

# The Philosophy of Ministry of the Apostle Paul

Acts 20:17-35

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Philosophy is:

- A statement of **purpose**
- A statement of **priorities**
- A statement of **principles**

Paul's Ministry in Ephesus - "...he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church." (v. 17)

- *"and he came to Ephesus"* (18:19)
- *"I will return again unto you, if God will"* (18:21)
- *"came to Ephesus"* (19:1)
- *"into the synagogue"* (19:8) [3 months]
- *"daily in the school of Tyrannus"* (19:9) [2 years]
- *"Paul determined to sail by Ephesus"* (20:16)

Summary of Paul's Ministry in Ephesus

- *"all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."* (19:10)
- *"God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul."* (19:11)
- *"the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified"* (19:17)
- *"So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed."* (19:20)

## “...Ye Know...” (v. 17-21)

### I. The Manner of His Ministry (v. 18-19)

- ❖ *“Serving the Lord”* – there is great satisfaction and fulfillment that comes from doing WHAT God gives you to do, WHEN and WHERE He wants you to do it.
- ❖ Provides freedom from:
  - the goal of statistically measurable results
  - the passion for a name and the fame that goes with it
  - the fear of disappointed expectations
  - the pressure to conform to a man-made standard
  - the intimidation of those who are critical and judgmental
  - the pride of accomplishment

#### A. Paul was challenged mentally – *“humility of mind”*

##### 1. Right thinking about God – Eph. 4:6

- *“One God and Father of us all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Ps. 86:10)

##### 2. Right thinking about ourselves – Eph. 3:8

- *“Unto me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given...”* (Rom. 12:3) [*“least of the apostles”* – I Cor. 15:9]

##### 3. Right thinking about others – Eph. 4:1,2

- *“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.”* (Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:2,3)

## B. Paul was challenged emotionally – “many tears”

\*That which moves a minister of God to tears –  
moves Him!

- Acts 20:31 – “with tears”
- II Cor. 2:4 – “with many tears”
- Phil. 3:18 – “even weeping”

## C. Paul was challenged physically – “temptations”

\* “We use the word temptation, in a more limited sense, to denote inducements offered to one to lead him into sin. The word in the Scriptures most commonly denotes trials of any kind.” –Albert Barnes N.T. Commentary

- II Cor. 4:8-11 – “...in the body...in our body...in our mortal flesh...”
- II Cor. 11:23-27 – “infirmities” (v. 30)

## II. The Method of His Ministry (v. 20)

- ❖ “I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you...” – Genuine ministry is always focused on meeting needs.
- ❖ This is the basis for the “live to give” approach to life and people.

### A. The Practice of the Ministry

1. Demonstration – “have showed you”  
 (“practice what you preach” – LIFE)

## 2. Declaration – “*have taught you*”

(“preach what you practice” – LIPS)

- ❖ It is your life that allows you to connect with people, and it is your lips that allow you to communicate with people. (walk and talk)

### B. The Place of the Ministry

#### 1. “Place to place” – “*publicly*”

(every place you go is an opportunity)

#### 2. “Person to person” – “*from house to house*”

(every person you meet is an opportunity)

### III. **The Message of His Ministry** (v. 21)

- ❖ “*Testifying*” – as a spokesman for Deity, God’s truth must be communicated well.
- ❖ The ultimate need is “a word from the Lord” which makes preaching essential to the ministry.

A. Mankind must be convicted of his sin – “*repentance toward God*”

B. Mankind must be convinced of his Savior – “*faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*”

Note: “*to the Jews...to the Greeks (Gentiles)*” (emphasis is placed upon the universal nature of the gospel)

Paul's "Pulpit Ministry" (Definitions from **Strong's Concordance**)

- **"Testifying, testify"** (v. 21,24) – literally "to attest or protest earnestly"  
-*"repentance toward God"*  
-*"faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"*  
-*"the gospel of the grace of God"*
  
- **"Preaching"** (v. 25) – literally "to herald (as a public crier), especially divine truth (the gospel)"  
-*"the kingdom of God"*
  
- **"Declare"** (v. 27) – literally "to announce (in detail)"  
-*"all the counsel of God"*
  
- **"Warn"** (v. 30,31) – literally "to put in mind, to caution or reprove gently"  
-*"perverse things"*

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## “...I Go...” (v. 22-24)

### I. There is a **call** that must be obeyed (v. 22)

-“bound in the spirit”

- ❖ The Spirit of God has placed upon Paul a great sense of urgency and obligation to go. Paul was experiencing an overwhelming sense of duty.

### II. There is a **commitment** that must be made (v. 22)

-“not knowing the things that shall befall me there”

- ❖ Paul was stepping into the unknown and yet refused to allow uncertainty to limit his willingness to go.

### III. There is a **cost** that must be paid (v. 23)

-“bonds and afflictions abide me”

- ❖ Paul accepted the hazards of his ministry, but was willing to pay the price if he did go. Suffering was a normal part of his ministry (Acts 9:16)

Ministry comes with:

1. A sense of **obligation**
2. A door of **opportunity**
3. A threat of **opposition**

## Paul's Committed Response (v. 24)

1. Unshakeable – *“none of these things move me”*
2. Unselfish – *“neither count I my life dear unto myself”*
3. Unstoppable – *“so that I might finish my course”*

\*I Tim. 4:7

\*Paul ministry and message were based upon and centered around *“the gospel of the grace of God”* which he needed to *“testify”*.

## “...I Know...” (v. 25-31)

### Paul’s Statements of Purpose:

\*Paul is aware that this is a farewell visit. He will not see this church or these people again.

I. **I have preached** – *“I have gone preaching the kingdom of God”* (v. 25)

II. **I have prepared** – *“I am pure from the blood of all men”* (v. 26)

- Paul makes reference to the concept presented in Ezek. 33:1-6 of *“the watchman and the warning”*

III. **I have presented** – *“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”* (v. 27)

- ❖ Paul uses the picture of a flock and the example of a shepherd to teach about the ministry (“the flock” is used figuratively to picture of a group of believers)
- ❖ Similar examples
  - “as a nurse”* – gentle (I Thess. 2:7)
  - “as a father”* – exhorted, comforted, charged (I Thess. 2:11)
- ❖ Peter is the other NT author who uses this image to present the responsibility of a minister (I Pet. 5:2,3)



## The Shepherd and His Flock

1. **A good shepherd will guide his flock** – “*the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers*” (v.28)

[Ps. 23:3; John 10:3,4]

- A leader **knows** the right way
- A leader **goes** the right way
- A leader **shows** the right way

2. **A good shepherd will feed his flock** – “*to feed the church of God*” (v. 28)

[Ps. 23:1,2; John 10:9]

- Proper nourishment **provides strength**
- Proper nourishment **produces growth**
- Proper nourishment **promotes health**

3. **A good shepherd will protect his flock** – “*watch...warn*” (v. 31)

[Ps. 23:4,5; John 10:12,13]

\*Attacks come from without – “*grievous wolves enter in among you...not sparing the flock*” (v.29)

\*Attacks come from within – “*of your own selves shall men arise...to draw away disciples*” (v. 30)

- Be **awake!**
- Be **alert!**
- Be **aware!**

## “...I show...” (v. 32-35)

❖ “I have showed you all things...” (v. 35)

### I. I have showed you the importance of building lives –

“and to the Word of His grace...” (v. 32)

A. God’s grace **builds** a life – “to build you up”

\*It is the grace of God which enables an individual to grow, mature, and develop into the person God desires them to be. (Eph. 4:12,15,16)

B. God’s grace **blesses** a life – “to give you an inheritance”

\*It is the grace of God that enriches the life with all that God has to offer in the life of an individual. (Eph. 1:18)

- “the glory of His grace” (Eph. 1:6)
- “the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7) [2:7]
- “the dispensation of the grace of God” (Eph. 3:2)
- “the gift of the grace of God” (Eph. 3:7)

C. God’s grace **beautifies** a life – “among all them which are sanctified” (made holy)

\*It is the grace of God that produces a God-likeness (godliness) in the attitudes and actions of an individual. (Eph. 1:4; 4:24)

**II. I have showed you the importance of bearing burdens** – “*ye ought to support the weak*” (v.35)

A. Paul spoke about **living** – “*these hands have ministered*” (v. 33,34)

\*Ministry must be “hands-on”

B. Paul spoke about **laboring** – “*so laboring*” (v. 35)

\*Ministry must be “others-oriented”

C. Paul spoke about **lifting** – “*support the weak*” (v. 35)

\*Ministry must be “need-focused”

**III. I have showed you the importance of blessing others** – “*it is more blessed to give*” (v. 35)

A. The **priority** of giving

\*God so loved the world “*that He gave*”.

[II Cor. 8:9]

B. The **practice** of giving

\*When God touches the heart, He touches the hand.  
(opens the wallet and the checkbook)

C. The **pleasure** of giving

\*The joy comes from living generously and seeing others blessed by it. (not mad or sad but glad!)

[II Cor. 9:7]

*Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous,  
Teach me to serve Thee as Thou deservest;  
To give and not count the cost;  
To fight and not to heed the wounds;  
To toil and not to seek reward,  
Save of knowing that I do Thy will, O God.*

**-Saint Ignatius of Loyola**

### **Paul's Farewell** (v. 36-38)

\*Paul's desire had been to encourage and edify, to support and serve.

1. The value of **words** – “*when he had thus spoken*”
2. The value of **prayer** – “*he prayed with them all*”
3. The value of **tears** – “*they all wept sore*”
4. The value of **love** – “*fell on Paul's neck and kissed him*”