, nor kept people at a distance, but conversed as freely and familiarly with the meanest, for their good, as if he had stood upon a level with them. He was willing to stoop to any service, and to make himself and his labours as cheap as they could desire. Note, Those that would in

any office serve the Lord acceptably to him, and profitably to others, must do it with all humility of mind, ^{<41B>}Matthew 20:26, 27.

(4.) He had always been very tender, affectionate, and compassionate, among them; he had *served the Lord with many tears*. Paul was herein like his Master; often in tears; in his praying, he *wept and made supplication*, ^{<30B>}Hosea 12:5. In his preaching, what he had told them before he told them again, *even weeping*, ^{<30B>}Philippians 3:18. In his concern for them, though his acquaintance with them was but of a late standing, yet so near did they lie to his heart that he *wept with those that wept*, and mingled his tears with theirs upon every occasion, which was very endearing.

(5.) He had struggled with many difficulties among them. He went on in his work in the face of much opposition, *many temptations*, trials of his patience and courage, such discouragements as perhaps were sometimes *temptations* to him, as to Jeremiah in a like case to say, *I will not speak any more in the name of the Lord*, ^{<20B>}Jeremiah 20:8, 9. These befel him *by the lying in wait of the Jews*, who still were plotting some mischief or other against him. Note, Those are the faithful servants of the Lord that continue to serve him in the midst of troubles and perils, that care not what enemies they make, so that they can but approve themselves to their Master, and make him their friend. Paul's tears were owing to his temptations; his afflictions helped to excite his good affections.

2. His preaching was likewise such as it should be, v. 20, 21. He came to Ephesus to preach the gospel of Christ among them, and he had been faithful both to them and to him that appointed him.

(1.) He was a plain preacher, and one that delivered his message so as to be understood. This is intimated in two words, *I have shown you, and have taught you*. He did not amuse them with nice speculations, nor lead them into, and then lose them in, the clouds of lofty notions and expressions; but he showed them the plain truths of the gospel, which were of the greatest consequence and importance, and taught them as children are taught. "I have shown you the right way to happiness, and taught you to go in it."

(2.) He was a powerful preacher, which is intimated in his *testifying* to them; he preached as one upon oath, that was himself fully assured of the truth of what he preached and was desirous to convince them of it and to influence and govern them by it. He preached the gospel, not as a hawker

proclaims news in the street (it is all one to him whether it be true or false), but as a conscientious witness gives in his evidence at the bar, with the utmost seriousness and concern. Paul preached the gospel as a testimony to them if they received it, but as a testimony against them if they rejected it.

(3.) He was a profitable preacher, one that in all his preaching aimed at doing good to those he preached to; he studied that which was *profitable unto them*, which had a tendency to make them wise and good, wiser and better, to inform their judgments and reform their hearts and lives. He preached *ta sympheronta*, such things as *brought with them* divine light, and heat, and power to their souls. It is not enough not to preach that which is hurtful, which leads into error or hardens in sin, but we must preach that which is profitable. *We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying*. Paul aimed to preach not that which was pleasing, but that which was profitable, and to please only in order to profit. God is said to teach his people to profit, ²³⁸⁷Isaiah 48:17. Those teach for God that teach people to profit.

(4.) He was a painstaking preacher, very industrious and indefatigable in his work; he preached *publicly, and from house to house*. He did not confine himself to a corner when he had opportunity of preaching in the great congregation; nor did he confine himself to the congregation when there was occasion for private and personal instruction. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to preach the gospel publicly, nor did he grudge to bestow his pains privately, among a few, when there was occasion for it. He preached publicly to the flock that came together into the green pastures, and went from house to house to seek those that were weak and had wandered, and did not think that the one would excuse him from the other. Ministers should in their private visits, and as they go from house to house, discourse of those things which they have taught publicly, repeat them, inculcate them, and explain them, if it be needful, asking, *Have you understood all these things?* And, especially, they should help persons to apply the truth to themselves and their own case.

(5.) He was a faithful preacher. He not only preached that which was profitable, but he preached every thing that he thought might be profitable, and kept back nothing, though the preaching of it might either cost him more pains or be disobliging to some and expose him to their ill-will. He declined not preaching whatever he thought might be profitable, though it

was not fashionable, nor to some acceptable. He did not keep back reproofs, when they were necessary and would be profitable, for fear of offending; nor did he keep back the preaching of the cross, though he knew it was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, as the Roman missionaries in China lately did.

(6.) He was a catholic preacher. He *testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks*. Though he was born and bred a Jew, and had an entire affection for that nation, and was trained up in their prejudices against the Gentiles, yet he did not therefore confine himself to the Jews and avoid the Gentiles; but preached as readily to them as to the Jews, and conversed as freely with them. And, on the other hand, though he was called to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and the Jews had an implacable enmity against him upon that score, had done him many an ill turn, and here at Ephesus were continually plotting against him, yet he did not therefore abandon them as reprobates, but continued to deal with them for their good. Ministers must preach the gospel with impartiality; for they are ministers of Christ for the universal church.

(7.) He was a truly Christian evangelical preacher. He did not preach philosophical notions, or matters of doubtful disputation, nor did he preach politics, or intermeddle at all with affairs of state or the civil government; but he preached faith and repentance, the two great gospel graces, the nature and necessity of them; these he urged upon all occasions.

[1.] *Repentance towards God*; that those who by sin had gone away from God, and were going further and further from him into a state of endless separation from him, should by true repentance look towards God, turn towards him, move towards him, and hasten to him. He preached repentance as God's great command (⁴⁴⁷³Acts 17:30), which we must obey — *that men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance* (so he explains it, ⁴⁴⁸³Acts 26:20); and he preached it as Christ's gift, in order to the *remission of sins* (⁴⁴⁵³Acts 5:31), and directed people to look up to him for it.

[2.] *Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. We must by repentance look towards God as our end; and by faith towards Christ as our way to God. Sin must by repentance be abandoned and forsaken, and then Christ must by faith be relied on for the pardon of sin. Our repentance towards God is not sufficient, we must have a true faith in Christ as our Redeemer and

Saviour, consenting to him as our Lord and our God. For there is no coming to God, as penitent prodigals to a Father, but in the strength and righteousness of Jesus Christ as Mediator.

Such a preacher as this they all knew Paul had been; and, if they will carry on the same work, they must walk in the same spirit, in the same steps.

II. He declares his expectation of sufferings and afflictions in his present journey to Jerusalem, v. 22-24. Let them not think that he quitted Asia now for fear of persecution; nor, he was so far from running away like a coward from the post of danger that he was now like a hero hastening to the high places of the field, where the battle was likely to be hottest: *Now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem*, which may be understood either,

(1.) Of the certain foresight he had of trouble before him. Though he was not yet bound in body, he was bound in spirit; he was in full expectation of trouble, and made it his daily business to prepare for it. He was bound in spirit, as all good Christians are poor in spirit, endeavouring to accommodate themselves to the will of God if they should be reduced to poverty. Or,

(2.) Of the strong impulse he was under from the Spirit of God working upon his spirit to go this journey: "*I go bound in the spirit*, that is, firmly resolved to proceed, and well assured that it is by a divine direction and influence that I am so, and not from any humour or design of my own. I go led by the Spirit, and bound to follow him wherever he leads me."

1. He does not know particularly the things that shall befall him at Jerusalem. Whence the trouble shall spring, what shall be the occasion of it, what the circumstances and to what degree it shall arise, God had not thought fit to reveal to him. It is good for us to be kept in the dark concerning future events, that we may be always waiting on God and waiting for him. When we go abroad, it should be with this thought, we know not the things that shall befall us, nor what a day, or a night, or an hour, may bring forth; and therefore must refer ourselves to God, let him do with us as seemeth good in his eyes, and study to stand complete in his whole will.

2. Yet he does know in general that there is a storm before him; for the prophets in every city he passed through told him, by the Holy Ghost, that

bonds and afflictions awaited him. Besides the common notice given to all Christians and ministers to expect and prepare for sufferings, Paul had particular intimations of an extraordinary trouble, greater and longer than any he had yet met with, that was now before him.

3. He fixes a brave and heroic resolution to go on with his work, notwithstanding. It was a melancholy peal that was rung in his ears in every city, that *bonds and afflictions did abide him*; it was a hard case for a poor man to labour continually to do good, and to be so ill treated for his pains. Now it is worth while to enquire how he bore it. He was flesh and blood as well as other men; he was so, and yet by the grace of God he was enabled to go on with his work, and to look with a gracious and generous contempt upon all the difficulties and discouragements he met with in it. Let us take it from his own mouth here (v. 24), where he speaks not with obstinacy nor ostentation, but with a holy humble resolution: “*None of these things move me*; all my care is to proceed and to persevere in the way of my duty, and to finish well.” Paul is here an example,

(1.) Of holy courage and resolution in our work, notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in it; he saw them before him, but he made nothing of them: *None of these things move me*; *oudenos logon poioumai* — *I make no account of them*. He did not lay these things to heart, Christ and heaven lay there. None of these things moved him.

[1.] They did not drive him off from his work; he did not tack about, and go back again, when he saw the storm rise, but went on resolutely, preaching there, where he knew how dearly it would cost him.

[2.] They did not deprive him of his comfort, nor make him drive on heavily in his work. In the midst of troubles he was as one unconcerned. In his patience he possessed his soul, and, when he was as sorrowful, yet he was always rejoicing, and in all things more than a conqueror. Those that have their conversation in heaven can look down, not only upon the common troubles of this earth but upon the threatening rage and malice of hell itself, and say that none of these things moved them, as knowing that none of these things can hurt them.

(2.) Of a holy contempt of life, and the continuance and comforts of it: *Neither count I my life dear to myself*. Life is sweet, and is naturally dear to us. *All that a man has will he give for his life*; but all that a man has, and life too, will he give who understands himself aright and his own

interest, rather than lose the favour of God and hazard eternal life. Paul was of this mind. Though to an eye of nature life is superlatively valuable, yet to an eye of faith it is comparatively despicable; it is not so dear but it can be cheerfully parted with for Christ. This explains ^{<416>}Luke 14:26, where we are required to hate our own lives, not in a hasty passion, as Job and Jeremiah, but in a holy submission to the will of God, and a resolution to die for Christ rather than to deny him.

(3.) Of a holy concern to go through with the work of life, which should be much more our care than to secure either the outward comforts of it or the countenance of it. Blessed Paul counts not his life dear in comparison with this, and resolves in the strength of Christ, *non propter vitam vivendi perdere causas* — that he never will, to save his life, lose the ends of living. He is willing to spend his life in labour, to hazard his life in dangerous services, to waste it in toilsome services; nay, to lay down his life in martyrdom, so that he may but answer the great intentions of his birth, of his baptism, and of his ordination to the apostleship. Two things this great and good man is in care about, and if he gain them it is no matter to him what becomes of life: —

[1.] That he may be found faithful to the trust reposed in him, that he may *finish the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus*, may do the work which he was sent into the world about, or, rather, which he was sent into the church about, — that he may complete the service of his generation, may make full proof of his ministry, — that he may go through the business of it, and others may reap the advantage of it, to the utmost of what was designed, — that he may, as is said of the two witnesses, *finish his testimony* (^{<617>}Revelation 11:7), and may not do his work by halves. Observe, *First*, The apostleship was a ministry both to Christ and to the souls of men; and those that were called to it considered more the ministry of it than the dignity or dominion of it; and, if the apostles did so, much more ought the pastors and teachers to do so, and to be in the church as those who serve. *Secondly*, This ministry was *received from the Lord Jesus*. He entrusted them with it, and from him they received their charge; for him they do their work, in his name, in his strength; and to him they must give up their account. It was Christ that put them into the ministry (^{<512>}1 Timothy 1:12); it is he that carries them on in their ministry, and from him they have strength to do their service and bear up under the hardships of it. *Thirdly*, The work of this ministry was to *testify the gospel of the grace of God*, to publish it to the world, to prove it, and to

recommend it; and, being the gospel of the grace of God, it has enough in it to recommend itself. It is a proof of God's good-will to us, and a means of his good work in us; it shows him gracious towards us, and tends to make us gracious, and so is the gospel of the grace of God. Paul made it the business of his life to testify this, and desired not to live a day longer than he might be instrumental to spread the knowledge and savour and power of this gospel.

[2.] That he may finish well. He cares not when the period of his life comes, nor how, be it ever so soon, ever so sudden, ever so sad, as to outward circumstances, so that he may but *finish his course with joy*. *First*, He looks upon his life as *a course, a race*, so the word is. Our life is *a race set before us*, ~~scri~~ Hebrews 12:1. This intimates that we have our labours appointed us, for we were not sent into the world to be idle; and our limits appointed us, for we were not sent into the world to be here always, but to pass through the world, nay, to run through it, and it is soon run through; I may add, to *run the gauntlet* through it. *Secondly*, He counts upon the finishing of his course, and speaks of it as sure and near, and that which he had his thoughts continually upon. Dying is the end of our race, when we come off either with honour or shame. *Thirdly*, He is full of care to finish it well, which implies a holy desire of obtaining and a holy fear of coming short. "Oh! that I may but finish my course with joy; and then all will be well, perfectly and eternally well." *Fourthly*, He thinks nothing too much to do, nor too hard to suffer, so that he may but finish well, finish with joy. We must look upon it as the business of our life to provide for a joyful death, that we may not only die safely, but die comfortably.

III. Counting upon it that this was the last time they should see him, he appeals to their consciences concerning his integrity, and demands of them a testimony to it.

1. He tells them that he was now taking his last leave of them (v. 25): *I know that you all, among whom I have been conversant preaching the kingdom of God*, though you may have letters from me, shall never see my face again. When any of us part with our friends, we may say, and should say, "We know not that ever we shall see one another again: our friends may be removed, or we ourselves may." But Paul here speaks it with assurance, by the Spirit of prophecy, that these Ephesians should *see his face no more*; and we cannot think that he who spoke so doubtfully of that which he was not sure of (*not knowing the things that shall befall me there*,

v. 22) would speak this with so much confidence, especially when he foresaw what a trouble it would be to his friends here, unless he had had a special warrant from the Spirit to say it, to whom I think those do wrong who suppose that, notwithstanding this, Paul did afterwards come to Ephesus, and see them again. He would never have said thus solemnly, *Now, behold, I know it*, if he had not known it *for certain*. Not but that he foresaw that he had a great deal of time and work yet before him, but he foresaw that his work would be cut out for him in other places, and in these parts he had no more to do. Here he had for a great while gone about preaching the kingdom of God, preaching down the kingdom of sin and Satan, and preaching up the authority and dominion of God in Christ, preaching the kingdom of glory as the end and the kingdom of grace as the way. Many a time they had been glad to see his face in the pulpit, and saw it *as it had been the face of an angel*. If the feet of these messengers of peace were beautiful upon the mountains, what were their faces? But now they shall see his face no more. Note, We ought often to think of it, that those who now are preaching to us the kingdom of God will shortly be removed and we shall see their faces no more: *the prophets, do they live for ever?* Yet a little while is their light with us; it concerns us therefore to improve it while we have it, that when we shall see their faces no more on earth, yet we may hope to look them in the face with comfort in the great day.

2. He appeals to them concerning the faithful discharge of his ministry among them (v. 26): “*Wherefore*, seeing my ministry is at an end with you, it concerns both you and me to reflect, and look back;” and,

(1.) He challenges them to prove him unfaithful, or to have said or done any thing by which he had made himself accessory to the ruin of any precious soul: *I am pure from the blood of all men*, the blood of souls. This plainly refers to that of the prophet (~~23:16~~ Ezekiel 33:6), where the blood of him that perishes by the sword of the enemy is said to be required at the hand of the unfaithful watchman that did not give warning: “You cannot say but I have given warning, and therefore no man's blood can be laid at my door.” If a minister has approved himself faithful, he may have this rejoicing in himself, *I am pure from the blood of all men*, and ought to have this testimony from others.

(2.) He therefore leaves the blood of those that perish upon their own heads, because they had fair warning given them, but they would not take it.

(3.) He charges these ministers to look to it that they took care and pains, as he had done: *“I am pure from the blood of all men, see that you keep yourselves so too. I take you to record this day”* — *en te semeron hemera*, “I call this day to witness to you:” so Streso. As sometimes the heaven and earth are appealed to, so here this day shall be a witness, this parting day.

3. He proves his own fidelity with this (v. 27): *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

(1.) He had preached to them nothing but the counsel of God, and had not added any inventions of his own; “it was pure gospel, and nothing else, the will of God concerning your salvation.” The gospel is the counsel of God; it is admirably contrived by his wisdom, it is unalterably determined by his will, and it is kindly designed by his grace for our glory, ~~1~~ 1 Corinthians 2:7. This counsel of God it is the business of ministers to declare as it is revealed, and not otherwise nor any further.

(2.) He had preached to them the whole counsel of God. As he had preached to them the whole counsel of God. As he had preached to them the gospel pure, so he had preached it to them entire; he had gone over a body of divinity among them, that, having the truths of the gospel opened to them methodically from first to last in order, they might the better understand them, by seeing them in their several connections with, and dependences upon, one another.

(3.) He had not shunned to do it; had not wilfully nor designedly avoided the declaring of any part of the counsel of God. He had not, to save his own pains, declined preaching upon the most difficult parts of the gospel, nor, to save his own credit, declined preaching upon the most plain and easy parts of it; he had not shunned preaching those doctrines which he knew would be provoking to the watchful enemies of Christianity, or displeasing to the careless professors of it, but faithfully took his work before him, whether they would hear or forbear. And thus it was that he kept himself pure from the blood of all men.

IV. He charges them as ministers to be diligent and faithful in their work.

1. He commits the care of the church at Ephesus, that is, the saints, the Christians that were there and thereabouts (^{401E}Ephesians 1:1), to them, who, though doubtless they were so numerous that they could not all meet in one place, but worshipped God in several congregations, under the conduct of several ministers, are yet called here *one flock*, because they not only agreed in one faith, as they did with all Christian churches, but in many instances they kept up communion one with another. To these elders or presbyters the apostle here, upon the actual foresight of his own final leaving them, commits the government of this church, and tells them that not he, but *the Holy Ghost, had made them overseers, episkopous* — *bishops of the flock*. “You that are presbyters are bishops of the Holy Ghost's making, that are to take the oversight of this part of the church of God,” ^{401E}1 Peter 5:1, 2; ^{401E}Titus 1:5, 7. While Paul was present at Ephesus, he presided in all the affairs of that church, which made the elders loth to part with him; but now this eagle *stirs up the nest, flutters over her young*; now that they begin to be fledged they must learn to fly themselves, and to act without him, for the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. They took not this honour to themselves, nor was it conferred upon them by any prince or potentate, but the Holy Ghost in them qualified them for, and enriched them to, this great undertaking, the *Holy Ghost fell upon them*, ^{401E}Acts 19:6. The Holy Ghost also directed those that chose, and called, and ordained, them to this work in answer to prayer.

2. He commanded them to mind the work to which they were called. Dignity calls for duty; if the Holy Ghost has made them *overseers of the flock*, that is, shepherds, they must be true to their trust.

(1.) They must take heed to themselves in the first place, must have a very jealous eye upon all the motions of their own souls, and upon all they said and did, must walk circumspectly, and know how to behave themselves aright in the house of God, in which they were now advanced to the office of stewards: “You have many eyes upon you, some to take example by you, others to pick quarrels with you, and therefore you ought to *take heed to yourselves*.” Those are not likely to be skilful or faithful keepers of the vineyards of others that do not keep their own.

(2.) “*Take heed to the flock*, to all the flock, some to one part of it, others to another, according as your call and opportunity are, but see that no part of it be neglected among you.” Ministers must not only take heed to their own souls, but must have a constant regard to the souls of those who are

under their charge, as shepherds have to their sheep, that they may receive no damage: “*Take heed to all the flock*, that none of them either of themselves wander from the fold or be seized by the beasts of prey; that none of them be missing, or miscarry, through your neglect.”

(3.) They must feed the church of God, must do all the parts of the shepherd's office, must lead the sheep of Christ into the green pastures, must lay meat before them, must do what they can to heal those that are distempered and have no appetite to their meat, must feed them with wholesome doctrine, with a tender evangelical discipline, and must see that nothing is wanting that is necessary in order to their being nourished up to eternal life. There is need of pastors, not only to gather the church of God by bringing in of those that are without, but to *feed it* by building up those that are within.

(4.) They must watch (v. 31), as shepherds keep watch over their flocks by night, must be awake and watchful, must not give way to spiritual sloth and slumber, but must stir up themselves to their business and closely attend it. *Watch thou in all things* (~~same~~ 2 Timothy 4:5), watch against every thing that will be hurtful to the flock, and watch to every thing that will be advantageous to it; improve every opportunity of doing it a kindness.

3. He gives them several good reasons why they should mind the business of their ministry.

(1.) Let them consider the interest of their Master, and his concern for the flock that was committed to their charge, v. 28. It is *the church which he has purchased with his own blood*.

[1.] “It is his own; you are but his servants to take care of it for him. It is your honour that you are employed for God, who will own you in his service; but then your carelessness and treachery are so much the worse if you neglect your work, for you wrong God and are false to him. From him you received the trust, and to him you must give up your account, and therefore *take heed to yourselves*. And, if it be the church of God, he expects you should show your love to him by feeding his sheep and lambs.”

[2.] He has purchased it. The world is God's by right of creation, but the church is his by right of redemption, and therefore it ought to be dear to

us, for it was dear to him, because it cost him dear, and we cannot better show it than by feeding his sheep and his lambs.

[3.] This church of God is what he has purchased; not as Israel of old, when he *gave men for them, and people for their life* (²³⁴⁸ Isaiah 43:3, 4), but *with his own blood*. This proves that Christ is God, for he is called so here, where yet he is said to purchase the church *with his own blood*; the blood was his as man, yet so close is the union between the divine and human nature that it is here called the blood of God, for it was the blood of him who is God, and his being so put such dignity and worth into it as made it both a valuable ransom of us from evil, and a valuable purchase for us of all good, nay, a purchase of us to Christ, to be to him a peculiar people: *Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me*. In consideration of this, therefore, *feed the church of God*, because it is purchased at so dear a rate. Did Christ lay down his life to purchase it, and shall his ministers be wanting in any care and pains to feed it? Their neglect of its true interest is a contempt of his blood that purchased it.

(2.) Let them consider the danger that the flock was in of being made a prey to its adversaries, v. 29, 30. “If the flock be thus precious upon the account of its relation to God, and its redemption by Christ, then you are concerned to take heed both to yourselves and to it.” Here are reasons for both.

[1.] *Take heed to the flock*, for wolves are abroad, that seek to devour (v. 29): *I know this, that after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you*. *First*, Some understand it of persecutors, that will inform against the Christians, and incense the magistrates against them, and will have no compassion on the flock. They thought, because, while Paul was with them, the rage of the Jews was most against him, that, when he had gone out of the country, they would be quiet: “No,” says he, “*after my departure* you will find the persecuting spirit still working, therefore take heed to the flock, confirm them in the faith, comfort and encourage them, that they may not either leave Christ for fear of suffering or lose their peace and comfort in their sufferings.” Ministers must take a more ordinary care of the flock in times of persecution. *Secondly*, It is rather to be understood of seducers and false teachers. Probably Paul has an eye to those of the circumcision, who preached up the ceremonial law; these he calls *grievous wolves*, for though they came in sheep's clothing, nay, in shepherds' clothing, they made mischief in the congregations of Christians,

sowed discord among them, drew away many from the pure gospel of Christ, and did all they could to blemish and defame those that adhered to it; not sparing the most valuable members of the flock, stirring up those whom they could influence to bite and devour them (^{<8B5>}Galatians 5:15); therefore they are called dogs (^{<8B2>}Philippians 3:2), as here wolves. While Paul was at Ephesus, they kept away, for they durst not face him; but, when he was gone, then they entered in among them, and sowed their tares where he had sown the good seed. “Therefore take heed to the flock, and do all you can to establish them in the truth, and to arm them against the insinuations of the false teachers.”

[2.] *Take heed to yourselves*, for some shepherds will apostatise (v. 30): “*Also of your ownelves*, among the members, nay, perhaps, among the ministers of your own church, among you that I am now speaking to (though I am willing to hope it does not go so far as that), *shall men arise speaking perverse things*, things contrary to the right rule of the gospel, and destructive of the great intentions of it. Nay, they will pervert some sayings of the gospel, and wrest them to make them patronize their errors, ^{<8B5>}2 Peter 3:16. Even those that were well thought of among you, and that you had confidence in, will grow proud, and conceited, and opinionative, and will refine upon the gospel, and will pretend with more nice and curious speculations to advance you to a higher form; but it is to *draw away disciples after them*, to make a party for themselves, that shall admire them, and be led by them, and pin their faith upon their sleeve.” Some read it, *to draw away disciples after them* — those that are already disciples of Christ, draw them from him to follow them. “Therefore, take heed to yourselves; when you are told that some of you shall betray the gospel, you are each of you concerned to ask, *Is it I?* and to look well to yourselves.” This was there fulfilled in *Phygellus and Hermogenes*, who turned away from Paul and the doctrine he had preached (^{<8B5>}2 Timothy 1:15), and in *Hymeneus and Philetus*, who *concerning the truth erred, and overthrew the faith of some* (^{<8B2>}2 Timothy 2:18), which explains the expression here. But, though there were some such seducers in the church of Ephesus, yet it should seem by Paul’s Epistle to that church (wherein we do not find such complaints and reprehensions as we meet with in some other of his epistles) that that church was not so much infested with false teachers, at least not so much infected with their false doctrine, as some other churches were; but its peace and purity were preserved by the blessing of God on the pains and vigilance of these presbyters, to whom

the apostle, in the actual foresight and consideration of the rise of heresies and schisms, as well as of his own death, committed the government of this church.

(3.) Let them consider the great pains that Paul had taken in planting this church (v. 31): “Remember that for the space of three years” (for so long he had been preaching in Ephesus, and the parts adjacent) “I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears; and be not you negligent in building upon that foundation which I was so diligent to lay.”

[1.] Paul, like a faithful watchman, had warned them, and, by the warnings he gave men of the danger of their continuing in their Judaism and heathenism, he prevailed with them to embrace Christianity.

[2.] He warned every one; besides the public warnings he gave in his preaching, he applied himself to particular persons according as he saw their case called for it, which he had something to say peculiar to.

[3.] He was constant in giving warning; he *warned night and day*; his time was filled up with his work. In the night, when he should have been reposing himself, he was dealing with those he could not get to speak with in the day about their souls.

[4.] He was indefatigable in it; he *ceased not* to warn. Though they were ever so obstinate against his warnings, yet he did not cease to warn, not knowing but that at length they might, by the grace of God, be overcome; though they were ever so pliable to his warnings, yet he did not think this would be a sufficient excuse for him to desist, but still he warned those that were righteous as not to turn from their righteousness, as he had warned them when they were wicked to turn from their wickedness, ²⁰⁸⁸Ezekiel 3:18-21.

[5.] He spoke to them about their souls with a great deal of affection and concern: he *warned them with tears*. As he had served the Lord, so he had served them, *with many tears*, v. 19. He warned them with tears of compassion, thereby showing how much he was himself affected with their misery and danger in a sinful state and way, that he might affect them with it. Thus Paul had begun the good work at Ephesus, thus free had he been of his pains; and why then should they be sparing of their pains in carrying it on?

V. He recommends them to divine direction and influence (v. 32): “*And now, brethren, having given you this solemn charge and caution, I commend you to God.* Now that I have said what I have to say, The Lord be with you; I must leave you, but I leave you in good hands.” They were in care what would become of them, how they should go on in their work, break through their difficulties, and what provision would be made for them and their families. In answer to all these perplexities, Paul directs them to look up to God with an eye of faith, and beseeches God to look down on them with an eye of favour.

1. See here to whom he commends them. He calls them brethren, not only as Christians, but as ministers, and thereby encourages them to hope in God, as he had done; for they and he were brethren.

(1.) He commends them to God, begs of God to provide for them, to take care of them, and to supply all their needs, and encourages them to cast all their care upon him, with an assurance that he cared for them: “Whatever you want, go to God, let your eye be ever towards him, and your dependence upon him, in all your straits and difficulties; and let this be your comfort, that you have a God to go to, a God all sufficient.” *I commend you to God*, that is, to his providence, and to the protection and care of that. It is enough that, from whomsoever we are separated, still we have God nigh unto us, ⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾1 Peter 4:19.

(2.) He commends them *to the word of his grace*, by which some understand Christ: he is *the word* (⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾John 1:1), *the word of life*, because life is treasured up for us in him (⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾1 John 1:1), and in the same sense he is here called *the word of God's grace*, because *from his fulness we receive grace for grace*. He commends them to Christ, puts them into his hand, as being his servants, whom he would in a particular manner take care of. Paul commends them not only to God and to his providence, but to Christ and his grace as Christ himself did his disciples when he was leaving them: *You believe in God, believe also in me*. It comes to much the same thing, if by the word of his grace we understand the gospel of Christ, for it is Christ in the word that is nigh unto us for our support and encouragement, and his word is spirit and life: “You will find much relief by acting faith on the providence of God, but much more by acting faith on the promises of the gospel.” He commends them to the word of Christ's grace, which he spoke to his disciples when he sent them forth, the commission he gave them, with assurance that he would be with them

always to the end of the world: “Take hold of that word, and God give you the benefit and comfort of it, and you need no more.” He commends them to the word of God's grace, not only as the foundation of their hope and the fountain of their joy, but as the rule of their walking: *“I commend you to God,* as your Master, whom you are to serve, and I have found him a good Master, *and to the word of his grace,* as cutting you out your work, and by which you are to govern yourselves; observe the precepts of this word, and then live upon the promises of it.”

2. See here what he commends them to the word of God's grace for, not so much for a protection from their enemies, or a provision for their families, as for the spiritual blessings which they most needed and ought most to value. They had received the gospel of the grace of God, and were entrusted to preach it. Now he recommends them to that,

(1.) For their edification: *“It is able* (the Spirit of grace working with it and by it) *to build you up,* and you may depend upon this, while you keep close to it, and are deriving daily from it. Though you are already furnished with good gifts, yet this is able to build you up; there is that in it with which you need to be better acquainted and more affected.” Note, Ministers, in preaching the word of grace, must aim at their own edification as well as at the edification of others. The most advanced Christians, while they are in this world, are capable of growing, and they will find the word of grace to have still more and more in it to contribute to their growth. It is still able to build them up.

(2.) For their glorification: *It is able to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.* The word of God's grace gives it, not only as it gives the knowledge of it (for *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*), but as it gives the promise of it, the promise of a God *that cannot lie,* and which is *yea and amen in Christ;* and by the word, as the ordinary vehicle, the Spirit of grace is given (~~404~~ Acts 10:44), to be the seal of the promise, and the earnest of the eternal life promised; and thus it is the word of God's grace that gives us the inheritance. Note,

[1.] Heaven is an inheritance which gives an indefeasible right to all the heirs; it is an inheritance like that of the Israelites in Canaan, which was by promise and yet by lot, but was *sure to all the seed.*

[2.] This inheritance is entailed upon and secured to all those, and those only, that are sanctified; for as those cannot be welcome guests to the holy

God, or the holy society above, that are unsanctified, so really heaven would be no heaven to them; but *to all that are sanctified*, that are born again, and on whom the image of God is renewed, it is as sure as almighty power and eternal truth can make it. Those therefore that would make out a title to that inheritance must make it sure that they are among the sanctified, are joined to them and incorporated with them, and partake of the same image and nature; for we cannot expect to be among the glorified hereafter unless we be among the sanctified here.

VI. He recommends himself to them as an example of indifference to this world, and to every thing in it, which, if they would walk in the same spirit and in the same steps, they would find to contribute greatly to their easy and comfortable passage through it. He had recommended them to God, and to the word of his grace, for spiritual blessings, which, without doubt, are the best blessings; but what shall they do for food for their families, an agreeable subsistence for themselves, and portions for their children? “As to these,” Paul says, “do as I did;” and how was that? He here tells them,

1. That he never aimed at worldly wealth (v. 33): *“I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; nor do you, and then you will be easy.”* There were many in Ephesus, and many of those that had embraced the Christian faith, who were rich, had a great deal of money, and plate, and rich furniture, and wore very good clothes, and made a very good appearance. Now,

(1.) Paul was not ambitious to live like them. We may take it in this sense: *“I never coveted to have so much silver and gold at command as I see others have, nor to wear such rich clothes as I see others wear. I neither condemn them nor envy them. I can live comfortably and usefully without living great.”* The false apostles desired *to make a fair show in the flesh* (⁴⁰⁸²Galatians 6:12), to make a figure in the world; but Paul did not do so. *He knew how to want and how to be abased.*

(2.) He was not greedy to receive from them, silver, or gold, or apparel; so far from being always craving that he was not so much as coveting, nor desired them to allow him so and so for his pains among them, but was *content with such things as he had*; he never *made a gain of them*, ⁴⁰²⁷⁻²Corinthians 12:17. He could not only say with Moses (⁴⁰⁸⁵Numbers 16:15), and with Samuel (⁴⁰²⁸⁻¹1 Samuel 12:3, 5), *Whose ox have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded?* But, “Whose kindness have I coveted, or asked? Or to

whom have I been burdensome?" He protests against desiring a gift,
~~4017~~Philippians 4:17.

2. That he had worked for his living, and taken a great deal of pains to get bread (v. 34) "*Yea, you yourselves know, and have been eye-witnesses of it, that these hands of mine have ministered to my necessities, and to those that were with me; you have seen me busy early and late, cutting out tents and making them up;*" and, they being commonly made of leather, it was very hard work. Observe,

(1.) Paul was sometimes reduced to necessities, and the want of the common supports of life, though he was so great a favourite of Heaven and so great a blessing to this earth. What an unthinking, unkind, and ungrateful world is this, that could let such a man as Paul be poor in it!

(2.) He desired no more than to have his necessities supplied; he did not work at his calling to enrich himself, but to maintain himself with food and raiment.

(3.) When he was to earn his bread, he did it by a manual occupation. Paul had a head and a tongue that he might have got money by, but they were these hands, saith he, *that ministered to my necessities*. What a pity was it that those hands by the laying on of which the Holy Ghost had been so often conferred, those hands by which God had wrought special miracles, and both these at Ephesus too (~~4016~~Acts 19:6, 11), should there be obliged to lay themselves to the needle and shears, the awl and tacking-end, in tent-making, purely to get bread! Paul puts these presbyters (and others in them) in mind of this, that they may not think it strange if they be thus neglected, and yet to go on in their work, and make the best shift they can to live; the less encouragement they have from men, the more they shall have from God.

(4.) He worked not only for himself, but for the support of those also that were with him. This was hard indeed. It had better become them to have worked for him (to maintain him as their tutor) than he for them. But so it is; those that are willing to take the labouring oar will find those about them willing they should have it. If Paul will work for the maintenance of his companions, he is welcome to do it.

3. That even then, when he worked for the supply of his own necessities, yet he spared something out of what he got for the relief of others; for this

he here obliges them to do (v. 35): “*I have shown you all things, that is, in all the parts of your duty I have set you your copy and given you a good example, and particularly in this, that so labouring you ought to support the weak.*” Some understand it of their supporting the faith of weak believers, by removing the prejudices which some conceived against Christianity, as if the preachers of it made a gainful trade of their preaching, and the gospel was only a trick to get money by, and pick people's pockets. “Now, that you may *cut off occasion from those that seek occasion to reproach us*, and so may support the weak among us, you will do well, for the present, to get your livelihood by the labour of your hands, and not to depend upon your ministry.” But I rather understand it of their helping to support the sick, and the poor, and those that could not labour, because it agrees with Paul's exhortation (^{400B}Ephesians 4:28): *Let him labour, working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* We must labour in an honest employment, not only that we may be able to live, but that we may be able to give. This might seem a hard saying, and therefore Paul backs it with a saying of our Master's, which he would have them always to remember. These words our Lord Jesus said; it should seem, they were words he often used to his disciples. When he himself did so much good gratis, and bade them to do so too (^{400B}Matthew 10:8, 9), he added this saying, which, though nowhere recorded by the evangelists, yet Paul had by word of mouth from Peter, or some other of the disciples; and an excellent saying it is, and has something of a paradox in it: *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* “It is” (saith Dr. Tillotson) “a particular endearment of this admirable saying of our Saviour's to us, that, being omitted by the evangelists, and in danger of being lost and forgotten, it was thus happily retrieved by St. Paul, and recorded by St. Luke.” It is more blessed to give to others than to receive from others; not only more blessed to be rich, and so on the giving hand, than to be poor, and so on the receiving hand (every one will own this); but more blessed to do good with what we have, be it much or little, than to increase it and make it more. The sentiment of the children of this world is contrary to this; they are afraid of giving. “This giving,” they say, “undoes us all;” but they are in hope of getting. *Every one for his gain from his quarter,* ^{400B}Isaiah 56:11. Clear gain is with them the most blessed thing that can be; but Christ tells us, *It is more blessed* (more excellent in itself, an evidence of a more excellent disposition of mind, and the way to a better blessedness at last) *to give than to receive.* It makes us more like to God, who gives to all, and receives from none; and to the Lord Jesus, *who went*

about doing good. It is more blessed to give our pains than to receive pay for it, and what we should delight to do if the necessities of ourselves and families would admit it. It is more pleasant to do good to the grateful, but it is more honourable to do good to the ungrateful, for then we have God to be our paymaster, who will reward in the resurrection of the just what has not otherwise been recompensed.

⌄ ACTS 20:36-38

PAUL TAKES LEAVE OF THE ELDERS OF EPHESUS

After the parting sermon that Paul preached to the elders of Ephesus, which was very affecting, we have here the parting prayer and tears, which were yet more affecting; we can scarcely read the account here given of them, and meditate upon them with dry eyes.

I. They parted with prayer (v. 36): *And, when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.* And, no doubt, it was a prayer every way suited to the present mournful occasion. He committed them to God in this prayer, prayed that he would not leave them, but continue his presence with them.

1. It was a joint prayer. He not only prayed for them, but prayed with them, *prayed with them all*; that they might put up the same petitions for themselves and one another that he put up to God for them all, and that they might learn what to ask of God for themselves when he was gone. Public prayers are so far from being intended to supersede our own secret prayers, and make them needless, that they are designed to quicken and encourage them, and to direct us in them. When we are alone we should pray over the prayers that our ministers have put up with us.

2. It was a humble reverent prayer. This was expressed by the posture they used: *He kneeled down, and prayed with them*, which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and significant both of adoration and of petition, especially petition for the forgiveness of sin. Paul used it much: *I bow my knees*, ⌄ Ephesians 3:14.

3. It was a prayer after sermon; and, we may suppose, he prayed over what he had preached. He had committed the care of the church at Ephesus to

those elders, and now he prays that God would enable them faithfully to discharge this great trust reposed in them, and would give them those measures of wisdom and grace which it required; he prayed for the flock, and all that belonged to it, *that the great Shepherd of the sheep* would take care of them all, and keep them from being a prey to the grievous wolves. Thus he taught these ministers to pray for those they preached to, *that they might not labour in vain*.

4. It was a parting prayer, which might be likely to leave lasting impressions, as the farewell sermon did. It is good for friends, when they part, to part with prayer, that by praying together just at parting they may be enabled to pray the more feelingly one for another when they are separated, which is one part of our Christian duty, and an improvement of the communion of saints. The Lord watch between us, and watch over us both, when we are absent one from the other, is a good parting prayer (~~434~~Genesis 31:49), as also that our next meeting may be either nearer heaven or in heaven. Paul here followed the example of Christ, who, when he took leave of his disciples, after he had preached to them, prayed with them all, ~~450~~John 17:1.

II. They parted with tears, abundance of tears, and most affectionate embraces, v. 37, 38.

1. *They all wept sorely.* We have reason to think the Paul himself began; though he was determined to go, and saw his call clear to other work, yet he was sorry in his heart to leave them, and many a tear it cost him. He that was so often in tears while he was with them (v. 19, 31), no doubt shed many at parting, so watering what he had sown among them. But the notice is taken of their tears: *They all wept sorely*; there was not a dry eye among them, and it is probable the affectionate expressions Paul used in prayer set them a-weeping. These were tears of love and mutual endearment, like those of Jonathan and David, when they were forced to part, and *wept one with another, until* (as if they wept for strife) *David exceeded*, ~~484~~1 Samuel 20:41.

2. *They fell upon Paul's neck, and kissed him*, all, one after another, each bewailing his own loss: "How can I part with this invaluable man, this blessed Paul," says one, "in whom my life is a manner bound up?" — "Farewell, my dear friend," says another, "a thousand thanks to thee, and ten thousand to God for thee, and for all the pains thou hast taken with me

for my good.” “And must we part?” says another: “must I lose my spiritual father, nurse, and guide?” — “What will become of us now?” says another, “when we shall no more have him to apply to, and receive direction from? What shall I do, if the Lord take away my master from my head? *My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.*” Note, Those that are most loving are commonly best beloved. Paul, who was a most affectionate friend himself, had friends that were very affectionate to him. These tears at parting with Paul were a grateful return for all the tears he had shed in preaching to them and praying with them. *He that watereth shall be watered also himself.*

3. That which cut them to the heart thus, and made this place such a *Bochim*, such a place of weepers, was, *that word which Paul spoke, that he was certain they should see his face no more.* If he had given them directions to follow him, as he did to those that were his usual companions, or any intimation that he would come hereafter and make them a visit, they could have borne this parting pretty well; but when they are told that they shall see his face no more in this world, that it is a final farewell they are now giving and taking, this makes it a great mourning; it makes farewell just like a funeral, and puts them into this passion of weeping. There were other things for which they sorrowed — that they should lose the benefit of his public performances, and see him no longer presiding in their assemblies, should have none of his personal counsels and comforts; and, we hope, they sorrowed for their own sin, in not profiting more by his labours while they had him among them, and which had provoked God to order his remove. But that which gave the most sensible accent to their grief was *that they should see his face no more.* When our friends are separated from us by death, this is the consideration with which we raise up our mourning, that we shall see their faces no more; but we complain of this as those that have no hope, for if our friends died in Christ, and we live to him, they are gone to see God's face, to behold his glory, with the reflection of which their faces shine, and we hope to be with them shortly. Though we shall see their faces no more in this world, we hope to see them again in a better world, and to be there together for ever and with the Lord.

III. They *accompanied him unto the ship*, partly to show their respect for him (they would bring him on his way as far as they could), and partly that they might have a little more of his company and conversation; if it must be the last interview, they will have as much of him as they can, and see

the last of him. And we have reason to think that when they came to the water-side, and he was about to go on board, their tears and embraces were repeated; for loth to part bids oft farewell. But this was a comfort to both sides, and soon turned this tide of passion, that the presence of Christ both went with him and staid with them.