

Acts 20:17-38, Message to the Ephesian Elders
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Overview

1. *Who* are the addressees? --> leadership in the primitive church: equivalence of elders, pastors, bishops.
2. *Why* does Paul want to meet with them? --> to equip them to carry on in his stead.
3. *What* does Paul outline as their duty? --> imitation of him in three areas:
 - a) dealing with opposition
 - b) thoroughness in ministry
 - c) both of these motivated by the right goals.
4. Overall outline
The chiasmus discerned by Exum & Talbert 67 misses several important correspondences and rhetorical patterns. Thus we diverge slightly. Three paragraphs describe Paul's conduct; then three more recall it and apply it to them. Pattern is AB-C, BA-C, where C provides the motivation for A and B.
 - a) Paul's Example
 - 1) 18-19, Dealing with opposition
 - 2) 20-21, Thoroughness in Ministry
 - 3) 22-24, What his motives are and aren't
 - b) Their Exhortation
 - 1) 25-28, Thoroughness in Ministry
 - 2) 29-31, Dealing with opposition
 - 3) 32-35, What their motives should and should not be

A. Preliminaries

1. Who are the addressees?
 - a) Titles applied to them
 - 1) 17, "elders of the church." --> their maturity and experience.
 - 2) 28a, "overseers" = "bishops." --> their authority to rule
 - 3) 28b, "feed" = "pastor." --> their responsibility to teach.
 - b) Other exx of these three titles or functions applied to a single group of people:
 - 1) 1 Pet. 5:1,2
 - 2) Heb. 13:7 (teaching), 17 (rule), 24 (part of the church; elder).
 - c) Beware dangers of separating these functions into different people (as so often today: seminary grad might be pastor, but not elder; in episcopal churches "overseer" is only higher level)
 - 1) Without being a teacher, no solid foundation on the word of

God.

- 2) Without being an elder, one has no experience on which to base teaching. God's revelation is through the Spirit as well as through the Word of God, and one must have walked with the Spirit.
- 3) Without being an overseer, teaching becomes academic and hollow. Must seek to see it put into practice.

2. Why does Paul want to meet with them?

- a) Does NOT go into Ephesus, 16. The people there would delay him. A large and active body of believers, resulting from his lengthy ministry there.
- b) Does call the elders, to pass the torch to them.
- c) --> This is the single best example of the apostle's concept of the work and ministry of elders, addressed to elders. What he tells them as he turns them loose. Probably parallels comments he makes to other groups of elders in the other cities, but Luke has preserved only this one. So it is critical for us to understand and follow.

B. 18-21, Paul's Methods

Two things that they know about him.

1. 18-19, his engagement with opposition. Has not been afraid to get his hands dirty and his soul bruised in facing opposition.
2. 20-21, his thoroughness in teaching. Four dimensions:
 - a) form: personal report of experience ("showing") and scripture-based "teaching" (drawing on the two forms of revelation that God has given us: the Spirit and the Word).
 - b) place: publicly and privately. A teacher's role is not just in the pulpit, but also to seek out individuals and encourage them as necessary.
 - c) audience: jews and Greeks. Has promoted unity across potential splits; not favoring either party. Teaches all. Cf. today, some people think their job is to teach adults, or else children; while a teacher may appeal more to one group than another, the teacher should seek to bridge divisions, not reinforce them.
 - d) content: emphasis here on the gospel message
 - 1) repentance--turning from past sinful life
 - 2) faith--trust in the Lord.
3. In both of these, note his openness with them. No sense of "pastoral aloofness."
 - a) Governing clause, "you know," v.18a. Dominant theme through the entire message.
 - b) 18 "with you" comes at the head of the sentence in Greek; emphasized. Has not hidden his trials and struggles. No attempt to maintain a pastoral facade. They have seen him humiliated and in tears.

- c) 20 "showing" emphasizes reporting based on personal experience. Not just exposition. He's been there.

C. 22-24, Paul's Motives

1. Doesn't know the details of what's coming in Jerusalem.
2. Does know, through prophecies delivered along the way, that he will be bound and oppressed (basis of his assessment in 25 that he will not see them again).
3. But this dismal prospect does not discourage him. His motive is not his personal security and comfort, but experiencing the joy of completing the work that God has given him, described in 24 as
 - a) a course (race course; don't collapse before you reach the goal);
 - b) a ministry from the Lord (sense of being personally charged with carrying something out)
 - c) a message to deliver (cf. Rom. 1:14, "I am debtor").
4. With this passage, compare Heb. 12:1,2 (running a race as our Lord did, motivated by the joy that awaits at the end).
5. --> Paul's motive is not his own comfort or security, but the reward the Lord is preparing for him.

D. 25-31, Their Methods

Each of these two sections has three parts:

1. the circumstances that make the exhortation necessary (introduced by oida);
 2. Paul's example in this area, recalling the first half of the sermon;
 3. the specific exhortation to them.
1. 25-28, Thoroughness in Teaching.
 - a) 25, Circumstances: He won't be able to continue this work among them.
 - b) 26-27, Paul's example. 27 "shun" is 20 "kept back"; 27 "declare" is 20 "show." These two verses carry our attention back to the detailed description of Paul's teaching.
 - c) 28, Exhortation.
 - 1) Need to take heed to themselves as well as the flock. If they stumble or fall, their ministry to the flock will be ruined.
 - 2) The responsibility is laid on them by the HS. The church does not make elders; it recognizes those whom God has appointed.
 - 3) Value of the flock measured by its purchase price. "the church of the Lord and God, which he has purchased with his own blood." Clear teaching of the deity of the LJC, though scrambled in the MSS tradition through the Arian

controversy.

2. 29-31, Dealing with Opposition

- a) 19-30, Circumstances: two kinds of opposition to expect. Both based on strong central leadership.
 - 1) Wolves from without, those who are not truly God's children but seek to gain admission in order to profit from the church.
 - 2) False teachers from within, who distort the truth in order to lead away a group of their own disciples.
- b) 31b, Paul's example: warned everyone with tears (cf. 19). "Warn" here is a distinctive Pauline word that involves
 - 1) verbal interaction
 - 2) that confronts problems rather than smoothing them over,
 - 3) for the benefit of the hearer.It's easier to overlook things, but Paul's example requires us to confront and deal with them.
- c) 31a, Exhortation: "Watch." Be on the lookout. Don't be lulled into false security.

E. 32-35, Their Motives

This is one of the most significant passages in my own life; the one the Lord used to turn us away from a career at DTS preparing men for the professional ministry, and toward a sense of responsibility for supporting ourselves. Chiastic, with a description of their motive on the outside and + and - descriptions of Paul's on the inside.

1. 32, Their motive

- a) In this life, the personal edification that comes from intense involvement in the Word of God for the sake of others. The responsibility to teach others is a great incentive to learn ourselves. Not just elders: a father in the home, who is diligent to read and explain the scriptures to his family, will himself profit greatly.
- b) In the life to come, an eternal inheritance. Cf. Paul's attitude in v.24 and Heb. 12:1,2, the future joy.

2. 33-34, Paul's motive. Works out the contrast in 22-24.

- a) He is not driven by worldly gain, any more than by worldly comfort.
- b) 34, on the contrary, he is self-supporting

3. 35, How this works out in their lives: They are to follow his example of self-support! --> no paid pastors. (NB: NOT "no pastors" or "no recognized elders," but rather a recognition of their responsibility to support themselves and lead the assembly in giving, rather than receiving.)

4. Important notes:

- a) There are passages in the NT that talk about GIFTS to those who minister the word of God; addressed to the giver, NOT the recipient, and a very different thing from a contractual salary.
- b) Conversation on the plane yesterday: "God works through people who don't follow this." Yes, he does; he also speaks through the mouth of donkeys. The issue is not what God can or cannot do, but what he has commanded us, and what our response is.
- c) No one person has all the truth. We can still learn from those who differ with us on this point. Need to represent this teaching humbly and in a spirit of Christian love. God doesn't teach us all the same things in the same order.

F. 36-37, Farewell

A tearful parting, showing the great love between them.

Summary

- 1. Christian leadership requires two things:
 - a) willingness to confront opposition rather than evade it;
 - b) thoroughness and diligence in teaching, not superficial.
- 2. Motives must be God's reward; we should shun earthly remuneration as much as possible, to keep ourselves servants of the Lord and answerable to him.

Hymn: Go, Labor On

Analysis

A. sequence p

- 1. 17)Apo\ de\ th^s Milh/tou pe/myas ei)s)/Efeson metekale/sato tou\s presbute/rous th^s e)kklhsi/as.
- 2. quote p
 - a) quote f: time p
 - 1) time: 18 w(s de\ parege/nonto pro\s au)to\n
 - 2) text: ei)^pen au)toi^s,
 - b) quote: [B - F following: chiasitic]

B. 18-24, Paul's Example

- 1. 18-21, Manner of his ministry: AQ p
 - a) AQ f: time p
 - 1) text: (Umei^s e)pi/stasqe
 - 2) time: comment p
 - a> text: a)po\ prw/thh h(me/ras
 - b> comment <hmeras>: a)f' h(^s e)pe/bhn ei)s th\n)Asi/an
 - b) AQ:
 - 1) *his willingness to face opposition; anticipates 29-31* pw^s meq' u(mw^h to\n pa/nta xro/non e)geno/mhn, 19 douleu/wn tw^| kuri/w| meta\
 - a> pa/shs tapeinofrosu/nhs
 - b> kai\ pollwn dakru/wn

c> kai\ peirasmw^n tw^n sumba/ntwn moi e)n tai^s
 e)piboulai^s tw^n)Ioudai/wn:
 2) *his thoroughness in teaching: anticipates 25-28 20 w(s
 ou)de\n u(pestela/mhn tw^n sumfero/ntwn tou^ mh\ cf. v.27*
 a> a)naggei^lai u(mi^n kai\ dida/cai u(ma^s
*an. has special meaning "to report back, based on
 experience." But later merges with ap. Here, if used in
 the special sense, emphasizes Paul's personal testifying
 to what he had experienced, as essential alongside more
 formal teaching.*
 b> dhmosi/a| kai\ kat' oi)/kous,
 c> 21 diamarturo/menos)Ioudai/ois te kai\ (/Ellhsin
 d> th\n ei)s qeo\n meta/noian kai\ pi/stin ei)s to\n
 ku/rion h(mw^n)Ihsou^n.

2. 22-24, Motives for his ministry: contrast p
*nun idou ... mh eidws sets up a contrast with v.25 nun idou ...
 oida, which effects the transition into the second half of the
 speech; that, in turn, is built around the notion of "I know [or
 "you know"] ..., therefore ..."*

- a) 22-23, thesis: circumstance p: what his motive IS NOT
 1) text: 22 kai\ nu^n i)dou\ dedeme/nos e)gw\ tw^| pneu/mati
 poreu/omai ei)s)Ierousalh/m,
 2) circ: AQ p
 a> AQ f: ... mh\ ei)dw/s,
 b> AQ: contrast p
 1> ta\ e)n au)th^| sunanth/sonta/ moi ...
 2> quote p
 a: quote f: 23 plh\n o(/ti to\ pneu^ma to\ a(/gion
 kata\ po/lin diamartu/retai/ moi le/gon o(/ti
 b: quote: desma\ kai\ qli/yeis me me/nousin.
- b) 24, Antithesis: what his motive IS.
 1) 24 a)ll' ou)deno\s lo/gou poiou^mai
 2) oude exw th\n yuxh\n mou timi/an e)mautw^|
 3) w(s teleiw^sai ... meta xaras [*objects in apposition;
 specification p?*]
 a> to\n dro/mon mou ...
 b> kai\ th\n diakoni/an
 1> comment: h(\n e)/labon para\ tou^ kuri/ou)Ihsou^,
 c> apposition: diamartu/rasqai to\ eu)agge/lion th^s
 xa/ritos tou^ qeou^.

C. 25-35, Their Exhortation

*Each section has the form "I know [or "you know"] X, therefore do
 Y." The shift from Manner (A,B) to Motive (C) is reflected in the
 shift from "I know" to "you know," and in the turn from chiasm
 (AB-BA) to alternation (AB-C, BA-C).*

1. 25-31, Their Ministry

- Each of these two sections has three parts:*
 a) *the circumstances that make the exhortation necessary
 (introduced by _oida_);*
 b) *Paul's example in this area, recalling the first half of the
 sermon;*

c) *the specific exhortation to them.*

a) 25-28, They must be thorough in teaching, as he was.

- 1) 25, Circumstances: his departure. quote p
a> quote f: 25 Kai\ nu^n i)dou\ e)gw\ oi)^da o(/ti
b> quote: comment p
1> text: ou)ke/ti o)/yesqe to\ pro/swpo/n mou u(meis^s
pa/ntes
2> comment <umeis>: e)n oi(^s dih^lqon khru/sswn th\n
basilei/an:
- 2) 26-28, Example: his example of thoroughness.
a> quote p
1> quote f: 26 dio/ti martu/romai u(mi^n e)n th^|
sh/meron h(me/ra| o(/ti
2> quote: kaqaro/s ei)mi a)po\ tou^ ai(/matos pa/ntwn,
b> 27 ou) ga\r u(pesteila/mhn tou^ mh\ a)naggei^lai pa^san
th\n boulh\n tou^ qeou^ u(mi^n. cf. v. 20
- 3) 28, Exhortation: comment-purpose p
*Falls within exceptions to Hollenbach's constraints:
adjectival clause*
a> text: 28 prose/xete e(autoi^s kai\ panti\ tw^|
poimni/w|,
b> comment <poimniw>: e)n w(^| u(ma^s to\ pneu^ma to\
a(/gion e)/qeto e)pisko/pous,
c> purpose: comment p
1> text: poimai/nein th\n e)kklhsi/an tou^ qeou^,
2> comment <ekklhsian>: h(\n periepoi/sato dia\ tou^
ai(/matos tou^ i)di/ou.

b) 29-31, They must be alert to opposition, as he was.

- 1) 29-30, Circumstances: AQ p
a> AQ f: 29 e)gw\ gar oi)^da o(/ti
b> AQ:
1> ei)seleu/sontai meta\ th\n a)/fici/n mou lu/koi
barei^s ei)s u(ma^s mh\ feido/menoi tou^ poimni/ou,
2> 30 kai\ e)c u(mw^an au)tw^an a)nasth/sontai a)/ndres
lalou^ntes diestramme/na tou^ a)pospa^an tou\s
maqhta\s o)pi/sw au)tw^an.
- 2) 31, AQ p
a> 31a, Exhortation
AQ f: 31 dio\ grhgorei^te, mnhmoneu/ontes o(/ti
b> 31b, Example
AQ: trieti/an nu/kta kai\ h(me/ran ou)k e)pausa/mhn
meta\ dakru/wn nouqetw^an e(/na e(/kaston.

2. 32-35, Their Motives

Chiastic, Their motive, Paul's (marked in the center with "you know"), theirs again.

- a) 32, their motive
 kai\ ta\ nu^n parati/qemai u(ma^s
 1) tw^| qew^|
 2) comment p
 a> text: kai\ tw^| lo/gw| th^s xa/ritos au)tou^
 b> comment: tw^| duname/nw|
 1> oi)kodomh^sai
 2> kai\ dou^nai th\n klhronomi/an e)n toi^s
 h(giasme/nois pa^sin.
- b) 33-34, Paul's motive (negative): contrast p
 1) antithesis: a)rguri/ou h)\ xrusi/ou h)\ i(matismou^
 ou)deno\s e)pequ/mhsa:
 2) thesis:
 a> AQ f: 34 au)toi\ ginw/skete o(/ti
 b> AQ: tai^s xrei/ais mou kai\ toi^s ou)^sin met' e)mou^
 u(phre/thsan ai(xei^res au(^tai.
- c) 35, their motive: quote p
 1) quote f: 35 pa/nta u(pe/deica u(mi^n o(/ti
 2) quote: ou(/tw^s kopiw^ntas dei^
 a> a)ntilamba/nesqai tw^n a)sqenou/ntwn,
 b> mnhmoneu/ein te tw^n lo/gwn tou^ kuri/ou)Ihsou^ o(/ti
 au)to\s ei)^pen,
 1> Maka/rio/n e)stin ma^llon dido/nai h)\ lamba/nein.
- D. 36-37, Farewell
 1. 36 Kai\ tau^ta ei)pw\n qei\s ta\ go/nata au)tou^ su\n pa^sin
 au)toi^s proshu/cato.
 2. 37 i(kano\s de\ klauqmo\s e)ge/neto pa/ntwn,
 3. kai\ e)pipeso/ntes e)pi\ to\n tra/xhlon tou^ Pau/lou katefi/loun
 au)to/n, 38 o)dunw/menoi ma/lista e)pi\ tw^| lo/gw| w(^|
 ei)rh/kei o(/ti ou)ke/ti me/llousin to\ pro/swpon au)tou^
 qewrei^n.
 4. proe/pempon de\ au)to\n ei)s to\ ploi^on.