

Crossway Life Group, Week of November 17

See sermon notes on [CMC's webpage](#) for background information

Community

Take time to share and pray for each other's concerns and joys.

Scripture: Acts 20:17-38 Sermon: "Above All Else"

Reading & Discussing Scripture

- **What things are most valuable to you?** For example, if you could only keep what you could fit in a suitcase, what would you keep?
- **Read Acts 20:17-38.** How might the reality that this was Paul's last opportunity to meet with these leaders in the Ephesian church have shaped what he wanted to share with them?
- **In verses 18-21,** Paul emphasizes his authority to direct the Ephesian elders. What does he describe about his pattern of life among them? How do these qualities relate to our common expectations for the behavior of leadership? What impresses you about what Paul describes?
- **In verses 22-24,** how does Paul describe his attitude about the hardship he expected in the days ahead?
- **In verses 25-27,** what does Paul mean about his being "innocent of the blood of any of you"?
- **Re-read verses 28-31:** What is Paul's most urgent command? What dangers awaited them? How is the Trinity involved in the church, both around in the world and in Ephesus?
- **In verses 32-35,** what is another danger Paul was concerned about among the elders in Ephesus?

The Big Idea

The church (and our church)

is priceless to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Application & Reflection Questions

- Based on this passage (and elsewhere), how would you describe God's heart for His church?
- Consider this statement: "As people whom Jesus died to save, what is priceless to Him must be priceless to us." What would it look like for the church to be priceless to us?
- Sometimes the church has harmed people. Given Paul's vision of God's relationship with the church, how should we respond to that?
- Paul said that the elders were to keep watch over "all the flock", meaning all of the people in the church. One particular risk for the early church was to pick only Jews or only Gentiles as the people who would receive care. Acts 6 provides one example of how the church had to adjust in order to care for all of the flock. What groups or categories of people are at risk for not being cared for in our church today? What can we do as a church and as individuals to keep watch over all the flock?
- Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." In what ways are you giving to the church? How has God blessed you in that giving? Are there other ways that you could be giving to the church while trusting in God's blessing for your gifts and service?

Growing in Cultural Understanding

It seems that the greatest controversy regarding Paul's ministry related to uniting Jews and Gentiles into a single church (for example, see Acts 21:27-30). As we read about in various places in the New Testament (such as Romans 14-15), it required adjustment by people to make this united church work. What are some adjustments that need to be made in our church in order to be united across differences?

Serving beyond ourselves

What are ways that your group can be for the benefit of people beyond yourselves?

Would your group consider **praying for our church's nominating committee**? This team is responsible to review people who are suggested as possible nominations for Board Member, Board Member/Elder, Nominating Committee member, and search committee member. Please pray for this committee:

- To develop a good process for our church
- For wisdom about people and the Spirit's leading
- That they would not delay, and that they would not rush
- For God's provision of the right leadership for our church

Acts 20:17-38 – New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

²²"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

²⁵"Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

³²"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

³⁶When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. ³⁷They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. ³⁸What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.