

# (Acts) None of These Things Move Me

by Brian Brodersen

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*Paul's determination to finish his course and his willingness to abandon his life for Christ are key takeaways from his ministry in Ephesus and his journey to Jerusalem.*

**Duration:** 53:01

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the changes that occurred in the church shortly after the apostolic age. He explains that the men who succeeded the apostles did not have the same confidence in God and developed the bishopric system, where churches were divided into districts and overseen by bishops. The speaker emphasizes that God calls us to leave our comfort zones and do something for Him, even if it means leaving behind family and friends. He also highlights the importance of serving and supporting the weak, as well as the need for leaders in the church who can provide vision and direction.

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## Transcript

We've opened our Bibles to the 20th chapter of Acts, and we're going to pick up tonight in verse 17. And Lord, we pray that as we once again follow along with the Apostle Paul and his journeys and his ministry, we pray, Lord, that you would teach us from his life. And Lord, we thank you again for this great book of Acts, this great record that you've given to us of the activity of the early church and how inspiring it is, how exciting it is to see how these men and women went out into their world and how they impacted that world for you.

And Lord, we know that one of the reasons why you've given us this record is so that we might glean from it, that we might learn from it, that we might be inspired by it and follow the examples of those whose lives are recorded in it. And so may that happen in our hearts tonight. May we be stirred up.

May we be provoked. May we be, Lord, challenged and blessed as we turn now to the pages of Scripture. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen. Now, Paul has spent as we've been considering, he spent about a three year period of time in Ephesus ministering there and really establishing the church. And then, of course, we read that it was there in Ephesus that people from all over Asia came to hear the gospel as Paul was preaching.

And we remember that God was working extraordinarily. And Paul, through his handkerchief and different his aprons and things, God was doing miraculous works to testify to the fact that this man was indeed his servant and his message was indeed from God. But Paul came to a point where he felt that it was time to move on to new territory and he really wanted to get back to Jerusalem.

Paul had a great passion to minister to his own people. He had a love for his nation. He had a love for the Jews, and he always had hoped to have an impactful ministry among them.

But his ministry was sort of limited among the Jews, and he longed and longed to get back to Jerusalem at some point. He thought, man, if I could get back to Jerusalem and if I could just have an opportunity to share my testimony, I think that the Lord could really use that. And of course, you could understand why Paul would have thought that way, because remember his background.

Remember, he was one of the great leaders within the party of the Pharisees. He was one of the great rabbinical minds of the day, and he was so steeped in Judaism and was such a devout disciple of the system that he thought if he could get back in and tell the people that he was wrong in regard to his attitude toward Jesus Christ and share his testimony with them, he thought that surely they would embrace the Lord. I mean, how could they not after hearing his story? And so with all of that stirring in Paul, all of that passion to minister to the Jews burning within him, Paul decided that he was going to make his way back to Jerusalem.

And so as we pick up tonight in verse 17, that is what's happening. Paul is ultimately traveling back to Jerusalem, but on his way back, he's stopping and he's visiting some of the fellowships in the different places where he spent time serving. And he comes now to Miletus.

And so he comes to Miletus, which is some mile south of Ephesus. And when he arrives in Miletus, he sends to Ephesus and he calls for the elders of the church. So now Paul is aware of the fact that he's never going to return to Ephesus.

He spent those three years there and he's laid a foundation and now he's passing on that work to somebody else. And he knows that he's not going to be coming back through that part of the world. And so he gathers the elders together and he really just bears his heart to them.

He really pours out his heart to him and just sort of commissions them and and really lays a foundation for them so that they can carry on the work that he had begun. And so he calls for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them, you know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials, which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews, how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

So Paul, as he gathers them together, he says, look, I want to remind you of the example that I've been to you. You know, Paul would often point to himself as an example. And that wasn't an arrogant thing.

It was just something that he did because he was a genuine servant of God. And sometimes today, you know, we don't want that kind of responsibility. Sometimes we even say things like, hey, well, you know, don't don't listen to me or don't look at me.

You know, I'm not perfect or anything like that, which is true, of course, none of us are perfect, but we ought to be living the kind of life that we could say to somebody like Paul did follow me as I follow the Lord. Paul was a serious man about his relationship with God, and so he could set himself forth as an example. And so he reminds them of how he was in their presence, serving the Lord with all humility.

Paul was a humble man and he was there just humbly going about the Lord's business. He wasn't there ruling over everybody. He didn't see himself as, you know, some sort of a ruler over the people.

He wasn't there to have the people wait on him or serve him. He wasn't there to be ministered to, but he was there to minister to others. And so he was among them in humility.

And then he mentions the many tears and trials which happened to him by the plotting of the Jews. Now, it's interesting that we don't really have a record anywhere in the scriptures of the difficulties that Paul experienced while ministering there in Ephesus, except the things that we read in our last study when the riot broke out and all of that happened, which was really toward the end of his ministry. But evidently, throughout the entire three years that he was there, there was an ongoing sort of a harassment.

And so he alludes to it here, although it's never really, you know, dealt with in any detail, any place else in the scripture in writing to the Corinthians. So he says an interesting thing. He makes a reference to having fought with beast at Ephesus, and some actually thought that Paul was thrown into the arena with some of the wild beast like they would do occasionally back in the days of, you know, the persecution of the Christians under the Roman emperors.

But it's highly unlikely that that's what Paul's referring to. He's probably talking more about the constant conflict that he was having with those Jews who were opposing him in Ephesus. So he makes reference to it here.

It was something that was very trying to him. It was something that was very difficult to him. But, you know, the fact of the matter is this.

Whenever we step out to serve the Lord, there's going to be opposition to it. And we've got to realize that and we've got to be ready for it. And we've got to not faint when it comes, because it's going to come.

And instead of being surprised by it, we ought to just expect it and realize this is part for the course. Peter, when he was writing his first epistle, he mentioned the fact that the people were going through various trials and temptations and things. And he said to them, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some bizarre thing happened to you.

He said, this is just the way it is. And this is just the way it is now in some places. The opposition manifests itself in more of a physical sort of a way.

In some countries, somebody handed me earlier this week, they handed me a magazine from Voice of the Martyrs. And in this particular magazine, they have a number of photos of some of the Chinese Christians being persecuted by their captors or by the police or whoever it was that had arrested them or whatever the case was. And these guys, these these ones who were persecuting the Christians, they photographed it themselves.

Now, I don't know how the voice of the martyrs got ahold of these pictures, but as I was looking through this and seeing them beating the people and just abusing them in various ways, all my heart just went out

to them. I thought, Lord, we don't realize what what's going on with so many of our brothers and sisters in the world today that that's happening. That's one manifestation of conflict, hostility.

We're not living under those kinds of circumstances, thank God. But there might come a day when we do. But even if that never happens, we, of course, experience opposition as well, because you can't live godly in Christ Jesus without suffering persecution.

Paul said you can't live for Jesus Christ in this present world without the devil coming after you and harassing you. It's just part of the Christian life. So it's something that we need to realize.

It's a reality. And we can't draw back because it comes. We need to just stand fast against it and persevere through it.

And by the grace of God, of course, we can do that. And Paul continued to do that throughout his ministry. It didn't cause him to pack his bags and say, man, I'm getting out of town.

These Jews are harassing me all the time. They're always plotting against me. I'm going to go on a vacation.

He just stuck it out and thank God he did. And then he says to them in verse 20 that he kept back nothing that was helpful, but he proclaimed it to them and taught them publicly and from house to house. This is where you really see the heart of the apostle Paul.

You know, he wasn't, as already mentioned, he wasn't on any kind of an ego trip. You know, there wasn't. A certain standard number of people that had to gather together for the apostle to show up, sometimes today with, you know, some preachers, they won't come and address an audience unless it it, you know, unless there's a certain amount of people, there's a minimum amount of people that they will, you know, come and address.

And we've actually had the experience of phoning sometimes people and asking them if they want to, you know, do something with us. And the first question they ask is, well, how many people are going to be there? And then right away we realize we're calling the wrong people. So we say, oh, never mind.

We'll get back to you later, because, you know, why would we want to bring in somebody who's who's thinking in those kinds of terms? Jesus certainly didn't think that way. Jesus didn't have a problem ministering to one or two or three or five or whatever. And nor did the apostles.

Paul was happy to minister publicly when he could, when maybe large crowds of people would gather. He was also very happy to minister privately. He was happy just to go into people's homes and disciple them.

You know, Paul is one of those Bible characters that, you know, has really become a hero to so many. And I think for myself, he's probably apart from the Lord Jesus. He's probably my hero.

Biblically, I just I just love him. And these are the things I love about him, just as you see his heart and his humility here. So he says that he was testifying to Jews and also to Greeks.

And this was the essence of his message, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now he says, and see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that in except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. Now, notice Paul says that he's going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem.

And the question that's been asked is, what is he referring to? Is he bound by the Holy Spirit? Was the Holy Spirit the one who was, you know, pushing him toward Jerusalem or was it his own determination? Was he in his own spirit bound and just under that deep passion and desire to get to Jerusalem and to preach the gospel? And there's actually been some dispute among Bible commentators as to whether or not Paul was right or wrong to go to Jerusalem. Was he really being led by the spirit or was this something that Paul was just determined to do and he wasn't listening to the Lord? My personal conviction on it is that Paul was being led by the spirit and that the Holy Spirit was simply letting him know what was going to happen to him when he got there. So there wouldn't be any surprises like the Lord saying, oh, Paul, go to Jerusalem.

You have a great ministry. And then he gets there and he ends up in prison. That would have been kind of a disappointment.

But I think here the Lord is prompting his spirit. He's provoking Paul. He's putting in him that passion to go to Jerusalem.

But at the same time, he's saying, Paul, you're going to go, but it's not going to be easy. And there's going to be trouble, bonds and afflictions await you there. But listen to what he says in verse 24.

But none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself so that I may finish my race with joy and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. I love this verse. This is one of the great verses in all of the Bible, in my estimation.

But none of these things move me. The Holy Spirit's warning everywhere the apostle goes, people are saying, oh, Paul, don't go to Jerusalem. Oh, it's you're going to get in trouble there.

And they're trying to persuade him. And as we continue on in the story, we're going to find that the closer he gets to Jerusalem, the more the warning intensifies. But Paul says, I'm not moved by that.

I'm not bothered by that. He was such a single minded person. He was so singly focused on getting the gospel to those who hadn't heard it.

He wasn't going to be deterred by anything. And, you know, there have been many who have come after Paul that have had a similar sort of determination, and that's many times what it takes. A friend of mine, Rob Dingman, who pastors one of our churches in London, Rob has a great way of, well, describing things and all.

And he likes to refer to certain guys who kind of have this same mentality that Paul had as guys with a head of flint. He says, you know, these guys, they just they got a forehead of flint. There's nothing that's going to stop them.

They're just going to go. And regardless of the opposition, regardless of the difficulties, they're going to persevere and they're just going to get the job done. And that's.

What we need, we need people who just say, you know, none of these things move me, I don't care, I'm not bothered by those kinds of circumstances or difficulties. I'm going to go for it, I'm going to get the gospel to those people. Well, you read the story of the missionaries, as many times, you know, I will make reference to many of the missionaries.

You think the obstacles that they faced and the things that they overcame, but they did it because they were determined. None of these things moved them. Sometimes today we hear people, you know, we're talking about getting the gospel out.

We're talking about church planting and all of that. And a lot of times, you know, you know, the guys are looking to go out and start a church, but they want to make sure, you know, make sure the weather's nice where we're going. And of course, they've got a Starbucks there, don't they? I mean, that's really an important issue.

And and sometimes you're looking, thinking, now, where is your brain? I mean, no, we're talking about getting the gospel to people. We don't. Those aren't the issues that we need to really be concerned with.

Paul knew that he was stepping into trouble, but he wasn't moved by it. Because his his greater passion was to get the word of God to these people. And notice what he says, he says, so that I may finish my race with joy in the ministry which I have received from the Lord.

That's the thing. Paul had his own course. We all have our own course.

We're all part of a race. That's what we're taught in the scriptures. We're to run with endurance, the race that is set before us, it tells us in Hebrews chapter 12.

And then Paul and speaking of the Christian life, he says, don't you know that those who run in a race, everyone runs, but only one receives the prize run that you may win. And he likened the Christian life to a race or to a course. And he had his own particular course that God had laid out for him.

And Paul's great determination in life was to finish the course. I'm going to finish the course. I don't want to drop out of the race.

I don't want to take a shortcut. I don't want to in some way get disqualified. I want to finish the course.

And, you know, he did because at the end of his life, when he wrote to Timothy, he said, I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I've kept the faith.

And so that's what he's talking about here. None of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself. You see, here's the thing.

If our lives are dear to ourselves, we will never attain to. The things that God has for us in order to really attain to what God has for us, we've got to lose our lives. Remember, that's what Jesus taught us.

He said he that seeks to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake, that person will really find it. Jesus said, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. You see, as long as I hold my life dear to myself, my effectiveness for Christ is going to inevitably be limited. I've got to abandon myself.

I've got to just say, you know what, I'm not I'm not worrying about my life anymore. Oh, but that goes so against the grain of what we're brought up to think and what we're told in our culture, doesn't it? I mean, there are people that would look on and say, oh, that's ridiculous. That's the most irresponsible thing I ever heard.

What do you mean you don't have health insurance? What do you mean you don't have life insurance? Don't you know that you could get sick and. You know, some people say, oh, wow, I didn't think of that boy. Lord, I can't go out to the mission field because what about insurance? But we have to remember something.

God. He's our insurance agent. He's our doctor, too.

He's our creator. He's our everything. I mentioned I think it was last week I mentioned Bill Gallatin, a great friend, great man in the ministry, pastoring back in New York for the past 25 years.

But Bill's really involved in a lot of the missions, things that we do. We do a lot of stuff together. But twenty five years ago, when the Lord sent Bill out of here back to New York as somewhat of a missionary, the Lord really put on his heart never to get health insurance, never to get life insurance, not to worry about any of those things.

And to this day, he's he's not worried about it. He's just serving the Lord and he's taking that, you know, he's he's taking the scriptures at face value. He's he's laying hold of him.

He's believing that just like God was Abraham's shield and his exceedingly great reward, he's saying, you know, God's my shield and my exceedingly great reward as well. And I look at that and I think, you know, there's something to that. You know, as I was reading recently through Genesis and I've now gone from Genesis into Exodus, as I'm reading through, I'm just looking at all of this where, you know, the Lord is so intimately involved in the lives of these people.

I mean, to the point where you read things like and the Lord, you know, withheld them from. But with the women, you know, they were barren and actually, you know, the statement in one case in one particular case is that it was the Lord's doing for his purpose. And then, you know, another occasion where, you know, something occurs and and the Lord says, well, you know, that's because I caused that to happen or I prevented that from happening or something.

But anyway, as I'm reading through, I'm thinking, you know, it's amazing how intimately involved God is in the lives of these people that I'm reading about here. But then I realized that that's the same kind of involvement that I can expect God to have in my life. You know, I don't know if you've come across this or not, but there are people around today who have been affected by, you know, maybe sort of the intellectual bug or something.

I don't know exactly what's bit them, but, you know, they're really negative about anything supernatural or when somebody says, hey, the Lord told me this or like, oh, no, you know, the Lord doesn't talk to people like that today. You're going to get in all kinds of trouble, you know, thinking that the Lord speaks to you. You know, if you can't read in the Bible, God's not saying it.

And, you know, and they really, I think, are quenching the spirit in their own life and they're trying to quench the spirit in the lives of other people. And there's almost like a school of thought that's developed where, you know, you're not to really expect God to speak directly to you. God's given you a brain.

You want to just use it, figure it out for yourself sort of a thing. And, you know, you can't expect God to intervene. That's why we have doctors today.

You don't go to the church and get prayer. You go down to the you know, to the emergency or to the clinic or whatever, and the doctors take care of you. And and there's really just sort of a hostility almost toward people depending on God in a real serious way.

That is a direct assault against what the new covenant is all about. I mean, we're reading in the old covenant about God being intimately involved in the lives of these people. What about under the new covenant? His involvement is even more intimate.

So I can expect God to speak to me and I can freely say, you know, the Lord spoke to me and he told me this and not feel ashamed or not feel like, you know, wow, I'm setting myself up for a big disaster. There's obviously checks and balances, and of course, the word is the thing that we always want to use as our gauge for what God or what we believe God is speaking to us. I want to encourage you to expect God to speak to you, to believe that God's going to speak to you and when things happen in your life, to look at it as possibly God intervened here.

The Lord did this. Instead of saying, oh, wow, that's amazing that that happened, what a coincidence. Oh, it's not a coincidence.

It was the Lord. But, you know, there are those who, you know, these naysayers who want to. Oh, you know, we can't expect God to be working miraculously today and all of that.

And, you know, if some something happens in your life that was extraordinary and you attribute it and the Lord did that, they say, oh, no, that wasn't the Lord. You know, that was just it was just the way it goes. Not so.

We're God's people and just like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and all the rest of them, we can expect we ought to be anticipating that God is is working in our lives. Now, I don't know how in the world I got there from none of these things move me, but let's go back to none of these things moving me. So that's it.

None of these things moving me. I'm not going to be detoured. I'm not going to be distracted.

I'm going to trust the Lord. That's how I got there. I remember now we're we're trusting the Lord.

We're not going to let these obstacles stand in the way if God's calling us, if God's leading us, we're going to depend on him to take care of us. And that's what Paul did. And so he says in verse twenty five, and indeed, now I know that you all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God will see my face no more.

Boy, I can really. Identify with the apostle here and I would imagine the emotions that were stirring not only in him, but in that crowd that was gathered at that time they had been together, Paul had been with them for three solid years and he had taught them publicly, he had been in their homes, he was, you know, in many ways their father in the faith. And now he says, I know that we're never going to see each other again.

I could imagine that he was choked up, to say the least, when he said that. I have myself had to say goodbye to two churches. And to this date, those those particular days that I did that in both of those churches are probably the two hardest days I've ever faced in ministry emotionally, for sure, to to have to get up to, you know, a congregation of people that I've been connected with for so long and to say, you

know, not necessarily I'll never see your face again, but, you know, I'm not going to be a pastor anymore.

And man, I know how gut wrenching that is. I'll never forget when we were in London, a couple of the young guys that came to the church early on, guys that have been here with us, they're in the group M.O.D., Ephraim and Robert and Patrick. I'll never forget after about a year and a half of being there and, you know, just having a great bond with them.

And we were sitting down one evening and we were talking and Robert was just expressing his heart on something. I don't remember exactly what it was, but he said, but he was talking about the British term is being gutted, you know, and that means, you know, you're just emotionally just, you know, it's a devastating thing, he said, and he compared whatever it was. I can't remember, but he compared it to something like and he said, if I came to church and Pastor Brian told me he was leaving and I'll never forget two and a half years later, I had to stand up and do that very thing.

And that was in my mind as I was, you know, just remembering what he said and it was it was indeed a gut wrenching time, but I can really identify with Paul here and it must have been a hard thing for him to do. But yet at the same time, there was that sense that God was calling him. And, you know.

God does call us, he calls us sometimes to leave the comfort zone, sometimes he calls us to leave our family, sometimes he calls us to leave our friends, sometimes he calls us to leave everything that we're comfortable with and everything that we might have known, and he calls us to go off and do something for him. But here's the great thing. Even if we never saw each other's faces again on Earth, we've got a reunion coming in heaven, you see, and that's what we can always look forward to.

That's what we can always be excited about. And I'm sure that that truth was part of what brought consolation to all of them at this point. But he says, you you will not see my face anymore.

Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God, the prophet Ezekiel. God spoke to Ezekiel and he commanded him to speak to the people. And the Lord said, if you refuse to speak to the people and they don't turn from their sin, then their blood is going to be upon your head.

He said, but if you speak to them and they still don't turn, then you're free and clear. Their blood is upon their own head. And I think Paul is probably thinking of Ezekiel when he makes this declaration here.

I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. So Paul taught them. The scriptures, he taught them everything that they needed to know.

He didn't leave any issue hanging. He addressed the whole gamut of the counsel of God. And of course, that's the model that has been set for us, and that's what we've been seeking to do.

That's certainly what Pastor Chuck has done for so many years, faithfully, the whole counsel of God, Genesis to Revelation over and over and over and over again. And that's what we're supposed to do. And it would be a great day if the church started doing that again, the church in general, because that's to a large degree the problem within the Christian church today is people aren't getting the whole counsel of God.

They're getting, you know, whatever the preacher happens to fancy, you know, if he's got a pet doctrine, there's whole ministries that all they ever talk about is faith and prosperity and how faith leads to prosperity. They never talk about anything else. They have shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to the people before them.

And there are those who, you know, talk about family and every address has to do with family matters and family issues. It's an important issue, but it certainly doesn't cover the whole counsel of God. And there are those that are negligent because they're they're just concentrating on on this one thing.

Some people talk about election. It's all they ever want to talk about election and the five points and reformed theology and all of that sort of thing. And they're not giving the whole counsel of God.

The task of a faithful minister is to give God's people his word in its entirety, the whole counsel of God. And now Paul says in verse 28, he says, Therefore, take heed to yourselves. Remember, he's speaking to the elders of the church.

Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Notice the order. Paul says, therefore, take heed, first of all, to yourselves.

I must take heed to myself before I can really take heed to the flock. In other words, I have got to be right with God. I've got to be seeking the Lord.

I have to myself be doing these things and then I can effectively minister to the flock. But there's a big temptation in the ministry to concentrate on the flock to the neglect of our own souls, those of us who are elders, those of us who are in positions of leadership. And it's a constant battle.

It's a constant battle to stop and say, OK, I've got to take a step back and I have got to take heed to myself here. And I think as we sort of survey the landscape and you see some casualties out there, some ministry casualties, a lot of times you can trace it back to a failure of those men to take heed to themselves. They got so wrapped up in the ministry, they got so wrapped up in just the mechanics of it, and it just became, you know, the routine and it was what it was all about.

And they forgot about their own souls. We must take heed to our own souls first, all of us, regardless of what our particular calling is. But here he goes on and he says to them, he says.

That they are to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. Boy, the value of the church purchased with the most precious thing in all the universe, the church is priceless. The blood of Christ is priceless.

But Paul says to them, he says, shepherd the flock. And as he's as he's reminding them that that God purchased the church with his blood, he would, of course, be, you know, laying the seriousness of the matter upon them. This is a heavy, heavy responsibility, not one to cower back from, but one to take soberly and to realize I've got to be committed to this.

But this idea of shepherding. Shepherding the church of God, I think it includes three things. And for any of you that might at some time be thinking about maybe pastoral kind of ministry or something like that, maybe you have somewhat of a desire in your heart.

Maybe you've thought that, you know, perhaps the Lord would lead me into that someday. He might very well do that. But let me give you three things real quickly that I think sum up what Paul is talking about here when he says to shepherd the church of God.

It involves three things. First of all, it involves feeding them, which we've just talked about, really giving them the whole counsel of God, the shepherd feeds the flock. And so our primary responsibility is to nurture God's people through his word.

Secondly, the shepherd is to tend to the flock. And that would, I think, sort of imply that personal touch. You know, as pastors, we're not to be merely teachers.

Pastors have a gift to teach. But the pastoring, the whole picture of a pastor is really the picture of a shepherd. The implication is a personal touch.

There are sometimes those who don't want to have any personal involvement with the people. They love the pulpit ministry. They like to get up and address the crowds and they like to minister in a collective sense.

But then they don't. Really have any desire to connect with people on a personal level. If that's the case, I highly doubt that someone's really called to the ministry.

At least the pastoral ministry, they can't be because part of it is a personal touch. So we don't merely just stand in a pulpit and give an oration, but we have to make contact with people. Touch people, get involved in their lives, get to know them, pray for them, things of that nature.

Over the years, I've seen a lot of guys in ministry developed the sort of the us against them mentality with the congregation. And they put a large buffer zone between them and the people. And you can never get to the pastor.

There's 10 guys at least between you and the pastor before you could ever even begin to approach him. And I've had people say to me in regard to the ministry that they they don't mingle with the people dangerous, they say, can really get hurt. Well, that might be true, but that's OK.

Vulnerability is part of goes with the job. So it is that that personal touch tending and then thirdly and finally. To shepherd the flock would be to lead them.

Some people are good at teaching and they're even good with a personal touch, but they don't have a vision, so they're not leading really. And people sit week after week, month after month, year after year, and they're they're getting the right information and they're feeling loved, but they never have any sense of real direction or vision or, you know, they're not sort of prompted or motivated to get out and serve the Lord themselves. And I've seen guys who are good pastors and and good teachers, but yet lacking leadership and the church doesn't really develop the way it potentially could.

So I think these are the three ingredients that go into effectively shepherding the church of God. And so Paul calls them to do that. And then he says in verse twenty nine, he says, for I know this.

That after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves, men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves. That had to be heart wrenching for the apostle to anticipate that that would happen in the future.

And of course, it did happen. And of course, it still does happen today. You know, when you have.

Pastor to church, when you've sort of taken care of God's people and then maybe the Lord does call you to move on, that's one of the one of the big things, one of the big struggles is, you know, as you're passing this thing on to somebody else, are they going to take care of it? Or, you know, it's like having a baby and then giving it to somebody else to raise. And, you know, again, I can identify with the apostle here. And yet there is a point where you have to just entrust people to the Lord.

But I think even more sadly than savage wolves coming in among them, and that's quite a description, isn't it? Paul's talking about some ferocious beast, but even sadder is also from among yourselves. Men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves. That is really the saddest thing to ever happen in a church.

Tons of churches split. You've heard of church splits, I'm sure. And generally they split because someone in leadership in the fellowship rises up and begins to draw away disciples after themselves.

And it is a very sad thing that does occur, but Paul says, therefore, watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I love verse 32.

It's one of my favorite verses. You know, it's interesting, shortly after the apostolic age. Things really changed in the church.

Because the men that succeeded the apostles or came after them, they did not have the same confidence in God that the apostles had. And so what they did is they developed what was called the bishopric and what they began to do shortly after the apostolic age is that they began to sort of break the churches up into districts and to put men over groups of churches.

You see, in in the Bible, the bishop is the overseer of a local church. So Pastor Chuck is the bishop of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, and we are the elders who serve along with him, and that's the biblical model. But shortly after the apostolic period, the leaders in the church at that time, instead of following the apostles example and commending the people to God, trusting God with the church, they said, oh, no, this is going to you know, this is going to go south if we don't if we don't put some safeguards in.

And so what they did is they started to appoint these men to rule over various regions. Now, it seemed innocent at the time and it was and I'm sure their motives were pure and right and good. But if they could have only seen what it developed into, it became what is known as the papacy.

It became the rule of the bishop of Rome. It became. The Roman Catholic Church, ultimately, and one man ruling all over all of Christendom, over all of the entire world.

The bishop of Rome was, of course, the the likely candidate to oversee the whole thing because he was in the imperial city. So what more important city was there at the time than Rome? There was no more important city. So eventually the bishop of Rome got the top job in the church, but it never should have happened that way.

But it did happen because those guys couldn't do what Paul did right here. Paul's leaving and he doesn't say, OK, now I've got to put in some safeguards. Listen, you guys, you know, you're going to be pastoring

your churches, but I'm going to leave a few people here and they're going to really be in charge.

No, Paul was wise. He said, brethren, I commend you to God. Paul knew that ultimately he had to trust God with the church.

And that's one thing that a lot of men have not been able to do, haven't been able to trust God with the church. And so they keep holding on to it and they keep their influence there and they keep. And, you know, there comes a place where you just have to say, Lord, it's your deal.

And that's what Paul did here. But he says, I commend you to God and listen to the word of his grace. That's all we need.

That's all every Christian needs. That's all any church needs. We need God and his word.

If we've got God in his word, we've got all we need. Now, he says, notice, he says, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified. The word of God, again, we see the importance of it.

The word of God is able to build you up. That's what it does. It builds us up.

It increases our faith. It makes us strong. It causes us to grow.

And so Paul says, I'm just turning you over to the word, to the Lord and his word, and I'm confident that if you've got God in his word, you'll be just fine. And we are confident of that as well. He says, I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities. And for those who are with me, I have shown you in every way by laboring like this, that you must support the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Paul was just a great example of a servant of God.

So I've been with you three years. I haven't been here for the money. I've coveted no one's silver or gold.

As a matter of fact, you know that I've worked myself. You know, there's so much skepticism among people about Christians today and about especially about, you know, church leaders and, you know, all of that. And so often the charge is that all they're just in it for the money.

And what a great thing it is for, you know, people to set an example where it's obvious that this isn't about the money. One of the great things about the time that we spent in England was that because of the generosity of people here, we were able to serve the Lord there and pioneer that church without ever taking a single penny from the ministry there. And it was such a wonderful thing to just, you know, if there was ever any accusation, no one could ever accuse us of being in it for the money because we never we never took any.

And. Paul set such a great example in that. And so when he had said these things.

He knelt down and prayed with them all, then they all wept freely and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship. And so there you have it.

Paul is continuing his journey toward Jerusalem. And we will pick up and follow him once again in our next study, Lord, we thank you for this great example that you've given us in your servant Paul and Lord, just as he's recorded for us his own ministry among the people of Ephesus, so many things for us to glean from so many things for us to learn. And we thank you that these things are written here, that we can discuss them together, that we can meditate on them.

And Lord, tonight we want to. Lord, we really want to commit ourselves. To finishing the course.

Lord, may we like Paul not be moved by anything that would seek to knock us off course. May we stay the course. Help us, Lord.

Lord, help us to realize that if we count our lives dear to ourselves, then we'll never attain. To the thrill that awaits us when we totally give ourselves over to you. So help us, Lord, just to in some ways throw caution to the wind.

Knowing that you're going to catch us. Knowing that you're there, knowing that you're undergirding us, knowing that underneath are the everlasting arms. Lord, may we have the same confidence in you that was demonstrated by Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and David.

And Peter and John and Paul and all the rest of them. Lord, may we realize today in a fresh new way that. You are our God, just like you were there, God, and that you, Lord, are working.

That you're active in the lives of your people, that we can. Lord, expect you to speak to us. We don't have to be ashamed to say the Lord spoke to me.

We believe that you speak. We want you to speak or give us an ear to hear what your spirit is saying to us collectively and to us individually. So, Lord, as we.

Go now our separate ways. Lord, work your work of grace in us. Lord, may our lives be.

Not ours. But yours. May we remember that we were bought with a price.

We're not our own and may we glorify you in our body and our spirit, which belong to you. Help us, we pray. In Jesus name.

Amen.

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