

Acts 20 - John Karmelich

1. Let's say you were teaching a class or saying goodbye to younger college you have been training. What would be your final words? What would you want them to remember most?
 - a. Suppose you could talk as long as you want, but it was only one speech, and when you're done, you're gone for good. What information would you want to convey?
2. This is what we get from Paul in Acts Chapter 20.
 - a. Chapter 20 focuses on 2 speeches Paul gives to two groups of believers in two different cities. In each case, he went gave one final message, assuming he would never see them again.
 - b. Reading this, we get an idea of what is important to Paul, and thus, get a pretty good clue as what is important to us as Christians. (That means pay attention! ☺)
3. Chapter 20 wraps up Paul's 3rd missionary journey. Luke rejoins Paul's group of disciples in this chapter. You'll notice the pronouns change from "they" to "we".
 - a. Like most of the previous chapters of Paul's adventures, there are patterns to watch for. Some of the things Paul does and doesn't do make excellent examples of how to live our Christian lives.
 - i. That's always a good thing to look for when you're reading the Bible: patterns. As you read your Bible, ask yourself "why is this person doing this action *this* way? Why did God act *that* way and not *this* way? That is usually great lessons in studying the patterns of actions taken in the Bible. That is what "mediating" on the Bible is all about. Reading a passage and just thinking about it.
 - b. As Paul completes his journey, you'll see times when Paul chooses to sail to the next destination, and other times he chooses to walk. The "why's" of Paul's choices has some good insight for us as Christians.
4. With that surprisingly brief intro, let's get rolling! ☺
5. Chapter 20, Verse 1: When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-by and set out for Macedonia.² He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece,³ where he stayed three months.
 - a. Verse 1 mentions an "uproar". What uproar?
 - i. Remember there are no chapter breaks in the original text.
 - ii. The last part of Chapter 19 was the big riot where a mob was chanting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for 2 hours, before the city officials broke up the crowds. Paul was prevented from speaking to this mob, as the "preventor's" feared Paul losing his life.
 - b. This verse says Paul left Ephesus soon afterwards. He encouraged the newly appointed leaders of the churches of Ephesus, and was now traveling to Macedonia.
 - i. Commentators surmise that this period of Paul traveling through Macedonia and Greece is about a year in length. In 2nd Timothy Chapter 4, it mentions that Titus went further north to what-is-today-Albania, Croatia and Yugoslavia. Paul may have traveled that far during this journey, but it is not known.
 - c. For the most part, Paul was probably revisiting churches and locations he has already established. This included Athens, Berea and Corinth. Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians and the Book of Romans were probably written during this time period.
 - d. There is one word used twice in the 1st two verses: "encouragement".
 - i. As Christians we tend to forget how important that is.
 - ii. These Christians faced physical persecution from non-believers. Encouragement is essential during rough times.

- iii. God also puts Christians through periods of time where He is silent in our lives. It is not because He doesn't love us, He is just teaching us to walk by *faith* when he's not around. During times like that, encouragement from other believers is essential. This is just another example of why Christians are to work *together* and not individually.
- 6. Verse 3, continued: Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia.
 - a. What most commentators, surmise, and probably is true, is that there was a plot to kill Paul. The plot was to kill Paul *after* the ship had left the port, say, by throwing him overboard. Then the murders could say Paul drowned "by accident". Paul found out about this plot and traveled by foot instead of by sea.
 - i. Here's another example of "patterns" for us to study. God was calling Paul to move on to the next town. Paul didn't say, "God is going to protect me no matter what, I'll just get on the ship". Paul used logic when he did not get a direct revelation from God.
- 7. Verse 4: He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.⁵ These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas.
 - a. Luke is listing Paul's travel companions. Remember that everybody is important to God, not just Paul, and these men's names are recorded throughout history.
 - b. Notice that every man listed here is from a different city.
 - i. We learn from Romans 15:26 that Paul took up a money collection to help the church in Jerusalem. Jerusalem and the surrounding area were going through a famine at the time, and needed financial support (see Acts 11:28 for a cross-reference to the famine).
 - ii. I think Paul was trying to show unity in the church by having representatives from different churches come with Paul to bring the money to Jerusalem.
 - iii. We also surmise that the threat to kill Paul didn't affect the other disciples as they boarded the ship.
 - iv. These men were probably all young men that Paul asked to join him over the previous year in Macedonia and Greece. Paul probably used the travel time to further instruct potential future leaders in these churches. Imagine having Paul himself as your instructor! The lesson for us as Christians is to be willing to mentor younger Christians for leadership.
- 8. Verse 6: But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.
 - a. "The Feast of Unleavened Bread" is a collective name for 3 Jewish holidays, which include the Feast of Unleavened Bread itself, The Feast of Firstfruits and Passover. Notice Paul still celebrated Passover. I personally take the view that when Jews become Christians, God does not expect them to abandon their Jewish heritage. When God gave the instructions to the Jews on celebrating Passover, He said to observe this holiday *forever*, not just until the Messiah comes. This is why Messianic Jewish churches still celebrate Passover.
 - b. This journey took 5 days. In Acts 16:11, the same journey (in the opposite direction) only took one day. OK, John, big deal, so the winds were against them. So what? ☺
 - i. Remember to watch for patterns! In Verse 16 we learn that Paul was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem before the next big holiday, which was Pentecost. Pentecost is a little over 50 days after Passover. (See Leviticus 23:15). By delaying Paul's return trip to Jerusalem, God may have been testing Paul's patience.
 - ii. Just because the return trip was difficult, does *not* mean Paul (and us) are out of God's will! (See, another pattern for our lives! ☺)

9. Paul now stops in Troas. Luke tells a story of something that happened here in Troas. Verse 7: On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.
 - a. Here is the first mention of "the first day of the week" as a gathering day for Christians. This is a reason why church service is usually on Sunday, and not Saturday. Sunday is considered the first day of the week. Saturday is associated with the Jewish Sabbath. (The words "Sunday" and "Saturday" have nothing to do with this discussion, and that's a whole separate topic I'll save for another day!)
 - b. Paul was planning to leave the next day. It was still a long trip to Jerusalem and he was in a hurry. So he talked until midnight teaching.
 - i. Luke says Paul spoke all night, until the morning light. Don't show this verse to your pastor. We don't want to give them any ideas. ☺
 - ii. The other joke is don't be too tough on your pastor. He may take
 - iii. Revenge and for his last sermon, preach an "all-nighter!" ☺
10. Verse 8: There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. ⁹ Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead.
 - a. There are a lot of cute jokes here about how it's "biblical" to fall asleep in sermons. Unfortunately, Eutychus died from falling asleep, so, so-much for that theory! ☺
 - b. I visualize this dwelling place as a 3-story house. The 2nd floor was a large 2-story room, possibly with a mezzanine or balcony. Eutychus was sitting in the window. He fell asleep, and fell outside to the ground.
 - c. There are some interesting conjectures as to why Luke mentions the fact there are "many lamps" were present in this meeting room.
 - i. One popular theory is that the lamps consumed up a lot of oxygen, and thus making this young man Eutychus sleepy!
 - ii. A better conjecture is that the lights were used as a public witness to those who passed by. Historians tell of ugly rumors spread about Christians. For example, because Jesus said, "this is my body/my blood given for you", that somehow, Christians were into cannibalism. Therefore, the lighted rooms were to show that these rumors were not true. (A good application for us!)
 - iii. A simple, but probable conjecture is that Paul was speaking at night, people were taking notes, and/or every family needed a lamp to get home.
11. Verse 10: Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!"
 - a. There are some really good symbolic sermons preached from these verses. Some people think these types of sermons take the text too far out of context, so be your own judge here. This particular example is based on Jon Curson's commentary.
 - i. Here was this young man Eutychus at Paul's Bible study. He wasn't sitting up front, he was in the back. In fact he was in the back row by the window. As he was not paying attention, he became spiritually "dead". Paul, like Jesus, our good shepherd, cares for his sheep. Paul didn't say "well, Eutychus, serves you right for falling asleep at my sermon" No! He went to him, probably prayed over him, and God performed a miracle and revived his life. Once we commit our lives to Jesus, he never abandons us, no matter how strongly or shallow we follow him. As long as we abide in Him, he will never leave us. (See Gospel of John, Chapter 10 for more on this last point.)

- ii. Some more-liberal commentators doubt that Eutychus actually died. The original text is quite clear. This man was dead, and miraculously revived. Remember that Luke, the author of Acts was a physician (see Colossians 4:14). Dr. Luke knows "dead" when he sees it! ☺
- 12. Verse 11: Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. ¹² The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.
 - a. After the miracle, the group had communion, then Paul preached until morning.
 - b. This shows that Paul was a powerful speaker. Anybody who can hold your attention all night is impressive. It also shows the power of the message itself. People are so hungry to hear about Jesus, they fight off sleep to hear the message.
 - i. Jon Curson, compared the ability to focus all night on Paul's message like going to skydiving school. If this was your first skydive, believe me you are going to pay attention to the instructor no matter what the room conditions are like, or how long he speaks! ☺ John's point isn't that we need all night church sermons. It is just that we need to have a serious interest in Bible Study as part of our Christian lifestyle.
 - ii. Paul said: "And my preaching was very plain, not with a lot of oratory and human wisdom, but the Holy Spirit's power was in my words, proving to those who heard them that the message was from God." (1st Corinthians 2:4 TLB)
 - c. It is interesting that Luke does not record anything about Paul's sermon. That is unusual when you compare it to the rest of the chapter. Most of the remainder of Chapter 20 is a single-sermon Paul gives to the leaders of the Ephesus churches. Luke appears to be at both events. He records the miracle, but not the sermon. For whatever reason, the Holy Spirit seemed to guide Paul to not record any part of the all-night speech.
 - i. The beginning of my sermon talked about the importance of "ending well". Here Paul ends his short visit with an all night speech.
 - ii. We can conjecture that since the communion wasn't done until midnight in the sermon, the issue of communion was part of the sermon. We can surmise that Paul probably went over all the major Christians doctrines during this time.
- 13. Paul is now traveling again. Verse 13: We (Luke, others) went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot.
 - a. From Troas to Assos, Paul walked, while the others sailed. We can only speculate the reasons why. Most commentators believed Paul just wanted time to be alone with God. Sometimes the best prayer time is long walks or in our case, long drives in silence. It gives us a chance to commune with God without interruption. In the Gospels there are a number of occasions where Jesus left to be alone with God the father.
- 14. Verse 14: When he (Paul) met us (Luke, others) at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. ¹⁵ The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Kios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus. ¹⁶ Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.
 - a. Paul had a lot of friends in Ephesus. Remember in Chapter 19 Paul spent two years in a rental hall lecturing in Ephesus. Paul knew if he stopped now at Ephesus, he would be too tempted to stay for a long visit. He was simply in a hurry to reach Jerusalem by the next big holiday, which was Pentecost.
 - i. Paul probably thought of the large crowds gathering in Jerusalem for Pentecost as a great witnessing opportunity, and thus was in a hurry.

- b. What these verses say is that Paul made arrangements for the elders of Ephesus to meet Paul in Miletus. Paul had "runners" go to Ephesus to gather these elders. Most churches in those days met in people's homes. These elders were probably the leaders of these churches.
 - i. Therefore, what we have here is the first recorded pastor's conference! The rest of this chapter is Paul addressing the elders/pastors in Ephesus, and possibly the surrounding regions.
 - ii. The rest of this chapter reads like one of Paul's epistles. Paul's personal writing style of long, complex sentences is noticeable in the text.
 - iii. In some ways, this is the most important part of the Chapter. It teaches us "if Paul just wants us to remember a few things, here are the most important". Although the speech is addressed to the leaders, the applications to *all* Christians will become obvious as we read the text.
15. Verse 18: When they (Ephesian elders) arrived, he (Paul) said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews.
- a. When Paul was gone, There are "hints" in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 that negative, slanderous rumors about Paul were spreading by his enemies.
 - b. Therefore, Paul opened with the self-testimony of "serving the Lord with great humility and with tears".
 - i. One of the most important aspects of being a Christian is actually living what we profess. Paul opened his speech not as a reminder, but as a defense. He is saying in effect: "I didn't just preach it, I practice it as well!"
 - c. There is an important lesson in the opening words of Verse 19: "I served the Lord."
 - i. In the ministries God calls us, we serve God (by serving others). The key is to focus your efforts on that fact that you are serving God, not people. People will not always be grateful. Criticism will often come, even when you have the best intentions. The key is to remember you are serving God and not man. God is the one who judged our hearts.
 - a. The verse does not mean to ignore your family or your work in order to work on you ministry. It is simply a matter of priority. Jesus said "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:33 NIV). The "all these things" are the other aspects of our lives that we must also be concerned about.
 - d. Paul said he served "with tears". I don't see Paul weeping through every sermon. I think this is about Paul knowing the effects of sin, and how it ruins people's lives. Paul knew that the only joy in life comes from serving the True and Living God, and watching people turn away from God, is the pain that caused the tears.
 - e. Lastly, "the plots of the Jews", is not an anti-Semitic (Jewish) remark, although it reads that way in the English. Paul himself was a Jew and proud of that fact. Paul was referring to the Jewish leaders who turned away from believing in Jesus as Messiah.
 - i. The lesson about "testing" is one for all of us. God puts "tests" in our lives, as he did in Paul, to strengthen Paul's faith.
16. Verse 20: You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.
- a. Remember that there were no big-building churches at this time. Paul went from house to house, not just hanging out in his rental hall.

- i. This is a lesson to pastors and Bible teachers. It is not the size of the audience that counts. Many people get a big ego and only want a big audience. God calls us to witness individually as well as collectively. I'm sure no audience was too big or too small for Paul. That's a great lesson for all of us.
 - ii. Paul also mentions "Jews and Greeks". The reference refers to no one group of people being any greater than any other group of people.
- 17. Here, Paul reveals his future plans. Verse 22: "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.
 - a. Now there is an encouraging sermon! ☺ Paul is saying, I'm being lead by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem, where I will face prison and hardships. Now *that* is a test of one's faith. Where one feels lead by God do something that is physically painful. It is an example of God calling someone to make a sacrifice for a greater good.
 - i. That's something to remember when you are in physical pain, or God calls you to do something that is very difficult. God's plans and purposes are much greater than ours are.
 - b. Paul said he is compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. There is a great debate among the commentators about whether this was Paul being led by the Holy Spirit, or Paul's own desire to preach to his own Jewish brethren. I'll discuss this in length in the next lesson and I'll present both sides of the issue. There are really good Bible scholars on both sides of this issue, so just keep that in mind for now.
 - c. This leads to the question, "how does one know if they are being led by the Spirit?
 - i. First of all, it will never be contradictory to the Word of God. Period.
 - ii. Second, I describe it as an overwhelming feeling that this is what God wants to do in my life. Many people get confirmation of those feelings during their "quiet time" reading God's word. I find that if you have a systematic plan of reading through the Bible (say, a little of the "Old" & little of the "New" every day), God shows us things he wants for our lives. To those who know their Bible well, God will often put into your mind a certain verse or book to turn to.
 - a. There is the danger of trying to control the situation and "think" it is of God. We "feel" this is right, and we know the Bible verses we can turn to for support. It's good to pray in situations where you are in doubt of whether something is, or is not the will of God. A good short prayer in this situation is "God, bless it or block it". If we can see God blocking our actions, we know it was of us, and not of God.
- 18. Paul continues, verse 24: However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.
 - a. Here is a great verse to think about. Paul says he is not interested in fulfilling his own desires, but *only* what God desires for his life. There is a great prayer to throw at God: Father, what is the task(s) that you desire for my life? In what aspects of my life am I serving myself and not you?
 - b. I see this verse as a small model for human happiness. People are going to disappoint you in life. Material things are never going to satisfy you. Living for God, seeking to do his will, making that your primary motive for living, will bring you greater joy and rewards than anything you do for any other purpose.

- c. I also want to point out a common misconception about this verse. Paul says he considers his life "worth nothing". That does not mean to walk around without any self-confidence, or believing you are incapable of doing anything. Paul was a great man because he was willing to be available (not just able!) to God for service. God created you, and (to borrow an old expression) "God don't make no junk". God has blessed every one of us with special gifts that we are supposed to use to glorify God. That is the point Paul is trying to get across here!
19. Verse 25: "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.
- a. Paul was making this announcement to point out his sorrow for leaving.
 - b. Some commentators believed that Paul actually visited Ephesus again between his 1st and 2nd imprisonments in Rome (coming in later chapters). As of this date, Paul believed that after visiting Jerusalem, he was going to focus the rest of his missionary life on the "Western World", based out of Rome, as opposed to the "Eastern World", which was all the areas we have covered in the past several chapters.
 - i. If it is true that Paul did revisit Ephesus again, the simple point is that Paul was flexible. At this time Paul did believe he would never return again.
20. Verse 26: Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.
- a. Verse 26 is probably a reference to Ezekiel, Chapter 3. God calls Ezekiel to be a "watchman" over Israel. To paraphrase the main idea, God told Ezekiel "Tell the people everything I am about to tell you. If you do that, you are innocent as you have warned them. If you don't, you are responsible because you did not warn them.
 - b. Verse 27 is among my favorites in the Bible. It is a call to every preacher, pastor, teacher, and parent and to those under our care to teach "the whole will of God".
 - i. I'm not exactly sure what Paul meant, but I know a safe way of figuring it out. The simple answer is to teach all the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. That is the idea of this writing ministry. Pick a book of the Bible, teach verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter. That way I know I'm covering the "whole will of God"
 - a. If you are called to be a Bible Teacher, you are held to a higher standard than other Christians (See James 3:1). God holds us accountable to teach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. By teaching the whole Bible, verse-by-verse, I can sleep well at night, knowing that I can't deviate too far from the truth. The great danger is always when you take text out of context of the surrounding verses. Also, the Bible as a whole has a great built-in self defense mechanism as the word usage, principals and doctrines are consistent throughout the whole book.
 - c. In fairness, Paul didn't have a New Testament to work with. Therefore, he probably meant "the whole will of God" as all the major doctrines of Christianity (e.g. "The Trinity, Jesus as God, Jesus as the only way to Salvation, etc.).
 - d. In Christian teaching, there are a lot of debatable issues, none of which affect our salvation. Some of these affect our perspective as Christians, and others are simply debate issues. When Christians have a different view than mine that *is* Biblically supportable, I rarely argue. I just don't find it beneficial to argue over such issues. What I *do* care about is issues so significant, that they are outside an acceptable "box of beliefs" of Christianity. That may be what Paul meant by "the whole will of God".
21. Paul now shifts his talk to warnings about false teachers. Verse 28: Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

- a. Verse 28 states that we are to be Shepherds over our flock, just as Jesus is our Good Shepherd (John 10:11). Shepherd those who God calls for you to care over. If you're not sure, ask him! God expects us to pray over them, teach them the Word, and watch out for false teachers. Other verses also teach that in turn, we should pray for our church leaders that God may grant this wisdom in shepherding us. (References: 1 Thessalonians 5:25, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Hebrews 13:17-18).
 - b. Verse 28 says that God bought the church "which God bought with his own blood".
 - i. That's a good verse to share with Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons, who falsely argue that Jesus himself is not God. (They will argue that "he" refers to Jesus the son. Read the verse again. Proper grammar is that the "he" refers the previous noun usage, which is God, the Father.)
 - ii. Paul uses this verse as a reminder of how *important* all members of the church are to God. They were purchased with blood. That fact should guide us in the care for those under us.
 - c. Verse 29 warns against outsiders coming into the church to teach false doctrines.
 - i. The greatest danger of cults is usually on new-believers, with only limited knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity. New believers are the ones who need the strongest courses against the cults.
 - d. Verse 30 warns against insiders in the church teaching false doctrines.
 - i. Many of the books of the Bible warn against this. The one chapter book of Jude focuses on this issue. I usually find false-teachers within the church are those who have a particular doctrine view, and then use that to divide the church. Someone becomes obsessed with an issue like free will versus pre-destiny, and causes splits in a church over that issue. There are going to be issues Christians are going to divide over. The point is to disagree in a respectful way. To borrow another Christian slogan "In essentials, clarity, in all others, charity".
 - a. When in doubt, I look at the Bible as my final authority. There are many minor issues the Bible is *real* clear about. These include many of the sexual sins. There are other minor issues where the Bible is silent. In those cases, we should be silent. In the Biblical debatable issues, determine your view, but be flexible enough to consider you might be wrong. (OK, off the soapbox! ☺)
 - e. Almost every book in the New Testament has some sort of warning against false teachers in the church. That should be a warning of how significant an issue this is.
 - i. I find the greatest way to combat false teachers is simply to teach the truth. The Bible does a great job of defending itself. There are times, especially in defense, where one has to directly combat false teachers. But I find, as a teacher, the best way to teach against false doctrines and false religions is to show the simple truths of the Bible.
22. Paul wraps up this section of his sermon: Verse 31: So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.
- a. Paul spent about 3 years ministering out of Ephesus. Apparently, warning against false teachers and false religions was a strong point in his ministry.
 - i. I take the view it is important to discuss those types of issues, if for no other reason it is emphasized so strongly throughout the New Testament.
 - b. For the second time in this sermon, Paul gives a "with tears" reference. The danger of false religions, or a false teacher leading Christians astray causes pain both to a congregation and to the individual members who get caught up in this. The thought of that pain was too much for Paul to bear. This is simply another example of how much Paul loved the church, and couldn't stand to see anybody suffer needlessly. It is a great example for us as Christians.

23. Verse 32: "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
- a. Paul is saying "I taught you everything you need to know. Now it is time for you to be teachers. There comes a time for every student to graduate and take over. This is what Paul is preaching here.
 - b. Personally, I never forgot the day God hit me with this principal. I was reading Hebrews, and the unnamed writer, who I believe was Paul said:
 - i. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! (Hebrews 5:12 NIV)
 - ii. The verse is condemning those who should be mature by now, but still need to learn the basics. It was the underlined portion that hit me. "By this time you ought to be teachers". After years of intense Bible Study (albeit, just as a hobby!) I knew God was calling me into the teaching as a ministry.
 - c. I like Paul's expression: "The word of his grace". God's grace is knowing and living the fact that God is now in charge of our lives, and we never have to worry about sin again. It doesn't mean we have a free license to sin, it simply means we are no longer under the condemnation for sin. We don't have to feel guilty or worry about salvation. Our gratitude for what Jesus did for us causes us to change our lifestyle and want to live the life He has called us to live. That's the "word of his grace".
 - d. Paul also says that shepherding the flock "builds *you* up and gives *you* an inheritance.
 - i. One of the great rewards of teaching the Bible is all that you learn. The best way to learn any topic is to teach it. I find that God not only gives you the head-knowledge, but practical experience application as you learn to trust God more and more.
 - a. Teaching is just one example. The benefit of encouraging others, doing good deeds, "giving" and service has its own rewards as well.
 - b. The Bible talks a lot about rewards in heaven for the believers.
 1. Jesus said in the last chapter of the Bible: "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:12 NIV)
 2. I use this verse, and others as a basis that God rewards us based on our faithfulness to what he has called us to do.
24. Paul continues, Verse 33: I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.
- a. Paul, as a traveling missionary, never took a collection from the people he was trying to convert. That principal is still applied today. The church themselves should and do pay the way of missionaries. I never believe the "world" should support the church.
 - b. Paul also had a day-job. That is how he paid his bills. Paul did it this way as to keep his reputation clear that he wasn't doing it for the money. This is also why I believe all Christians are missionaries to some extent. Our day-jobs is how we support ourselves and our families. Our free time, our giving of ourselves is our mission.
 - c. Again, Paul is not bragging, but pointing out as an example to others to "walk the walk and talk the talk".
25. Verse 35: In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
- a. Remember that Paul was carrying with him a collection for the church in Jerusalem, so this was fresh in his mind, as well as his pocket!

- b. To me, there is something about a good deed for someone in need that speaks louder than all the lecturing on the Bible. It goes back to the old saying of "people don't care what you know until they know that you care".
 - c. Paul quotes Jesus as saying "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
 - i. The funny thing is, you can't find that quote anywhere in the Gospels.
 - ii. You can argue Paul was paraphrasing what Jesus said in Luke 6:38
 - a. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6:38 NIV)
 - iii. I take the view that Paul had direct revelations from God and was quoting Jesus directly. Either way, you can build a case for Bible accuracy.
26. Verse 36: When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.
- a. This is a great indication of a loved man, not just someone who is a great speaker. A great speaker you applaud. A loved man gets hugs and kisses as he leaves. It speaks a lot about the character of Paul.
27. Verse 38: What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.
- a. Paul concluded this great speech. The elders of Ephesus were now ready to be ministers themselves. I understand grief of never seeing a good friend again. I suspect there was something more to it. Let me explain:
 - i. As a student about to graduate and embark in the world, there is a point of fear when you graduate and realize you are no longer under someone's care.
 - ii. The same feeling exists when your parents pass away. The feeling that you are now on your own. Who do you rely upon?
 - a. I'm convinced that was part of their grief. Paul calls these men to shepherd their flocks, but their master is not there for advice anymore. It is moments like this when often we need to trust God *more*.
28. Let's Pray: Father, we thank you for these lessons about our ministry and our mission in life. Help us to focus that you have called each of us to a specific ministry, and given us special talents to complete that ministry. For those who are uncertain what that calling is, give us wisdom. For those of us who know that calling, guide us on the paths you desire for our lives, and help us to make you a priority over all other needs. Further, help us to love, encourage and support one another. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.