

PAUL SAYS "AUF WIEDERSEHEN" TO THE ELDERS
OF THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS
(ACTS 20:17-38)

INTRODUCTION:

This was a special called meeting of these officials ~~and rulers~~ of the church. Probably some of the other members of the church came along with their elders.

This was Paul's last time to see their face. This was the last message Paul preached before he was arrested and imprisoned in J'lem and taken to Rome.

I. IN THE FIRST DIVISION PAUL MAKES HIS DEFENSE OR GIVES HIS VINDICATION OF HIMSELF AND HIS MINISTRY. vs. 18-27; *His past ministry in Eph. 18-21.*

A. To the world --

He has paid his debt to Jew and Greek

B. His ministry or service had three marks

1. Humble mindedness *His present journey towards imprisonment, 22-24*
2. Tears
3. Trials or temptations

C. He had not shrunk from declaring the whole counsel of God.

He did not hide or keep back any part of the gospel.

His emphasis was on repentance and faith,

In the 2nd div. Paul gives pastoral direction in vs. 21

II. HIS CHARGE TO THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH, 28-31

A. Here we have the shortest pastoral manual if the NT. *(The only Pauline speech in Acts to the elders)*

B. In vs. 27 we have the central fact concerning the church of God: "The Church of God which He purchased with His own blood"

1. The church is the "ecclesia", *the central fact of the Church*
God's "called out" company of people.

2. The church is "purchased", ransomed, acquired, obtained.

This does not imply paying a price to anyone or buying from someone.

Like a Judge's Charge to the jury.

*"Elders" (vs. 17) parallel w/ "Bishop" or "overseer" (vs. 28)
Pastors are overseers as well as shepherds.*

3. Notice the mystery & significance in the expression "His own blood", or "blood that was his own".

The blood that was shed must be more than human; it must be divine; when Paul says "his own blood", the antecedent of "his own" is "God."

The church was purchased with God's own blood.

But we know it was the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed on the Cross.

This was the blood that purchased our redemption.

We cannot mistake the fact that Paul here is equating Christ with God.

Christ, whose blood was shed, is God.

The underlying doctrine here is the doctrine of the atonement.

The real solution is to be found in the doctrine of the Trinity.

This verse reminds us of Rom. 9:5, written just about this same time in Paul's life, where he speaks of Christ as being "over all, GOD blessed forever".

Paul's ominous future death, vs. 23-31

4. He charges the elders to take heed of the imminent peril of false teaching, (*struggle w/ heresy*) coming both from without and within (29-31).

Commendation

III. IN HIS FAREWELL (vs 32-38) HE GIVES THE ALL SUFFICIENT PROVISION FOR THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

Commendation

A. "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace."

B. These are your resources:

God, and the word of his grace.

These are always the resources of the Christian Church.

C. This word is able to build up the church.

~~D. He appeals to the integrity of his private life.~~ *Paul's last speech before prison.*

~~He had given a living example of a servant of Christ.~~

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John Milton in his great poem Lycidas tells of Jesus as "The Pilot of the Galilean Take" speaking sternly of false shepherds who "Creep and intrude and climb into the fold...[merely] for their bellies' sake..." and care not for the sheep."

In one of the greatest metaphors of the English language, he paradoxically calls them "Blind mouths!" Literally, this is an impossible contradiction in terms. Instead of OVERSEEING the flock, they do not see at all; and instead of feeding the hungry mouths of the sheep, all they are interested in is feeding their own mouths; ~~they know~~ nothing of the true art of shepherding or pastoring souls.

And the worst tragedy is that

"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."

Besides this, grim wolves come in from the outside and devour the sheep and smite them with their violence and ruthless power.

(See lines 108-131)

The great perils of the church have always been
first, those within,
then, those without.

John Ruskin's comment on this passage is that
a Bishop is a person who sees,
and a pastor is a person who feeds.

The worst character a bishop can have is therefore to be
blind.

And the worst character a pastor can have is,
instead of feeding, to want to BE FED,--
to be a Mouth.