

Saturday, May 13, 2023 ◻ Read Acts 20:26–27

Questions from the Scripture text: With what words does Paul emphasize the significance of what he's saying (v26)? What does he testify about himself? Of whose blood is he clean? What has he not held back from doing (v27)? What did he declare? How much of God's intention/counsel had Paul declared?

What must a minister do to be clear of the deaths of those entrusted to him? Acts 20:26–27 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these two verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **a minister must proclaim all that God has intended/counseled**.

Innocent of blood. Behind v26 stand Eze 3:16–21 and 33:1–9. God calls a watchman to address the people with words that they must hear and heed, lest they perish. If he sounds the warning, and they hear but don't heed, their blood is upon them. If he sounds the warning, and they refuse even to hear (and then obviously don't heed), their blood is upon them. But if he fails to sound the warning (and therefore they neither hear nor heed), then the watchman shares in the responsibility of the guilt. But the apostle here gives solemn witness ("I testify," v26) that he is innocent of the blood of all.

This is a serious word for the Ephesian elders and their congregation about how they have received the ministry of the apostle. What have they done with the three years' instruction to which v21 (and now v27) refer? The apostle is innocent in his preaching. Are they innocent in their hearing?

And it is a serious word for the Ephesian elders as they return home. Will they be "innocent of the blood of all" in their own ministry? And will their congregation be innocent of their own blood in how they receive the elders' ministry? v26 presents the Christian ministry—giving it and receiving it—high stakes indeed. They must not only take it seriously themselves as they go back to Ephesus, but they must relay this seriousness.

When we considered the language of "witness" ("testifying," v21), we were instructed about the love for God's glory that lies at the core of the ministry of the Word. Now, the language of innocence of blood instructs us about love for eternal souls that lies at the core of the ministry of the Word. Love for others' souls at the core of ministering, and love for our own soul in how we hear that ministry, and how we head the word that we hear in it.

The whole counsel of God. What content is required for a ministry, if the elder is to "acquit" himself well? Everything that God has said. On this side of the completed Bible, we can just say "all Scripture." When Paul is making that point in 2Tim 3:16–17, the logic is clear: if God has gone to the lengths of breathing a word out for it to be inscribed on the pages of Holy Scripture, then that word is profitable. And since God is perfectly faithful and wise in His goodness, we can be sure that He has given us everything we need for every good work. All of the Bible, synthesized in teaching and applied in proclamation, for all of life.

The elder is at least a watchman like Ezekiel, who must give warnings. But he is more. He is an overseer, who must govern and hold accountable. And he is a shepherd (pastor), who must feed, guide, defend, and comfort. We'll consider those two roles more in v28, but just now in v27 it means that they must give all of the Bible, for all of life, to all of Christ's church.

And we may add one more corollary. This is the complete ministry of the church. It is the Lord Jesus Who has given this ministry (v25). And if proclaiming the whole counsel of God fulfills it, we may realize that redesigning or reimagining the ministry of the church to take anything away from declaring the whole counsel of God makes the church and its ministers guilty of the blood of the church of God. And redesigning or reimagining the ministry of the church to add man's techniques (content would be even worse) to what Christ has instituted in Scripture cannot help but detract from the ministry of the whole counsel of God.

If the watchman (and his hearers) had a weighty task, how much more the overseers of the church (and their overseen)!

Conquering ministry avoidance. Having received such a weighty and beneficial ministry from the Lord, yet Paul was tempted not to fulfill it. It is sobering for us to consider the way that he words v27: "I have not shunned to declare." The verb means to shrink back from.

Why would a man be tempted to avoid such a ministry? There are many reasons. Church members (and often church leaders) often don't approve of such a ministry; instead, they "heap up for themselves teachers" who are "according to their own desires" (cf. 2Tim 4:3). Many words that sound otherwise good are employed to express those desires: "encouraging, uplifting, relevant, interesting/not boring," etc. But the Word of God is by very definition all of those things.

And many desires are simply contrary to the counsel of God: that preaching or teaching would be less doctrinal, make us feel good about ourselves, not meddle with our lives, not apply to politics or time management choices or some other sensitive area of life... or maybe that it would not take too long or occur too frequently.

But the faithful minister simply cannot let such opinions impinge upon his mandate from Christ. Surely, such "feedback" can tell him something about his hearers—useful information about their weaknesses and how to employ the "all longsuffering" part of 2Tim 4:2 as he employs God's method for training up appetites and abilities. He might even have to "do the work of an evangelist" to fulfill his ministry (cf. 2Tim 4:5). And since there will be many who will not relent, let him also be willing to "endure afflictions" (cf. 2Tim 4:5).

But whatever he does, let him not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God. Love for Christ, Who gave him the ministry demands that he not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God. And love for souls, whose eternal perishing is at stake in the ministry, demands that he not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God. And love even for righteous ("saved") souls, who may be chastened to the point of temporal death if something is left unheard or unheeded (cf. Eze 3:20, 1Cor 11:30–32) demands that he not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God.

And believers must seek such a ministry. How can they hear it if it is not even there? And if such a ministry cannot be found, let them take heaven by storm with prayers for it. And if they have such a ministry, let them attend upon it to hear the whole counsel of God. And if they are hearing it, let them also heed that whole counsel of God, believing what the Scriptures teach and doing what the Scriptures command. Love for Christ, love for their own soul, and love for the souls of others demands it.

One final word here to heads of households. Perhaps as you have been considering this passage, you have dreaded making application to your own leadership of your family. And it is a weighty responsibility to owe to your own wife and your own children the debt of "the whole counsel of God." But there is, in this passage, a marvelous provision for you and for them. Even more than your day by day duty to them in the home, you have a duty to them to be a member household of a local church in which this ministry is fulfilled. If none is available, move! If they are so scarce that there is nowhere to move for one, mourn! And if, in addition to a completed Bible, the Lord Jesus has given you a local ministry in which the whole counsel of God is proclaimed, attend! If you, or some member of your family cannot be present for some of it, get from your overseers some way of hearing whatever you are missing. Finally, don't just hear. Heed. Seek always to be applying all of the Bible to all of your lives in the home.

What is at stake in the ministry of the Word in the congregation? What sort of ministry has Christ mandated upon such stakes? What use are you making of the Bible that the Lord Jesus has provided for you? What use are you making of the preaching and teaching ministry in the local church that the Lord Jesus has provided for you? What use are you making of the ministry in the home that the Lord Jesus has provided for you?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You for all of the marvelous ways in which You help us by the ministry of Your Word. Forgive our ministers if ever they should shrink from declaring any part of Your whole counsel. Grant them quick repentance, for love to You and for love to eternal souls. And forgive us for when we treat as optional any part of Your whole counsel that they preach. Help us always by Your Spirit, so that we may have that ear to hear all that the Spirit, who proceeds from Christ, says to the churches.

Suggested songs: ARP23B "The Lord's My Shepherd" or TPH175 "Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Acts 20 verses 26 and 27. These are God's words. Therefore, I testify to you, this day that I am innocent. Of the blood of all men. For, I've not shunned to declare to you. The whole council of God.

So far the reading of God's inspired and to narrate work.

Minister may think of Many things that he thinks would be helpful.

To his flock to his congregation. But really there's only one thing that is helpful. And that has got himself. Who comes by his word to us.

And what Paul says here. This is therefore I testify to you this day. And he's using that very solemn language. Very serious language. They've testifying, I innocent of the blood of all.

It tells us that Minister has one calling. Whatever, the Lord Jesus has given him to do. That's The logic of this verse or these verses. Coming from verse 24, the ministry, which I received from the Lord Jesus. In other words, it's not the ministers duty to satisfy the people with his ministry.

He must do what the Lord has sent him to do. And if he does that, he has done all, that can be helpful. There's nothing that can be added from the wisdom of men. That can give life. To the soul.

There are two people who are endanger a perishing here, one. The apostle. And by extension, and example, the Ephesian elders, when they go back to their congregation, He says, I am innocent.

But what is the innocent enough? He is the innocent of the blood of all. He's the innocent to the blood. Of others. Which means that if he had. Not done what verse 27 describes. And they had perished in their sins.

Because, either, they did not know. What God had all that? God had commanded that they were supposed to do so that they did not know that it was sin. Or, they did not know. All that God has done for them in Christ so that they would hope in Christ and Him alone.

And so they would perish in their sins. Why? Because they lacked repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. You look back at verse 21.

If they did that, because And not, because if they did that, and Paul had not. Declared to them the whole council of God. Then not only would they perish in their sin, but Forward bear responsibility. For their having perished and their sin. Similar to what? God tells Ezekiel and Ezekiel 3 and Ezekiel 33.

Says the word of Y'all. He came to me. Saying, son of man, I made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Therefore here, a word from my mouth. And give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, you saw surely die. And you give him no warning.

Nor speak to one the wicked from his wicked way to save his life. That same wicked man, shall die in his iniquity but his blood, I will require your hand. Yet. If you warn the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness, north from his wicked way. He shall die in iniquity.

But you have delivered your soul. Again, when the righteous man turns from his righteousness, And commits iniquity and I lay a stumbling block before him. He shall die. Because you did not give him warning. He shall die in a sin is righteousness of Jesus done. It's not be remembered, but his blood.

I'll require your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the righteous men, With the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he's not really live because he took warning and also You will have delivered your own soul.

And that second case, there's a reminder that there are real consequences even for those who are righteous. Though they have a righteousness, that will be remembered in eternity. Yet, we are all under. The providential consequences and chastenings of God. And the Lord may even kill a believer. For spurning God's law.

We hear about it. We don't always read to the end of the chapter. And at the table in first Corinthians 11, what you hear about it? In first Corinthians 11, don't you? God was killing Christians.

Their righteousness did not mean that they were beyond. Temporal punishments.

And then in third chapter 33, again. Son of man, speak to the children of your people, say to them. When I bring the sword up on the line, the people take of the land. The people the land. Take a lot man from the territory. Making a watchman. When he sees a sword coming, if he blows the trumpet warns, the people, whoever hears, the son of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes away his blood, she'll be in his own head.

He heard the sound of the trumpet, but he did not take warning, his blood shall be on himself. But he takes warning, we'll save his life. With watching season sword, coming does not below the trumpet. The people are not warned. And the sword comes, it takes away any person from one then.

He is taking away and his iniquity, but his blood, I will require at the watchman's hand. Why? Because he didn't sound the warning.

So, you son of, man, I made you a watchman. The house of Israel. Therefore you feel your word for my mouth. And warn them for me. When I say to the wicked. No wicked, man. You so surely die. You do not speak to one the wicked from his way that wicked man shall dine in iniquity.

But his blood, I will require at your hand.

Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked to turn away from his way, he does not turn from his way. He shall die in his iniquity. But you have delivered. Your own soul.

So, it's not

So, it's pretty clear. That when he says, therefore our testify to you this day, i'm innocent of the blood of all For, i've not shunned to declare to you, the whole council of god. What the biblical background is for that. That the minister. The elder and the congregation. And again, as we've been making application, all the way through this, the husband and the father, and the home, Which is dreadful to think about.

For so many husbands and fathers. There's a watchman. He has been given the whole council of god. And it is his duty both to bring him under. Bring his family under the Watching the among whom. The. The watchman whom the lord has placed among his congregation. And, To give his family.

The word of god. In the home as well. The whole Council of god.

This means. All of the things that god warns us about. All of the things that God requires of us. And it means all of the things that god has done and that. That god uses to help us. Not just that we might escape. Eternal punishment. An eternal guilt. But so that we might serve the lord in this life.

Then be faithful servants. And not bring consequences upon ourselves and upon others.

Whatever the case, whether you Have the? Ministry of The whole council of god or not. You are responsible for. Your life before god. Just because we can't do anything to save ourselves. Our inability does not. Um, take away our responsibility. It just makes us more desperately needy of god.

So, even if you didn't have the word, you would be responsible before. God. How much more then? Those of you. Who have a husband or a father? That teach you the word of god. For having minister elders. The teacher, the whole council of god.

If you were responsible before even without the warning, Even without the teaching. How much greater is? How much for how much more are you accountable? If the lord has given it to you,

Now, what is it to which you are to pay attention?

What is it that you are to heed. What is it? That is to be. Taught to you. Declared to you. So, he says, five not shunned to declare to you. The whole. Council. Of god. Then leave anything out. Because it's difficult to understand. Didn't leave anything out. Because there's offensive to people's pride.

When i hurt their feelings.

Then leave anything out because it was controversial in the church. Among men. For people thought it was boring. Are people thought it was irrelevant. You know what makes it relevant? God said it.

When we get so accustomed to the bible, That. If someone. Had literally. Been given a word from god for you. Which doesn't actually happen. People want to make themselves relevant when they really want to overstep and making themselves relevant. This is the the Type of lie, they come up with god, gave me a word for you.

Well, the bible is an actual word of god for you.

And it is particularly those points at which We might not. Declare. Or wish to hear. The whole counts of god that we are the most That there is the most danger.

It's not the parts that everyone loves to hear. About how? You know, the beauty of creation. God's love to all of his creatures, his mercies Some of the easier things.

Those aren't the things that we, Are endanger of shunning to declare or resisting to hear. So it's particularly at the points. At which there is Something reluct. Some something hindering something causing reluctance. That there is danger.

Now, you guys don't have much of a choice.

You have to be at everything. But it won't always be. So with you, You will one day. Have more autonomy. And you will have the possibility. Of accumulating for yourself other things to do. Or just hardening your heart against prioritizing hearing. The whole council of god.

And, With as thin and light and short.

And infrequent. As the gatherings of the church to hear the word of god, declared by the minister Are in our day.

It was difficult enough. For a minister to Find ways in the ministry. To declare and the whole bible. To patiently, teach. And apply to life. From beginning of genesis 1 to the end of revelation 22.

And so i was going to take some commitment at some point in your life. The lord blessing to you the ministry. That is like that throughout your life. To attend well. But just attending isn't enough, is it? Because the declaring and the hearing. Is. You know, that'll absolve your minister.

But the heating. Is the responsibility that you have on your part.

And so yes, this means You should attend. The sabbath school. If the pastor has figured out a way to Get to declare the whole council god in part in the Sabbath school. And yes, you should attend the evening preaching. And yes, you should attend the prayer meeting. And yes, if a big part of declaring, the whole council of god,

Is coming by way. Of the Expositing and applying of the scripture. Uh, weekly devotional. You should use that, too.

Because i hear whoever your minister is will stand before. God, And jesus will say, Because the apostle you're speaking under inspiration of the Holy spirit. Jesus will say This win was innocent of your blood for. He did not son to declare. The whole council of god to you. He was not reluctant, he Did not.

Allow the the Um, Amount that had to be said or the possible offensiveness or other difficulties to get in the way. Grace sustained him and faithful service. He is innocent of your blood. But you. Shunned to hear the whole council of god declared. Said, i've had enough. 30 minutes a week is good enough for me.

Don't give it to me, too deeply Just hit the highlights. Don't meddle. In the applications.

I don't like to listen to. Whatever doctrines on whatever subject because i disagree with you.

And then, even for those who,

Have heard the whole council of god. Still, we must heed. Still, whatever is commanded. We must Resolve and put into practice to do. Whatever's forbidden. We must for square doing, we must refuse. And not do. All the truth about the lord jesus. We're to. Be sure of it as we embrace him.

And rest in it, it's even rejoice.

It's not enough to. Listen to the ministry of the word, we must live by that work. Which is ministered.

So, let's pray that God would help us.

Father, thank you for This portion of your word for

Speaking to us. So frankly. Clearly. We pray that. You would help. Me. To do so, for the family. And for the church, You help the boys to do so or learn to do so for when they have families, Pray that you would help us all to heed. All of your word in the bible.

Pray that you would make us to take it seriously.

Glory to pray that you would.

Help me. Put together the sermon for the lord's day.

That.

You give me ability to be clear.

And to say things that are difficult,

And that you would come by your word. And you would give and you would work life. That's getting jesus name.