



# SERMON NOTES

US N<sup>o</sup>. 119

Date: October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Title: Responsible Shepherding

#28 in the Series on the Acts of the Apostles

## 1. From Ephesus to Macedonia

- a. Once things had quieted down in Ephesus, Paul leaves and heads off towards Macedonia.
- b. Verse 1 makes it appear that Paul traveled directly from Ephesus to Macedonia. However, it seems that he went to Troas first looking for Titus to learn from him how the Corinthians had received his first letter. Once there he found an open door to preach, but was uncomfortable.
  - i. 2 Cor. 2:12-14, *"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia. Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place."*
- c. Not finding Titus in Troas, Paul crossed over the Aegean Sea to Macedonia probably landing at Neapolis and traveling inland to Philippi where he finally met up with Titus. He was greatly encouraged by the news from Corinth and may have written 2 Corinthians.
  - i. 2 Cor. 7:5-7, *"For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more."*
- d. After spending some time there, Paul traveled south to Greece where he spent 3 months, probably in Corinth. From here he wrote the letter to the Romans.
- e. From Greece, Paul had planned to take the journey by sea directly back to Syrian Antioch, but the plotting of some anti-Christian Jews made him take an overland route back through Macedonia, accompanied by many companions. *"It may have been planned to attack him on board ship, especially if the vessel was crowded with Jewish pilgrims for Passover or Pentecost."* (Williams)
- f. Paul was collecting money for the relief of the impoverished believers in Jerusalem which he viewed as a symbol of the overall unity of the Church.
  - i. Rom. 15:25-27, *"But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things."*
- g. Paul's companions were representatives from other churches who had sent money with Paul to Jerusalem. They were also present as ambassadors from the churches Paul has founded among

the Gentiles, and were there to vouch for Paul's good stewardship in regard to the collection destined for Jerusalem.

- i. Aristarchus and Secundus both came from Thessalonica. Aristarchus' name was connected with "*aristocracy*" and it's likely that he came from a wealthy and powerful family. Secundus on the other hand was a common name for a slave, which meant "*Second*." Slaves were often not called by their true names, and the first-ranking slave in a household would often be called *Primus* while the second-ranking slave was often called Secundus. It's nice to think of Christians from both high and low stations in life serving the Lord together, from Thessalonica and helping the Apostle Paul.

## 2. Church in Troas

- a. This is the first certain example we have of Christians making a practice to gather together on the first day of the week for fellowship and the word – though here, it seems they gathered in the evening, because Sunday was a normal working day for them.
- b. Paul sensed the need to preach for a long time because he was ready to depart the next day. He knew he might never see these particular Christians again.
- c. The combination of the late hour, the heat, and perhaps the fumes from the oil lamps made the young man Eutychus fall asleep. His fall and death certainly would have put a sour note on the meeting. He was probably between the ages of 8 to 14 years old.
- d. Paul probably stretched himself on him as Elisha did on the Shunammite's son. (cf. 2 King 4:33-35) Then almost matter-of-factly Luke tells us that Paul returns to the upper room, partakes of the Lord's Supper and the fellowship meal, continues his exhortation-encouragement via personal conversation until daybreak, and then departs.
- e. The Lord's Supper, the "*visible Word*," is as important as a means of spiritually strengthening the gathered church. When because of abuses the church came to separate the sacrament from the fellowship meal (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-22), something of the "*family atmosphere*" present in the combination may well have been lost. In an increasingly rootless society, where individuals find themselves without meaningful personal relationships in an impersonal urbscape, recapturing "family" around the Lord's Table could be a saving grace for many.

## 3. Visit with the Ephesian elders

- a. So, from Miletus, he called for the elders of the church to come for a special meeting.
- b. Here in Acts 20, we get a unique picture of Paul the pastor – what was important to him as a leader and shepherd of God's people.
- c. Paul could solemnly saw before these elders of the Ephesian church that he kept back nothing that was helpful. He didn't only teach the topics that pleased him. He proclaimed it all. He preached his message in different ways to fit different audiences, but the message remained the same: Repent and turn to Christ by faith.
- d. Paul recognized the dangerous road ahead of him; apparently he had received many words of prophecy telling him of this danger already. Yet he was not set off the track by danger, but was willing to lay down his life for the gospel of the grace of God. He could give it all over to God

even when he didn't know what would happen. More Christians should say, *"none of these things move me."* Uncertainty did not move Paul.

- e. Compared to his God and how he can serve him, Paul did not count his own life dear to him. Paul thought of himself as a runner who had a race to finish with joy. His death was in mind even now even though it would still be many years until he actually died, but he considered that what he did with his life now was worth dying for. He preached a gospel worth dying for. Many often feel that life is a failure unless we're getting a lot out of it: recognition, fun, money, success, etc. Paul considered life worth nothing unless he used it for God's work.
  - i. What he put into life was far more important than what he got out. Single-mindedness is a quality needed by anyone who wishes to do God's work. The single most important goal of Paul's life was to tell others about Christ (*cf. Phil. 3:7-13*).
- f. Paul also shows great sadness, great compassion, and great courage. He told them that this would probably be the last time they saw him, and he saw them. That amount of time and that kind of effective ministry builds bonds of fellowship and friendship that last.
- g. In his ministry, there was a constant strain on his emotional system; there were tears of sorrow and trials. He suffered persecution as a result of the plotting of the Jews, yet in spite of all the adverse circumstances, his ministry was bold and fearless.
- h. Paul then declares that his heart was clear, he could leave these Christians to God's care with a good conscience.
- i. The three *"therefore's"*:
  - i. One looked at his own life and his clear conscience. *"I testify to you that I am innocent of the blood of all men."* (*cf. Acts 20:26*).
  - ii. The second instructs the leaders of the Ephesian Christians about what they should do. *"take heed,"* (*cf. Acts 20:28*).
  - iii. This third is given after the urgency of taking heed has been explained. Paul asked them to have the same careful concern for the people of God that he himself had. We must pay attention to our own life; there is a high standard to fulfill which won't be fulfilled without paying attention to it. The godly leader knows that effective leadership flows from a life, not just knowledge.
- j. The word *"flock"* has the idea of sheep and they are called to shepherd the church of God.
  - i. Being a shepherd means feeding God's people. *"They are to be shepherds of God's church, poimanino meaning in general to tend a flock and in particular to lead a flock to pasture and so to feed it. This is the first duty of shepherds."* (Stott)
  - ii. Shepherds also lead under the guidance of the Chief Shepherd, they lead the people of God to where God wants them to be.
  - iii. Shepherds must take heed to themselves and to the flock of God because the church doesn't belong to them, it belongs to Jesus who purchased it with His own blood. Any responsible person is going to take greater care of something that belongs to someone else.

- iv. Taken together, it's really a wonderful balance: the sheep need to remember that God has appointed shepherds to feed & lead them, and the shepherds need to remember that the flock belongs to God & they must protect it.
- k. It is often easier for pastors to deal with the wolves that come from the outside – false teachings and goofy winds of doctrine. But it is often very difficult to deal with those who rise up from among us. It would be hard to believe, and like the disciples with Jesus, many of them would say, “Not me, Lord!”
  - i. False teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing, would prey upon the flock, showing no mercy. From within the fellowship, men would aspire to places of prominence, speaking perversions of the truth, and trying to draw away the disciples after themselves. They want a following; ego can make people do things that they never thought they would do.
- l. Leadership exercised in spiritual watchfulness over a flock...
  - i. It is collegial; elders are always referred to in the plural by Luke (*cf.* Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2, 20:17). In a day when the pastoral role has been turned into a one-man show, we would do well to consider, no matter our polity, how we may promote teamwork in the pastoring of the local flock.
  - ii. It must be spiritual: the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. (*cf.* Acts 13:2-4; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 1 Tim. 4:14). Their function is to shepherd and admonish. A shepherd protects, cares for and feeds the sheep through teaching and exhortation to nurture those in their charge (*cf.* Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). Sometimes that teaching will be admonition or correction of the will which presupposes opposition (*cf.* Rom. 15:14; Col. 1:28; 3:16).
    - 1. This also emphasizes that elders are not appointed or elected by the local assembly; they are made overseers by the Holy Spirit and should be recognized by the believers among whom they labor.
  - iii. It must be serious, conscientious and intensely personal. This Paul communicates by describing the church's infinite worth and his own conduct. The congregation is not the elders' church but the church of God, which he bought with the blood of Jesus. (*cf.* Ps. 74:2; Is. 43:21).
- m. After three years, the bottom line was that he could only commend them to God and to the word of His grace. There was trouble ahead, yet God and the word of His grace would see them through. Paul entrusted them to God and the Bible which are able to build up the believers and to give them an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
- n. Paul concludes by trying to communicate his motive in ministry. He wasn't in it for himself, but for God's glory and for the building up of God's people. Paul was satisfied with whatever he had, wherever he was, as long as he could do God's work. What are your attitudes toward wealth and comfort? Do you focus more on what you don't have than on what you do have? Then it's time to reexamine your priorities and put God's work back in first place.
  - i. These words of Jesus are not recorded in the Gospels, but not all of Jesus' words were written down (*cf.* Jn. 21:25); this saying may have been passed on orally through the apostles.

- o. Paul embraces and is embraced. He was not a cold dispenser of doctrine, but a warm, pastoral man who loved his people greatly and won great love from them.
  - p. Some 30 to 40 years later, Jesus sent a letter to this church in Ephesus, found in Rev. 2:1-7.
    - i. He complemented their hard work for the kingdom of God, their endurance through difficult times, their dealing with those who are evil & with false apostles, and for not giving up when they were weary.
    - ii. Despite it all, Jesus gave them a severe warning: they had left their first love (*cf.* Rev. 2:4). Unless things changed in a hurry, Jesus wouldn't even be present among them anymore. Perhaps in their zeal to fight against false doctrine, they had left their love for Jesus and for one another behind. The devil doesn't care which side of the boat we fall out of, just as long as we're in the water and not in the boat.
4. Take aways
- a. Aristarchus & Secundus
  - b. Eutychus, and you think I preach long.
  - c. Sheep and Shepherds
  - d. Take heed