

Sermon Notes on Acts 20:18-35, Trinity XV

1. Our text is St. Paul's farewell address to the pastors of the churches in and around Ephesus. There are other great farewell addresses in the Bible: Moses' address, Deut. 28-33; Joshua's address, Joshua 23-24; Jesus' address, Jn. 13-17. It is interesting to compare these four addresses with each other.
2. Paul's address divides itself roughly into two parts: Vss. 18 to 27 speak of what Paul did among his hearers. Vss. 28-35 speak of what Paul urges the Ephesian pastors to do and expect.
3. There are several themes in each part of Paul's address. We note the following for the two parts: In the first part, vss. 18-27, Paul's description of his ministry:
  - a) His unselfish attitude, vss. 18-20. His life was an open book. He diligently taught them both corporately and privately, putting himself on their level. This he did though he was in constant danger of the Jews who hated him.
  - b) Vs. 21 voices a theme which is frequent in the NT: repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. That was the Baptist's first and primary message, Mt. 3:2. Jesus said the same thing, Mt. 4:17. Their whole ministry was one of preaching repentance and faith. It was one of the last things Jesus said before ascending into heaven, Lk. 24:47. It was Peter's message on Pentecost, Acts 2:38. This can be traced throughout the NT. Luther's first of the ninety-five theses reads: "When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said 'Repent' He meant that the whole life of the Christian should be one of repentance."
  - c) Vss. 22-23 show us plainly that Paul knew that he faced danger in Jerusalem just as Jesus did. Paul's journey to Jerusalem ended in imprisonment in Rome.
  - d) Paul's utter devotion to the Kingdom of God, vs. 24, made him fearless. He loved his Savior and the Gospel above all else.
  - e) Vss. 25-27 are reminiscent of Ezek. 33 where God warns Ezekiel to show Israel their sins or God would require the blood from Ezekiel. Paul says "I am innocent of the blood of any of you." Perhaps Paul was thinking of Ezek. 33 when he spoke these words.
  - f) In vs. 27 Paul says: "I did not shrink from telling you God's whole plan." One is reminded of Moses' words at Deut. 29:29: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Paul's words remind us also of Jesus' promise at Jn. 14:26: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." God tells us all we need to know in the Bible. We should be joyfully content with that.
- In the second part, vss. 28-32, treats various subjects:
  - a) Vs. 28 is a beautiful word of advice for pastors. The congregation is the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers. It is the church which Christ bought with His own blood. He says "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock." First the pastor must pay attention to his own behavior and attitudes and then also to that of the flock.
  - b) Vss. 29-31 show us how quickly Satan can destroy the work of a faithful pastor. Fierce wolves will strike from the outside and false teachers will arise from within the congregation.
  - c) In vs. 32 Paul commends the pastors to God and His Word which can edify them and save them eternally. The Word is everything.
4. In vss. 33-35 Paul closes with several remarks about himself. He clearly did not work for earthly goods. And his whole life exemplified an otherwise unrecorded word of Jesus: "To give is more blessed than to receive."

## Sermon Outline on Acts 20:18-35, Trinity XV

Theme: PAUL, THE PASTOR'S MODEL AND COUNSELLOR

Introduction: I Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:6-9 give us the Lord's qualifications for the holy ministry. Pastors ought read those passages often. Our text is similar to those two passages. It shows Paul as the model for the pastor. And he also gives the pastor some good advice. We shall now consider Paul as pastor's model and advisor.

### I-Paul, The Pastor's Model

- A-He is a model of servanthood. Jesus once said (Mt. 20:26): "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant." We consider St. Paul great. That is because of his servanthood. His life was an open book, vs. 18. He served the people even when the Jews threatened him, 19. He taught the people publicly and from house to house, 20. His conscience was clear, vs. 26. He did not desire the money of the Ephesians, vs. 33. He paid his own way, vs. 34. Like Jesus he came not to be served but to serve. And lastly, we read in vs. 35 that Paul was concerned about the weak. That is the true test of true servanthood. Paul was like Jesus.
- B-He is a model of courage. Vss. 22 and 23 inform us that Paul knew that persecution awaited him in Jerusalem. The Jews wanted to kill him as they killed Jesus. Vss. 29 and 30 tell us that Paul knew that, after he would leave, false teachers would attack the Christians both from without and from within. They would attack like wolves. They would speak perverse things. But Paul did not yield.
- C-He is a model of faith and hope in Jesus Christ. Vs. 24 tells us that fears about persecution did not deter him. He was ready to lose his life for Jesus. He wanted to finish his course with joy. It takes faith and hope in Jesus Christ to say such things. And he proved it later when he was imprisoned and taken to Rome.

### II-Paul, The Pastor's Counsellor

- A-Take heed to yourself and to all the flock. Vs. 28. How does a pastor take heed to himself? By living blamelessly among his people and by preparing himself in his studies for his work. How does a pastor take heed to his flock? By preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God, vs. 27. His main work is to show the people their sins (Law) and to show them the grace of God in Christ (Gospel). This is what all the prophets, apostles and pastors have in common. This is the way people enter the kingdom of God. See also vs. 21.
- B-He tells pastors to be watchful, vs. 3. He says that for three years he did not cease to warn all of them with tears night and day. He was always warning them. And he warns the pastors (vss. 29 and 30) about the false teachers who were about to attack the congregations.
- C-He tells you to commend your people to God and His Word of grace. vs. 32. This implies that Paul had done his work very carefully. The whole text shows us that Paul had worked hard as a teacher and pastor. He believed that the seed of the Word brought forth faith in Christ and good works toward the neighbor. He believed that the Word of God is the whole armor of God wherewith to fight the battle both offensively and defensively. He had done his work carefully and he trusted that his work would endure.

Conclusion: To be a teacher or preacher of God's Word is an awesome responsibility. James 3:2 reads: "My brothers, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." Preachers and teachers must be chosen for and live up to God's qualifications. They will be judged more strictly than the average laymen because theirs is a greater responsibility. Let the church take heed to our text.