

Plumstead Bible Conference 2012

Part 3

Speaker	Arend Remmers; Michael Vogelsang; Farid Zaki Gayed; Graham Warnes
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[00:00:01] Dear Brethren, it is my exercise tonight to speak and share some thoughts about the message of the address of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian Elders in the book of Acts chapter 20. Acts chapter 20, and we start reading from verse 17.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, [00:01:04] repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more.

Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock [00:02:04] over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood, or the blood of his own. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. [00:03:01] I have showed you all things,

how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship. We've just read one of the passages of the Bible that are of a striking significance because it is a kind of farewell address of the Apostle Paul.

And if somebody is giving, so to say, his last words, knowing that his time on earth is drawing to a close, then these words have a special weight, a special importance. And it's also, in another way, quite remarkable, this speech, [00:04:04] because it is one of the very few, maybe the only speech we have of the Apostle in the book of Acts that is directed to believers. Most sermons in the book of Acts are preachings of the gospel to the unsaved. And Paul, on his journey, did not want to visit Ephesus, which would have diverted him from his path. And so he called the elders of the church to himself.

The elders or overseers were those people that were appointed officially in the beginning in the assemblies by the apostles or their delegates like Titus. And the two terms we find in scripture, elders and overseers, are used for the same group of persons.

Unfortunately, in Christianity, [00:05:03] from the Greek words that are used here, different offices have developed, the bishop and the Presbyterian structure. But we have three scriptures in the New Testament where both words are used together, and we will see quite clearly that they speak to the same group of persons. In our passage here in Acts 20, the first of these three scriptures, in verse 17, we read of the elders of the church. And in verse 28, he says of these persons, take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, out of which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. So he calls them overseers, the same persons he has called elders before. And we have another passage in the epistle to Titus, who was responsible of ordaining elders, and in Titus chapter 1, the apostle says in verse 5, [00:06:03] for this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city. And in verse 7, he says, for the overseer must be blameless, and so on. Again, both words for the same group of people.

And Peter also in his epistle, in 1 Peter chapter 5, that's the third verse, where we have both together.

In 1 Peter chapter 5, in verse 1, we read, the elders which are among you.

And then he says about these people, feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof. Again, both words for the same group of people.

[00:07:03] One term, the term elders, more speaks about the kind of persons they were. It speaks of their spiritual maturity that was necessary for such an office. The other word, overseer, speaks more of the kind of work they were doing, keeping the oversight of the assembly. Today, there are no apostles anymore.

No delegates of apostles that could ordain elders. So we have no officially appointed elders anymore. The thought you find in Christianity that the church or assembly is electing its elders is foreign to scripture. We don't find any example of that. But even if there are no officially appointed elders anymore, of course, the task they were doing to oversee the people of God is still done and is still recognized.

And so these elders are here, so to say, as the representatives [00:08:04] of these assemblies to whom Paul speaks.

And the message he gives could clearly be divided into four parts.

The first part, verse 17 to verse 21, Paul speaks about his conduct and his ministry among them in Asia. And all these three other parts begin with the same words, and now. In verse 22, and now. In verse 25, and now.

And then again in verse 32, and now. The second part, verse 22 to 24, he was going to speak about what lay ahead of him, what he was expecting now when he left them.

And in the third part, verses 25 to 31, he speaks to them about what would [00:09:05] happen after his departure, after the apostles were gone. And then, very encouraging, in the last paragraph, 32 to 38, he speaks about the resources of help for the believer when there are no longer any apostles. And we see that this is something that is very important for us today. We live in days where there are no apostles anymore. And we will find what Paul does when he says farewell to these Christians. He does not commend them to any other apostles, but to God and the word of his grace. And that is the same for us. But first of all, he speaks to them about the manner in which he had worked and served among them, and he speaks about the matter he talked about.

What was the content of his preaching among them?

[00:10:03] When he speaks first about the manner, he says, ye know, in verse 17, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord. That's the first thing. He was an apostle.

You and I, we are no apostles. We have other things to do. The Lord has given us. But in the first place, what we all do is serving the Lord. We should be, as was said in the conference, we should first of all be occupied with the kingdom of God, and everything else will be given to us. And that means serving the Lord. Of course, he served the saints. He was working among them. We will see that. But in the very first place, he was serving the Lord. The Lord that had called him to be an apostle, the Lord that had given him the task, what he should do, he was serving the Lord with all humility of mind.

[00:11:07] What a servant. What an example. Paul could say with an upright heart that he had served them with all humility of mind. I'm not sure if anybody's here would dare to say that of himself, but Paul could say so. And here's our example to follow him. Simply and humbly serving the Lord in the area he has given us, with the tasks he has given us, serving the Lord with all humility of mind. That is the mind of the Lord Jesus we find in Philippians 2 set before us as the example. And Paul had followed that. He was in humility of mind, serving the Lord, and with many tears. The service of Paul was a service in which he was moved in his inner being with compassion. It says about the Lord Jesus that he was moved with compassion when he saw the needs [00:12:04] of the people around him. And it was so with Paul that situations that happened to him caused him tears. Here it was particularly in connection with the Jews and the opposition of the Jews. But we also find in Philippians that he says to them, I have told you and now tell you with tears that there are those that are enemies of the cross of Christ.

We can learn from him that all these things that are there, the opposition that is there, the false influences among the sins, is not anything that should leave us unmoved. Serving the Lord is something that may cause us tears and temptations. He says, and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews. At every place where Paul was preaching the gospel, the Jews were there and there was the opposition of his own people, the Jews, and these were his temptations. But [00:13:04] generally speaking, serving the Lord will bring trials and temptations. Are you serving the Lord and you think, oh it's difficult, there's so many difficulties on the way, I'm experiencing temptations and trials? Well that's not surprising, that is something to be expected. The apostle had come across these things and it will so with every one of us when we serve the Lord. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. Paul was a faithful servant.

He did not keep back anything that was profitable for the saints.

It's also something we may ask ourselves, we are also guided by this thought. What is profitable for the saints? He kept back nothing. Maybe you realize there is some teaching [00:14:04] that is profitable or would be profitable for the mating where you are or for some saints you visit. But then you may say, well but it's unpopular to speak about that. But this was no reason for Paul to keep back anything that was profitable. And if we have young believers, young matings, the question will come, what is profitable for them? Not to keep it back. I remember we were talking with some brothers who were writing for young people's magazine and we were trying to put on them the idea that they should write on something we thought was profitable for young people. But some said, well I would prefer to write on what is on my heart. Which I can understand, everybody would like to speak and write on what is on his heart. But there are things we have to speak about, to write about [00:15:03] because they are profitable for the saints. And when we realize that some special truth is profitable, we will not keep it back.

But ask the Lord for guidance and help to speak about these things. Paul had kept nothing back that was profitable unto you, but have announced and have taught you publicly and from house to house.

There we find the two areas of his service. One was publicly. Yes, he was speaking publicly in the meetings or wherever. He was publicly speaking and teaching the Word of God.

But he was also working with individual souls from house to house.

How is that with us?

Probably there's a danger, particularly for the brothers who have the service of ministering the Word, [00:16:06] that we put more value on the public ministry.

You will be noticed, you will be seen, you will be taped, and your tapes could be bought in some particular places, you are even videotaped. And you might think that this is something more important than what's going on in private.

But the private from house to house sometimes may be much more effective. When you preach the Word publicly, which we have to do, which is our task, but very often we don't get any feedback if the message had come across, if people really understood what you wanted to bring over. But when you go into the houses and you ask questions, or get asked questions, you find out if the believers, if the saints really [00:17:04] got what you wanted to say, or you realize some new need that is there, some

point that should be clarified as far as the teacher is concerned. And the shepherd, of course, he is going from house to house doing this kind of work. Last year when I was in the United States and we had some youth lectures, and afterwards there was a question and answer session, and I had something, had said something about shepherd service and pastoral work, and one person said, but it was actually not a question, just a remark, the person said, where is that taking place? I've never noticed shepherd service amongst brethren, and my reaction was excellent, and she was quite surprised by my reaction. I said, if shepherd service is done and nobody notices, then it was very effective, because that's how it should be. It's not something that is done publicly, and everybody is going to notice it. [00:18:06] One believing woman once phoned me. She had read an article and wanted to talk about it. She phoned me. She was a member of a church, and she said to me, if I would go to my pastor at my church, then I could just put it into the newspaper. This is not what pastoral service is like. It is something that is confidential, something that is done from house to house. So we may wonder, why did all the Ephesians know that if it was in that way? Because, we find it later on, Paul had been in every house. He had been with every one of them, so they knew he was doing that work, even if they did not know when he was where, probably, but he was doing this for everyone, publicly and from house to house. And when Paul went to the houses from house to house, he went through the front door, because there were people who came through the back door. That's what we find in 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy 3.

[00:19:06] We find other people going from house to house. 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 6. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divert lusts. There he speaks of some false teachers that creep into the houses, not publicly and openly, but they come through the back door, so to say, to lead away weak believers from the truth. Is that not something that's still happening? People not acting openly, but going from house to house, and trying to influence people in the wrong direction? Not sure the Apostle Paul. And there is another thing I would like to point out with from house to house, and that is in 1 Timothy chapter 5. [00:20:01] 1 Timothy 5, verse 13. He is speaking particularly about young widows, and he said, and with all they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. He was talking about these young widows, but I think that's a danger for a lot of other people too, if we are idle, wandering from house to house, being busybodies, talking things we should not talk about. Maybe you are out of work, you have no job, which is not your fault, but the question is, what are you going to do with your time? If you are idle, wandering around, and talking about things that are not profitable, to do this, to go from house to house in this way, today, you do not even have to leave your house. Just go on Facebook and waste your time, and be a busybody, and talking about [00:21:04] things that should not be talked about. That's a danger. That was not Paul. When Paul came, he had a message. He had something to talk about.

He could speak about the person of the Lord Jesus. How wonderful that is, if in serving the Lord, we do not only have the public aspect before our eyes, but also the private one from house to house, to strengthen the saints.

Now he speaks about the things he had preached, and he speaks about two kinds of groups. One was the gospel, one was what he said to people, to unbelievers, and the other is what he taught the saints. In both cases, he gives us two subjects, and this has to do with the two lines we had before us today as [00:22:03] well. One side is the responsibility of man, and the other side is the grace of God. And both is true side by side.

We get problems, as we have seen, when we want to combine these things, or to mix them up. But in God's Word, we find them side by side. When we come to the gospel, which is the first thing he mentions, then he says in verse 21, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the side of the responsibility of man. He was preaching to man that he has to repent of his sins toward God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what the gospel preacher will bring before an unbeliever. He will make it sure to him that he is lost, [00:23:01] and that the only way to get saved is to repent of his sins, to confess his sins to God, and to believe that the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary has died for such a person.

But later on, I'm now just for a moment going to verse 24 at the end, he says that he has testified the gospel of the grace of God.

This is the other side. That is the side of God, the grace of God. Man is responsible.

Man is responsible and has to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus. But nevertheless, it's all the grace of God. It's not something we do to inherit anything. It is always the gospel of the grace of God.

I don't know if everybody here is saved. If everybody has had such a [00:24:01] moment in your life when you realized that you have to repent of all your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is your responsibility. The grace of God is still sounding this message. Paul has started with it to Jews and Greeks alike, to every man, and it is still preached today. But this time where the gospel of the grace of God is preached is drawing to a close, and therefore it is so necessary to listen what Paul said.

At the beginning of his second paragraph, where he speaks about what's going to happen to him, he says, and now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. He was bound in his in his own human spirit to go there to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.

[00:25:01] That is of course the normal way we all go. We don't know what's going to happen to us. We go our way, and Paul was particularly bound to go to Jerusalem once again to preach to his own people that were so much on his heart.

One thing he knew, safe that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide may. When he was traveling this way, there were several indications that he was going to be arrested and that he had to suffer. There the prophet Agabus came and bound himself and said the man here will bound in that way. And others, brethren through the Holy Spirit, told him not to go there. And even Paul realizes here, well when even Paul in this passage realizes that these messages were from the Holy Ghost. He said the Holy Ghost is telling me [00:26:03] that bonds and afflictions abide me.

I'm not going to do now into a discussion if it was right or not right for Paul to go there. I simply want to put before you that the Spirit of God in this passage makes clear Paul knew that the Holy Ghost was telling him, you will suffer there. And that Paul did not care what was going to happen to him.

This love for his people was so strong that this could not hinder him. If I had something on my heart to go to some place in the service of the Lord and somebody would say me through the Holy Spirit, if you go there you will be beaten and you will be arrested and other things will happen to you.

I'm not sure what I would do. If I would say, well perhaps I better do some other thing and leave that for later. But Paul said, no nothing of this will hold me back.

[00:27:04] But none of these things move me. Nothing of things move me. He had this determination in serving the Lord to go there and nothing could move him. How much do we have from this determination when the Lord has given us a service, a ministry? How easily we can be moved from it by some circumstances that are trying and that are not so favorable for us. But nothing of that could move the apostle, as he says. And neither count I my life dear unto myself. Even if there was the danger of losing his life, he said, well that's not so important. I do not count my life dear to myself. I'm even willing to sacrifice my life if that is the only way to reaching this people.

So that I might finish my course. So that I might finish my course.

[00:28:06] He was running a course. We all are running a course. And Paul says, I want to finish my course.

That is normally what should happen. If we run on a course, the idea is to finish it and not to stop on the way. And Paul says, I want to finish my course. And later on in his last epistle he could say, I finished the course. I've done that. I've been faithful to the end. I want to finish my course. Not looking back. And the ministry that which I have received of the Lord Jesus. Testify the gospel of the grace of God.

To fulfill, finish my course and the ministry which I have received.

There was something Paul had on his mind for himself and others. He encourages others if they had a ministry [00:29:02] to fulfill it. He says to Timothy, fulfill thy ministry. Preach the word. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill thy ministry. And there was another brother whom he speaks to in Colossians. See to the ministry that you have received in the Lord.

This could mean probably two things depending on where we put the emphasis. It could mean that he says, you have a ministry. Finish it. Maybe he saw some signs of not doing that.

But probably he was also interested in some other kind of ministry. And Paul was saying, fulfill thy ministry that you have received from the Lord. Try to finish that. And he gave himself as the example. He said, I want to fulfill this ministry to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

And then in verse 20-25, in the next paragraph now, he speaks [00:30:02] about the things that would happen after his departure. And he says, first of all, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more.

He had spoken about the gospel to all men, Jews and Greeks alike. But now he says, ye all, ye Ephesians. Now he is talking about what he taught among the saints. And also he speaks about two things. One having to do with the responsibility of man, and the other having to do with the grace of God. The first thing was preaching the kingdom. Let us to do with our responsibility. Living as

disciples in the kingdom of our Lord. He was preaching the kingdom, telling them what that meant to be in the kingdom of God. Living as his disciples. The one side. And the other thing.

[00:31:01] For I have not shunned, verse 27, to declare unto you all the counsel of God. That's the grace of God. All the counsel of God. All the truth about Christ in the assembly. Christ in heaven united with his body on earth. This wonderful counsel of God, which is the grace of God. That's not a question of our responsibility, but of God's grace. All his counsels that were in his heart, he has unfolded before them. How wonderful that is to see that the apostle had this balance in his teaching. He knew when to address the responsibility of the saints, and when to bring before them all the counsel of God. Again, he did not hold back anything. Not in the gospel, not in the teaching of the saints. He preached everything that was necessary to them. And therefore he could say, in verse 26, I am pure from the blood of all men.

[00:32:03] Maybe he was thinking about what we find in the prophet Ezekiel, where God says to the prophet, if somebody, a sinner, is going on an evil way, and you warn him, then he will be judged because of his sins, but you are pure from his blood. But if you don't tell him, then I will count you responsible for that. He will still be judged for his sins, but you will be responsible that you didn't tell him. And that is a serious word for us. The people around us will be judged for their sins, but what about us? Have we taken the opportunity as Paul, telling them to repent and to put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing them the gospel of the grace of God? Paul had done this to unbelievers as well as to the saints. And now he exhorts these [00:33:05] elders, take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock.

Quite often we find this scripture, this instruction in the scriptures, take heed of yourself and something else. But it always starts with take heed therefore unto yourself. Even the Lord Jesus used this expression once in Luke's gospel, chapter 14, Luke 14, verse...

Well, I don't find the words now, but it is as the Lord Jesus says, take heed to yourself. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. But it also starts with this take heed to yourself. First of all, putting ourselves into the light of God's words before we go to somebody else. And it is [00:34:03] here, it has to do with this shepherd service of the elders. So therefore it says take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock. To Timothy, where it was a matter of doctrine, he says take heed of yourself and the doctrine. But it always starts with having a look at our own selves, putting ourselves into the light of God's words. And then to all the flock and I now quote it from the Derby translation which is a bit more precise, to all the flock wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers, not over which, they are not setting above them, but wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers to shepherd the assembly of God which he has purchased with the blood of his own. To shepherd the assembly of God. And to do this we have to get a real estimation of the [00:35:02] value the assembly has in the eyes of God whom he has purchased with the blood of his own.

God gave his own, the son, to purchase the assembly. Such a value the assembly has in the eyes of God. And so these elders should see them as valuable and therefore they should shepherd them the assembly of God he has purchased with the blood of his own. When the Lord Jesus after his resurrection was talking to Peter and asking him three times, do you love me?

And he said, yes Lord, you know that I love you. Then the Lord says to him, shepherd my flock.

He says so to say, if you love me you can show this by serving them that are so valuable to my heart,

[00:36:02] my shepherds, my sheeps. And here it is God that purchased the assembly of God by the blood of his own. That should be the motivation for these overseers and even for us today to shepherd the church of God.

And then he speaks about what would happen after he had gone.

For I know that this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Satan always attacks from two sides, from the outside and from within. The whole book of Acts from the beginning shows us always these two strategies, persecution from without, corruption from within.

And here first of all he speaks about that which would come from without, grievous wolves entering in [00:37:06] among the saints, not sparing the flock. What a contrast.

There were these overseers shepherding the flock of God which he has purchased with the blood of his own. But there were those coming not sparing the flock. They didn't care for the flock. They didn't care for all the disaster they were doing among the saints, coming from without. But this was not the only danger.

And so he says, also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

He speaks they will also come from your own midst, from these number of elders there would some rise from among themselves, teaching wrong [00:38:04] things with the view of drawing others after themselves.

What a serious thing that is. There is the assembly of God, he has purchased with the blood of his own and they are have on one center and that is the person of the Lord Jesus, a gathering around him and then some people get up and draw, want to draw others after themselves.

Should that not be a really serious warning to these Ephesian elders? When he said about the, spoke about these things and we know when we look back about over two thousand years of Christian history up to the present day that these two dangers are still with us. Those attacking from outside and those corrupting from inside.

[00:39:02] But there was one man, he again puts there his example before them. He tells them to do two things. First of all he says in verse 31, therefore watch, to watch is necessary. As soon as we start sleeping and stop watching these influences from outside or from within may be very successful. We have to watch these things, these dangers that are there and remember that thing about the example you have, the example of the apostle, remember. And now he says and it's really touching to see how he describes his ministry once again, by the space of three years. It was not only a short visit he had made to them. He had been there for three years and I suppose you can do something in three years. [00:40:02] They had watched him in three years how he ministered among them. I seized not. That's one thing to start something, to be excited about the new work and just to begin it and then the problems come, the trials come, the opposition comes and you say well let's stop this and do something new. No he said I have not seized. I've gone over these three years. I seized not, I did not stop to warn everyone.

In these three years that he had been at the place there was not one single brother or sister in Ephesus that could say Paul has never been here and spoken with me. They all must admit he has warned us. Every one of us. He has spoken to us and he has warned us of these things that were coming. Every one of them.

[00:41:03] Night and day.

Night and day. Now this work that Paul did was not like a job you do from eight to five or whenever but it was a full-time 24 hours seven days a week. When there was an opportunity he used it. Probably there were some situations where it was only possible to speak to somebody at night but night and day whenever it was this man was occupied with the well-being of the saints and again he says with tears. He was moved with compassion. It was not some hard task master who came to them to beat them with the Bible but he really had they saw if he saw dangers if he saw some thing that was not wrong in the scene they really saw that it [00:42:03] moved him with compassion. He was exhorting them with tears. They really got the impression here is somebody who really cares for us and I'm sure they would remember that he said remember that and they could say yes if we are honest we must say Paul has been among us in such a way and now it comes to the last part and now brethren he was going to leave he was going to die finish his course and ministry I commend you to my successor no I commend you to Timothy and Titus no he did not I commend you to the elders that come after you no he did not all these things would finish would cease but I commend you to God and the word of his grace and beloved saying that's what we [00:43:05] still have we've no apostles and no elders officially appointed but we have God and the word of his grace God that has purchased the assembly with the blood of his own should he not care for his assembly and the word of his grace which is able to build us up all we need we have in the word on the spirit that opens the word of up to us that is what we need it gives it inheritance among all them which are sanctified what an encouragement and what a comfort that is sometimes we might think at least I have thought this when I was younger how good would it be if we still had some apostle who could say that's the way that's what we have to do there are no apostles anymore but that does not mean that we are have a [00:44:02] disadvantage the Lord is the same God is there his word is there we even have the completed word of God in our hands which the Ephesians did not have and we could follow this word that will build us up and again in closing once again the apostle says if you look at me I've done nothing that was not honorable that was not right he had not coveted gold silver he did nothing for money he speaks about such persons in his letters as well that were coming to fulfill the looker to do things he said that's not the thing in the work of the Lord that he did and just the opposite he had worked with his own hands for his necessities and those that were with him and then he says I have shoot you all things he did not only [00:45:01] teach them but he showed them how to do it and this gives authority and this gives really effort to what you say it's so with us as parents when our when we tell our children to do something and they see that we do it if they see that reading the bible for example and praying is something that is a part of our life and if we tell them they should do that they say well we've seen it in our parents but if you just tell them to do something they never see us doing it the authority is not very strong in what we do and it's so in spiritual things as well the things Paul taught he also showed them that there were those they had to support weak ones poor ones unequals words of the Lord Jesus who said it is more blessed to give than to receive we had in one other message in this evening [00:46:05] we had also a quotation that we found literally nowhere on it the same with that here we cannot open the gospels or someplace to find this sentence there but obviously it was a word of the Lord that all the Christians knew because he says to them remember the words of the Lord Jesus and of course it was something that characterized all his life it is more blessed to give than to receive probably that is something we have to learn anew we live in a society

where everybody asks what do i get from it if i do this if i do that what is there in in it for me that's not a question to ask in the first place but he says it is more blessed to give than to receive and then [00:47:02] after he's finished he knelt down and prayed with them all what a sight that must have been this company of elders and Paul kneeling down somewhere on the road and praying together and of course we could understand that they were weeping and felling him on Paul's neck and kissed him but maybe there is a little sign of weakness in this parting scene as well because it says they were sorrowing most of all for the words he spake they should not see his face anymore but we can understand this of course they had a relationship with Paul over these three years and now they were very sad they wouldn't see him anymore but in what he had said should they not have been more disturbed by what he said what would happen after him he had gone what would happen to the assembly with the wolves and the man standing up [00:48:03] sometimes we get more impressed with the emotional situation amongst persons than with the spiritual truth but when Paul was moved to tears in this passage it was really because he saw the spiritual dangers that were coming there what an example this apostle is for us in his ministry that he did you and i we have a ministry to fulfill a course to finish let us learn from the determination of the servant and when it comes to the assembly we have seen what Paul foretold his future we know it has come just as he told us but nevertheless we are still at the point at which paul was when he said farewell to the ephesian elders we are still commanded to god and the word of his grace amen