SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 20

The Whole Purpose of God — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

A pastor who held nothing back hands his people to God and to the word of His grace, and charges their shepherds to guard a flock that God bought with His own blood. Whatever my life costs, the point is to finish the course Jesus gave me — awake, humble, generous and faithful.

00 The Text

ACTS 20 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia.

2 When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece.

3 And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

4 And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

5 But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.

6 We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.

10 But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him."

11 When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left.

12 They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.

13 But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land.

14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

15 Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;

20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 "And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

25 "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

26 "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.

34 "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.

35 "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

36 When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

37 And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him,

38 grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

Marked in the text

- **v7** "On the first day of the week" — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** "gathered together to break bread" — Command / instruction
- **v7** "until midnight" — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** "fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead" — Sin / warning
- **v10** "his life is in him" — Promise / blessing
- **v12** "They took away the boy alive" — Promise / blessing
- **v16** "he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem" — Time / place / contrast
- **v19** "serving the Lord with all humility and with tears" — Command / instruction
- **v20** "publicly and from house to house" — Time / place / contrast
- **v21** "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" — Command / instruction
- **v22** "bound by the Spirit" — God — His character & actions

- **v23** “bonds and afflictions await me” — Sin / warning
- **v24** “I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself” — Command / instruction
- **v24** “finish my course” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “the gospel of the grace of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v26** “I am innocent of the blood of all men” — Sin / warning
- **v27** “the whole purpose of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v28** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock” — Command / instruction
- **v28** “the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” — God — His character & actions
- **v28** “which He purchased with His own blood” — God — His character & actions
- **v29** “savage wolves will come in among you” — Sin / warning
- **v30** “speaking perverse things” — Sin / warning
- **v31** “be on the alert” — Command / instruction
- **v32** “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace” — Promise / blessing
- **v32** “able to build you up and to give you the inheritance” — Promise / blessing
- **v35** “It is more blessed to give than to receive” — Promise / blessing
- **v36** “he knelt down and prayed with them all” — Command / instruction
- **v19** “tears” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v28** “flock” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

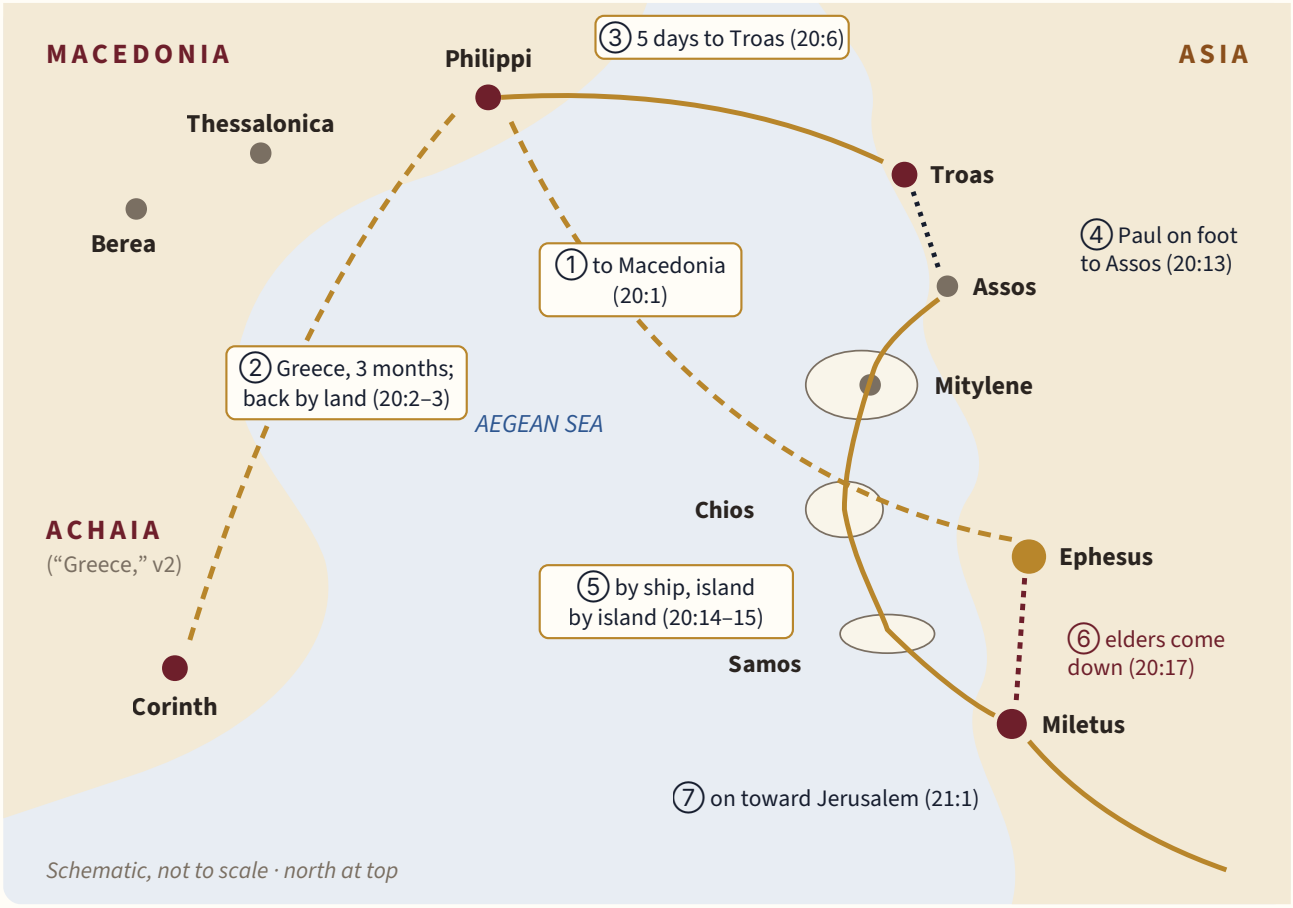
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 20:7

"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight."

FIGURE · PAUL'S ROUTE, ACTS 20



Follow the numbers: from Ephesus to Macedonia and Greece, back by land, across to Troas, then island by island down the coast to Miletus, where the Ephesian elders come to meet him.

Setting. After the riot, Paul says goodbye to the disciples in Ephesus and goes to Macedonia and Greece, where he spends three months (vv1–3). A plot changes his route; he goes back through Macedonia with seven companions from the churches (vv3–4). Luke rejoins him ("we," v5) at Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread; they reach Troas in five days and stay seven (v6). On the first day of the week Paul preaches until midnight and Eutychus falls and is raised (vv7–12). Then Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos and Miletus (vv13–15), where Paul calls the Ephesian elders and gives his farewell (vv16–38).

Structure:

- vv1–6 — **the journey:** Macedonia, much exhortation, Greece three months (vv1–3); a plot; the companions listed (vv3–4); Troas (vv5–6).
- vv7–12 — **Troas:** the first day of the week, breaking bread, Paul talks until midnight (v7); many lamps in the upper room (v8); Eutychus sinks into sleep and falls from the third floor — picked up dead (v9); "his life is in him" (v10); bread broken, talk till daybreak (v11); the boy alive, all comforted (v12).
- vv13–21 — **looking back:** Paul goes by land to Assos (vv13–14); island by island to Miletus (v15); hurrying for Pentecost (v16); the elders called (v17); "You yourselves know … how I was with you" — humility, tears, trials (vv18–19); nothing held back, publicly and house to house (v20); repentance toward God and faith in Christ (v21).
- vv22–24 — **looking ahead:** bound by the Spirit, not knowing what awaits (v22); bonds and afflictions (v23); "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself" — finish my course (v24).
- vv25–31 — **the charge:** you will not see my face again (v25); innocent of the blood of all men (v26); the whole purpose of God (v27); be on guard — overseers, shepherd the church bought with His own blood (v28); savage wolves and perverse men (vv29–30); be on the alert — three years of tears (v31).
- vv32–38 — **the commendation:** to God and the word of His grace (v32); no one's silver or gold (v33); these hands (v34); help the weak — "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v35); prayer, weeping, embraces, the ship (vv36–38).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "day / days" ×12 — vv6 (×3), 7 (×2), 15 (×3), 16, 18, 26, 31 — Luke's careful travel log.
- "Paul" ×7 — vv1, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16, 37.
- "know / knowing" ×5 — vv18, 22, 25, 29, 34; "You yourselves know" ×2 — vv18, 34.
- "God" ×5 — vv21, 24, 27, 28, 32.
- "Lord" ×4 — vv19, 21, 24, 35 — three times "the Lord Jesus."
- "testify / testifying / testifies" ×4 — vv21, 23, 24, 26.
- "Spirit" ×3 — vv22, 23, 28.
- "Jews" ×3 — vv3, 19, 21; "Asia" ×3 — vv4, 16, 18; "bread" ×3 — vv6, 7, 11.
- "talking / talked" ×3 — vv7, 9, 11.
- "shrink" ×2 — vv20, 27; "blood" ×2 — vv26, 28; "grace" ×2 — vv24, 32.
- "flock" ×2 — vv28, 29; "tears" ×2 — vv19, 31; "house" ×2 — v20.
- "see my face / his face" ×2 — vv25, 38; "Jerusalem" ×2 — vv16, 22; "church" ×2 — vv17, 28.

Contrasts: Midnight ⟷ daybreak (vv7, 11). Picked up dead ⟷ taken away alive (vv9, 12). Publicly ⟷ house to house (v20). Jews ⟷ Greeks (v21). Not knowing what will happen ⟷ knowing that bonds await (vv22–23). My life ⟷ my course (v24). Innocent of blood (v26) ⟷ purchased with His own blood (v28). Wolves from outside ⟷ men from among your own selves (vv29–30). Coveting silver ⟷ working with these hands (vv33–34). Giving ⟷ receiving (v35).

Shape of the chapter: a travel log (1–16) wrapped around one night at Troas, then one long speech (18–35) that moves from past to future to charge to commendation, and a short, tearful ending (36–38). The two scenes mirror

each other: at Troas a young man falls asleep and dies under the word; at Miletus Paul tells the elders to stay awake (“be on the alert,” v31) or the flock will be torn.

Chapter theme (my words): Paul finishes his work in Asia the way he did it — holding nothing back, at any cost, for a church that belongs to God. He hands the shepherds a charge and hands the church to the word of grace, and he goes toward chains with his eyes open.

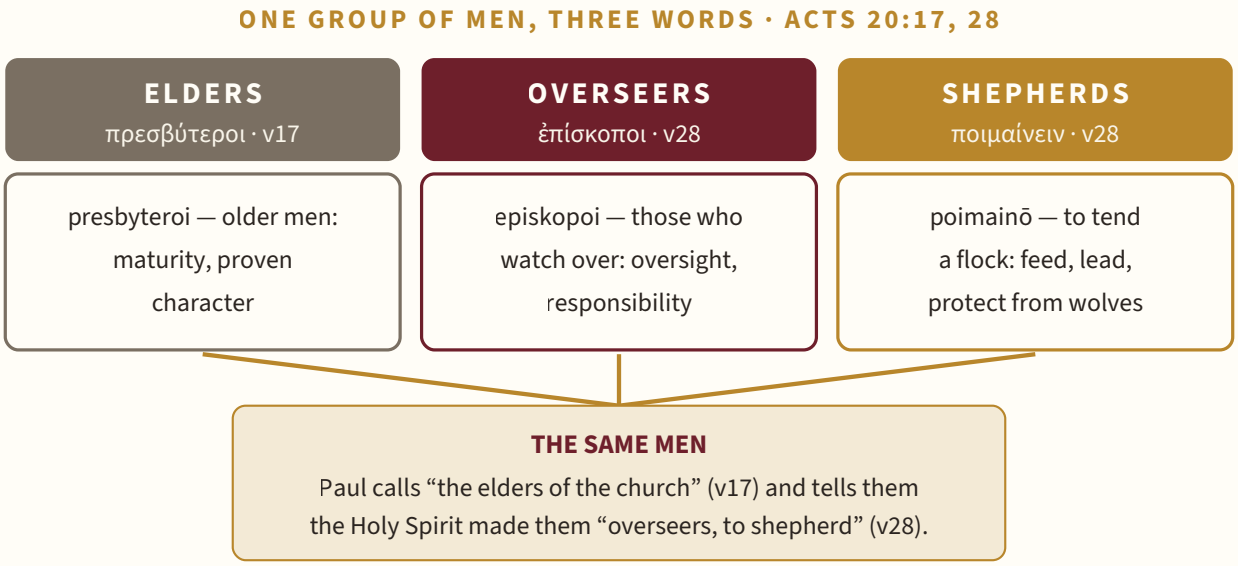
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 20:27

"For I did not shrink from declaring to you △the whole purpose of God."

FIGURE · ELDERS, OVERSEERS, SHEPHERDS



Notice that the men Paul calls "elders" in verse 17 are the same men he calls "overseers" and tells to "shepherd" in verse 28.

Why list the seven companions (v4)? They come from churches across Macedonia, Galatia and Asia. Guzik (with Longenecker) sees them as delegates carrying the collection for Jerusalem — "a symbol of unity that would help his Gentile converts realize their debt." Paul's letters confirm the collection (1 Corinthians 16:1–3; Romans 15:25–26), though Luke only hints at it here (see 24:17).

What was the gathering at Troas? "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread" (v7). Guzik's commentary calls it "the first certain example we have of Christians making a practice to gather together on the first day of the week." Henry speaks of believers meeting on the Lord's day to break bread. Luke does not stop to define "break bread," but it names the reason the church gathered.

Did Eutychus really die? Luke says he "was picked up dead" (v9), not "as if dead." Paul's "his life is in him" (v10) is the word of a man who has just seen life return, as when Elisha stretched himself on the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:34). Henry and Sproul both draw the lesson for hearers: stay awake to the word. Henry: "Let the punishment of Eutychus strike an awe upon us." But the story ends in comfort, not scolding: "They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted."

Why the long speech at Miletus? It is Paul's only address in Acts to Christian leaders, and it sounds like Paul's letters to Timothy. He defends his ministry (vv18–21), faces his future (vv22–24), charges the elders (vv25–31) and commends them (vv32–35). Guzik takes "from house to house" to show that the Ephesian church met in homes.

What is "the whole purpose of God"? Not every fact in Scripture but God's whole saving plan, told without trimming. Spurgeon: "That is no gospel which has not Christ in it," and "Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living." Henry: "The gospel is the counsel of God." Paul's word "shrink" (*hypostellō*) twice (vv20, 27) shows the danger: leaving out the hard parts.

Why "innocent of the blood of all men"? It is Ezekiel's watchman language (Ezekiel 33:6): the watchman who warns is clear; the one who keeps silent is guilty. Guzik: "Paul could leave them with a clear conscience because he knew that he taught them the whole counsel of God." Spurgeon took the same words for a farewell sermon of his own in 1859.

Elders, overseers, shepherds. Paul calls "the elders" (v17) and tells them the Holy Spirit made them "overseers" to "shepherd" (v28). In this text the three words describe the same men. Churches organize leadership differently, but every pattern has to answer to this: they are made by the Holy Spirit, they watch over themselves first (Henry: "take heed to themselves in the first place"), and the flock is not theirs.

"Purchased with His own blood." The text the interlinear shows reads "the church of God," and so the blood is God's own — a strong statement that Jesus is God. Some manuscripts read "the church of the Lord," and some scholars translate "with the blood of His own [Son]." Either way, Guzik is right: "the church doesn't belong to them, it belongs to Jesus who purchased it with His own blood."

Who are the wolves? False teachers from outside (v29) and from inside (v30). Guzik: "These wolves would be vicious." Henry: "these he calls grievous wolves." History bears Paul out: in 1 Timothy 1:3 Paul has to leave Timothy at Ephesus to stop "strange doctrines," and by Revelation 2:4 the church had resisted false apostles but "left your first love."

The saying of Jesus (v35). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" appears in no Gospel; Paul preserved it. He lived it — working with his own hands (v34) — and Guzik draws the rule for leaders: "Without a heart of sacrifice there can be no real effective, eternal ministry."

Word study (Greek):

- **first day of the week — *mia tōn sabbatōn* (G1520, G4521):** the resurrection day (v7).
- **break — *klaō* (G2806) / bread — *artos* (G740):** used only of breaking bread (vv7, 11; 2:46).
- **Eutychus — *Eutychos* (G2161):** "fortunate"; window — *thyris* (G2376); embracing — *symperilambanō* (G4843).
- **elders — *presbyteros* (G4245):** the men Paul calls to Miletus (v17).
- **humility — *tapeinophrosynē* (G5012):** lowliness of mind (v19; Phil 2:3).
- **shrink from — *hypostellō* (G5288):** to hold back (vv20, 27).
- **solemnly testify — *diamartyromai* (G1263):** earnest witness (vv21, 23, 24).
- **bound — *deō* (G1210):** bound in spirit before bound in chains (v22; 21:11, 13).
- **course — *dromos* (G1408):** a race to finish (v24; 2 Tim 4:7).
- **purpose — *boulē* (G1012):** God's resolved plan (v27; 2:23).
- **be on guard — *prosechō* (G4337):** take heed (v28).
- **overseers — *episkopos* (G1985) / shepherd — *poimainō* (G4165) / flock — *poimnion* (G4168):** one office, pastoral work (v28).
- **purchased — *peripoieō* (G4046) / blood — *haima* (G129):** acquired for Himself at the price of blood (v28).
- **savage — *barys* (G926) / wolves — *lykos* (G3074):** heavy, fierce (v29).

- **be on the alert — *grēgoreō* (G1127) / admonish — *noutheteō* (G3560):** stay awake; warn with tears (v31).
- **commend — *paratithēmi* (G3908) / build up — *oikodomeō* (G3618) / inheritance — *klēronomia* (G2817):** entrusted to God and His word (v32).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The church met on the day the Lord rose** (v7).
2. **Lucky had nothing to do with it** — "his life is in him" (vv9–10).
3. **Stay awake for the word** (Henry, Sproul).
4. **Public and house to house** (v20).
5. **Not shrinking is the test** — *hypostellō* twice (vv20, 27).
6. **Finish well, not long** (v24).
7. **The whole counsel includes duty** (Spurgeon).
8. **Elders, overseers, shepherds — one office** (vv17, 28).
9. **The flock has an Owner** — bought with His own blood (v28).
10. **Giving is the Lord's own word** (v35).

Cross-references: 2 Kings 4:32–35; Ezek 33:1–9; Matt 7:15; Luke 22:19; 23:46; John 10:11–12; Acts 2:23, 42; 14:23; 19:21; 21:11–13; 24:17; Rom 15:25–26; 1 Cor 16:1–3; 2 Cor 1:8–9; Eph 1:7; 4:28; Phil 2:3; 3:13–14; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 4:6–7; 1 Pet 5:2–4; Rev 2:4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 20:24

"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

FIGURE · THE FAREWELL AT MILETUS

PAUL'S FAREWELL AT MILETUS · ACTS 20:18–35 IN FOUR PARTS

LOOKING BACK vv18–21	LOOKING AHEAD vv22–27	THE CHARGE vv28–31	THE COMMENDATION vv32–35
"how I was with you"	bound by the Spirit	be on guard	to God and the word
humility, tears, trials	bonds await me	shepherd the church	of His grace
nothing held back	finish my course	bought with blood	no one's silver
public, house to house	innocent of blood	wolves from outside,	these hands worked
repentance and faith	the whole purpose	men from inside	more blessed to give

THE SAME VOICE AS THE PASTORAL LETTERS

"I have finished the course" (2 Tim 4:7) · "shepherd the flock of God among you" (1 Pet 5:2)

He opens and closes with "You yourselves know" (vv18, 34).

Read the four panels left to right — Paul's past, his future, his charge to the elders and his commendation of them to God.

Example to follow — Paul with the elders. "You yourselves know … how I was with you the whole time." He could point to his life, not just his teaching: humility, tears, hard work, nothing held back, house to house. The men I serve don't need a perfect leader; they need one they can watch up close who keeps showing up honest. I want to be able to say, "You know how I was with you."

Sin to confess — shrinking back. Twice Paul says, "I did not shrink from declaring." I have shrunk. I have skipped the hard verse, softened the warning, kept quiet when a brother was heading for the cliff because I didn't want the awkwardness. Ezekiel's watchman stands over that silence. I confess it, and I ask God for the courage to say the whole thing in love.

Command to obey — be on guard and be on the alert. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock." Henry is right: "take heed to themselves in the first place." I can't guard anybody if I am asleep in the window. This week I will guard my own heart first — the Word every morning, honesty with my accountability partner — and then check on the men God has put in front of me, by name.

Promise to trust — the word of His grace is able. Paul couldn't stay, so he commended them "to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance." When I have to leave a man — at the end of a group, at the gate of a facility, at a hospital bed — I don't leave him alone. I leave him with God and His Word, and that Word is able.

Example to follow — the Lord Jesus. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Jesus said it, Paul lived it with calloused hands. I will give something this week that costs me — time, money or work — to help someone weaker than me.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Eutychus sat in the window and drifted off while the word was taught. Where am I sitting "in the window" — half in, half out — and what keeps me from being fully awake to God's Word? (20:7–12) *Remain alert and engaged with God's Word (Sproul).*
2. Paul says he served "with all humility and with tears." What does humble, costly service look like in my home or my group this month? (20:18–21; Phil 2:3) *Humility of mind, many tears (Henry).*
3. What would it mean for me to say, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself"? What am I protecting that keeps me from finishing my course? (20:22–24; 2 Tim 4:7) *A runner who had a race to finish (Guzik).*
4. Paul "did not shrink from declaring" the whole purpose of God. What part of God's Word do I tend to skip — in my own reading or when I talk with other men? (20:20, 26–27) *Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living (Spurgeon).*
5. Paul warned of wolves from outside and men from inside. How do I watch over the men God has given me without becoming suspicious or controlling? (20:28–31; 1 Pet 5:2–3) *Take heed to yourselves in the first place (Henry).*
6. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Where is God asking me to work with my own hands so I can help the weak? (20:33–35; Eph 4:28) *Without a heart of sacrifice there can be no real effective, eternal ministry (Guzik).*

Worship. The Lord Jesus gives life back to a young man picked up dead. He is the Chief Shepherd who bought His church with His own blood. His Spirit makes overseers and warns of chains, and His word of grace is able to build up and bring home every one of His people. He said it Himself: it is more blessed to give — and no one ever gave as He gave.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, wake me up — I don't want to sleep in the window while You are speaking. Forgive me for shrinking back from the hard parts of Your Word. Make me humble enough to serve with tears and brave enough to say the whole truth in love. Guard my own heart first, and then help me guard the men You have given me. I don't count my life dear; let me finish my course with joy. I commend myself and every one of these men to You and to the word of Your grace. Amen.

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