

Paul's Goodbye to the Ephesian Elders

Acts 20:17-38

Introduction:

A. Paul and Ephesian elders:

1. Had spent 3 years together — more than any church. (v. 31).
2. Last time to see each other. (v. 38).
3. Future is both uncertain and troubling for Paul (vv. 22, 23) and church (v. 29).
4. What does one say at such time?

B. Paul addresses his *desires*, past and present, for himself and the church.

Discussion:

I. What Paul Wanted for *Himself*.

A. To be innocent of the blood of all men. (vs. 26,27, cf. Ezek. 33:1-6).

1. By teaching every needed subject. (vs. 20,21,26,27).
2. By teaching it to anyone who needed it. (v. 21). - if one rejected turn to another. (cf. Acts 13:46)
3. By teaching it anywhere or anytime. (v. 31)

B. To finish his race (course) with joy. (v. 24)

1. Paul: By not allowing physical threats to move him. (vv. 23,24)
2. Us: By not allowing unjust criticisms and other hardships move us.
3. By being like a field goal kicker: Unmoved by rushing line, eye on ball & goal.

C. To protect his good influence.

1. By not appearing to be mercenary. (33-35).
2. By not abusing his liberty. (cf. I Cor. 9:3,6,14).
3. By putting his influence for good first, personal comfort second.

II. What Paul Wanted for *the Church*.

A. To be kept both United and Sound. (vs. 28-31).

1. By a strong and alert leadership. (Elders v. 28; Preachers v. 31)
2. By a strong and alert membership. ("everyone", v. 31).
3. By understanding the source of greatest danger - "From yourselves" (vv. 29,30).

B. To receive its inheritance. (v. 32).

1. By being built up and sanctified.
2. By the "word of His grace".
 - a. Not by gimmicks.
 - b. Not by promotional hype.
 - c. Not by worldly wisdom.
 - d. Not by just being active.

C. To know the real value of work. (vv. 34,35).

1. To meet personal obligations. (v. 34; cf. 1 Tim. 5:8).
2. To avoid either theft or sponging. (cf. Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:8-10).
3. To have to give to others. (v. 35; Eph. 4:28).

Conclusion:

A. What do you want for yourself? For the church?

B. What are we doing to make church what God wants for it?