



Paul's Principles of Pastoral Care in Acts 20:17-38 and His Challenges to Pastoral Leaders

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the pastoral service practices of Paul that are worthy of being imitated by the local church leaders today by focusing on the content of his farewell speech to the elders of the church in Ephesus based on Luke's record in Acts 20:17-38. The narrative hermeneutic method will analyze each statement related to his service actions. The results of the analysis show the pastoral service practices that are lived, taught, and need to be imitated by church leaders today in Indonesia. The study results show that the Apostle Paul presents the principles of pastoral service that are timeless and relevant to the context of local church service today. The fundamental principles he taught and the challenges pastoral leaders face today are: First, making the most of time. Pastoral leaders in the present era are challenged to maximize every opportunity in their service, especially amid many distractions and demands of the times. Second, he emphasizes the importance of humility in service. Today's leaders must be aware of the danger of arrogance and constantly realize their trustworthy source of strength. Third, Paul not only serves with enthusiasm but also with deep emotion. This challenges today's church leaders to engage emotionally, empathize with the congregation, and feel grief and joy with them. Fourth, he often faces threats and dangers in his service. Church leaders must be ready to face challenges, especially when voicing the truth of the Bible in an increasingly secular cultural context. Fifth, serving with teaching. He emphasizes the importance of correct and profound teaching. In the information age full of false teachings, pastoral leaders are challenged to continue to provide teaching based on the Bible and relevant to their congregation.

Keywords: Paul's Principles, Pastoral Care, Acts 20:17-38, Pastoral Leaders, Local Church Ministry

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INTRODUCTION

In some modern churches, pastoral ministry plays an important role. In the pandemic era, pastoral ministry strategies are required to be more innovative so that they can foster the spiritual growth of church members (Darmawan et al., 2021). During the pandemic, the forms of pastoral ministry became one of the topics that were extensively researched. Wardhani and Panuntun's (2020) study showed that pastoral ministry is very important during the pandemic. Families whose members died from COVID-19 needed pastoral ministry support. Studies on pastoral ministry also evolved towards pastoral ministry in virtual space. The study by Simanjuntak et al. (2020) then focused more on pastoral commissions in virtual space. In ministry in certain areas, pastoral ministry innovation is also expected to be more relevant. Budiman and Harming (2021) proposed a problem-solving strategy for contextual pastoral ministry. Their analysis was based on John 4:1-26. Studies on pastoral ministry are also generally directed at Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. However, the Bible, especially the New Testament, indicates that the discussion of pastoral ministry is not only in his letters to Timothy and Titus. Acts is also a historical account that presents the principles of pastoral ministry.

The Book of Acts is a book in the New Testament that has a high literary value. In Greek, Acts is named *praxis Apostolos* (Acts of the Apostles), written during the last years of the first century (Douglas et al., 2011). Based on the early Christian tradition, the book of Acts was written by Luke, a non-Jewish Greek speaker (possibly from Antioch) and a medical doctor who became a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul (Douglas et al., 2011). Kennedy (1984, p. 114) called the Book of Acts a work of high literary value, resembling a classic historical monograph; it has an introduction and consists of a chronological narrative in which speeches and letters are included, as in the works of Greek historians. Luke's choice of this form indicates that he expected an audience with adequate education who would appreciate his work and that he thought of himself in the role of a Greek historian - not a collector of scientific facts but an interpreter and dramatizer of direction and meaning. The presence of several speeches that are included in his writing has preserved early Christian teaching of significant meaning and certainly has been valuable for the development of the Christian faith both in the past and in the present.

In the book of Acts, one of the main characters in the narrative of this book is the Apostle Paul. He is the person who is meant to be one of the main characters, as noted by the use of his rhetoric. It is said that he has an unattractive appearance but has an "angelic character" (Douglas et al., 2011, p. 208; Schnabel, 2008). Paul is a Jew who became a Roman citizen (Acts 22:3, 27). He is also a person with a background as a Pharisee who later became a Christian (Acts 15:5).

In the book of Acts, Luke wrote about the important role of the Apostle Paul in the growth of the church in the first century. The letters that the Apostle Paul wrote to the

churches that later entered the list of books in the Bible prove that he had an important role in the growth of the church. This is inseparable from the potential that he had. His experience in shepherding had shaped him, such as how he delivered his speeches in communicating God's messages. He became an excellent and superior orator compared with most people in general at the time as he carried out the mission of the Lord Jesus.

In the book of Acts, Luke records the pastoral principles in Paul's farewell rhetoric with the church leaders in Ephesus. Acts 20:17-38 presents pastoral principles that need to be studied in depth. Previous studies have not examined this issue in depth. A study of Acts 20:18-35 was conducted by Christopher (2021). This study focuses on the effort to understand the function of the emphasis on Paul's character in his speech in Miletus. Christopher's research (2021) does not specifically address the principle of pastoral ministry; therefore, the researcher focuses this study on the principles of pastoral ministry in Acts 20:17-38. Although it does not address the principle of pastoral ministry, Christopher's research (2021) also helps this study by providing information that enriches the discussion. Another study was conducted by Hemer (2019) examining Acts in relation to the Hellenistic historical background. This historical understanding is very important for interpreting this section and understanding the cultural and social influences that played a role at that time. The research of Hemer (2019) did not specifically examine Acts 20:17-38. Therefore, a more in-depth study of pastoral ministry based on Acts 20:17-38 is still required, a lacunae which this article seeks to address.

It is undeniable that pastoral ministry or shepherding a congregation is not an easy task. Pastoral ministry is a ministry with both various internal and external complex challenges. Therefore, a more profound principle of pastoral ministry is required. In order to enrich previous studies, both practical and theological in nature, the researcher examines Acts 20:17-38 to find some pastoral principles. From the background of the research above, the research question to be answered is, where are Paul's pastoral principles in his farewell discourse with the leaders of the Ephesian Church and what is their significance? The purpose of this study is to find his pastoral principles in his farewell rhetoric with the leaders of the Ephesian Church based on Acts 20:17-38.

METHOD

This study uses a biblical interpretation method that is relevant to pastoral activities. The focus of the analysis is directed specifically at the text of Acts 20:17-38 to identify the meaning of words and pay attention to words that require further research. This approach includes lexical, theological, and contextual analysis by considering both the immediate and wider narrative context. This study examines the key parts of Acts 20:17-38 that are relevant to the pastoral message delivered by the Apostle Paul.

Concerning genre, the text of Acts 20:17-38 falls into the narrative category. However, this study does not focus on the narrative itself; rather, it specifically focuses on

the principles contained in the narrative. Although an interpreter has identified Acts 20:17-38 as an episode about his visit to the elders of Ephesus (presbyters; see Acts 14:23) in Miletus (Talbert, 2005, p. 180), this study does not discuss this narrative aspect in depth.

This study focuses on the analysis of pastoral principles that can be found in Acts 20:17-38. This analysis is divided into several parts, including the analysis of Paul's rhetorical style, the presentation of research results on pastoral principles in the opening narrative written by Luke, the discussion of principles in his farewell rhetoric or speech with the elders of Ephesus, and finally, the analysis of principles contained in Luke's closing narrative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Rhetorical Style in Paul's Message

In the book of Acts, there are many texts that use rhetoric as a means of conveying messages, with about half of Acts in the form of speeches (Kistemaker, 1990). Examples of the use of rhetoric in the book of Acts include Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin (7:2-53), Cornelius' speech (10:30-33), James' speech (15:13-21), James and the elders in Jerusalem (21:20-25), and nine sermons and speeches by Paul. In addition, there are also speeches by Gamaliel, a Pharisee (5:35-39), Demetrius (19:25-27), a city clerk in Ephesus (19:35-40), Tertullus (24:2-8), and Festus, the governor (25:24-27). In Acts, there are four main groups of rhetorical styles used, which are evangelistic, deliberative, apologetic, and hortatory (Bruce, 1942, p. 27).

The first type of rhetoric is called evangelical discourse, and it is directed toward those who have no knowledge of God, particularly non-Jews. Speaking to those who are familiar with the revelation of the Old Testament, like Jews or religious people, requires a particular delivery style (Bruce, 1942, p. 27). The second rhetorical style is deliberative or consultative speech, which is usually used in the context of consultation among fellow disciples, such as when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot, or in the Jerusalem Council described in chapter 15 (Bruce, 1942, p. 27).

Furthermore, there is the apologetic or defensive rhetorical style, which includes the defense by Stephen before the Sanhedrin, the defense of Peter for eating with Cornelius (11:4), and a series of defenses delivered by Paul on various occasions, including before the people of Jerusalem (22:1), the Sanhedrin (23:1), Felix (24:10), Festus (25:8), Herod Agrippa II (26:1), and the Jewish community in Rome (28:17).

The main focus is the rhetorical style used by Paul in his speech to the church elders in Ephesus (20:18), which can be categorized as a hortatory style (Bruce, 1942, p. 27). This speech serves as a guide, advice, and rebuke. He serves as an advisor in this part and is in charge of overseeing the church at Ephesus going forward. This passage bears the qualities of a testament or covenant, including reflections on the past and promises

for the future (Hemer, 1989). This speech is addressed specifically to Christian audiences, especially the church leaders who had been established by Paul previously, and has a stronger relevance to the pastoral function than his other letters (Hemer, 1989).

The congregation needs guidance and provisions to continue their service, and in this context, the study of sermon-based ministry in the book of Acts can provide valuable insights. Acts contains many examples of direct sermons (Kim & Venter, 1999). Sermons differ from speeches in general, but one of their significant differences is that sermons emphasize God and use his word as the primary focus. The preacher gives a presentation of God, including His nature, call, acts, and desire for humankind (Baffour-Awuah et al., 2022; McIlwraith, 2020).

Despite being comparatively brief in comparison to Peter's or Stephen's speech, Paul's message leaves a lasting effect on the audience due to the subjects he raises. Typical beginnings for each section of the speech include "you know" in verse 18, "and now look" in verse 22, "and now know" in verse 25, and "and now" in verse 32 (Haenchen, 1971, p. 598). These sections of the speech include the following topics: the past, his actions at Ephesus, the present, his journey to prison, and the future, which includes his fate—including his death—and the Church's evolution—which involves some (or even many) falling into heresy or apostasy. Blessings and exhortation to take care of the weak are included in the speech's final section (Haenchen, 1971, p. 598).

The context of Paul's circumstances at the time may help us better understand the speech's motivation, which is self-justification, hope for the future, and emotional farewell (Christopher, 2021; Hemer, 1989). His self-justification is acceptable in light of the numerous persons who have witnessed his acts, works, deeds, and way of life. Consequently, the arguments that he made to his audience—particularly the Ephesian elders—are not refuted in this story.

Paul's Pastoral Principles on Serving

The foundation of effective pastoral ministry is formed by comprehending the pastoral principles of serving as they are shown in Acts 20:17–35. Paul provides helpful guidance and a role model for church leaders and Christian workers in this section. These are a few explanations of these ideas.

Making the Most of Time

In this context, Paul summoned the church elders, who were also referred to as "bishops" in Acts 20:28, and dispatched a message to Ephesus. In Acts 14:23, the function of church elders is discussed. Every church has a large number of elders (Coffman, 1999; Keener, 2013). He didn't travel to Ephesus himself; he sent a messenger for a specific reason instead. He valued time highly in the context of his ministry, as seen by the thoughtful analysis that went into his choice of not going to Asia (v. 16). This was so that

he could arrive in Jerusalem in time for the feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). This rationale clarifies the purpose of sending a representative to Ephesus.

As was previously stated, Paul had decided to decline a visit to Ephesus to minimize his stay in Asia. These weren't rash judgments; they were all the result of careful planning. Given the rigors of his ministry, it is evident that he valued his time much and did not want to waste it. Verse 16 further indicated his wish to, if at all possible, arrive in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. This served as rationale for dispatching an envoy to Ephesus. He also made hints about other things that needed to get done in Jerusalem before the feast of Pentecost. He made a responsible commitment to finishing all of his ministry tasks in accordance with his soul's calling to serve.

Luke describes Paul's invitation to the Ephesian elders to a conference in Miletus in the opening section. "To call" is the term "*μετεκαλέσατο*" (*metekalesato*). Only three times in the New Testament this verb are found—in Acts 7:14, Acts 10:32, and Acts 24:25. According to Robertson (2000), its use denotes a formal and serious invitation. He called the elders of Ephesus to a conference at Miletus to establish his authority as the church's founder and as a spiritual leader whose responsibility was to shepherd his people through the spiritual leaders who were his disciples.

Verses 18–35 in the next section indicate that this is the second part of Paul's farewell speech to the elders. The primary audience of this message are the elders of Ephesus, and he uses his oration as the speaker to convey several significant ideas in this section. He is giving them highly pertinent instruction in the context of their pastoral duties. It is anticipated that the elders of Ephesus would carry on the church's mission in the future as the heirs of the ministry relay.

If we closely study this passage's verses 20:18–21, we can see that it contains principles that are relevant to Paul's work and personal life. In order to impress and ultimately persuade the elders to accept the message he gave, he purposefully included these elements in his speech. In order to ensure that the church of God he had founded would be maintained and flourish, he wanted to provide in his message some crucial instructions for management. His personal background and ministry experience were discussed in the opening words of his speech.

The question that comes to mind is: Why did Paul summon the Ephesian elders? This can be viewed as his final instruction in the context of Acts 20:17–38 (see Acts 20:38). In this sense, "instruction" refers to a command or guidance given for carrying out certain tasks or work, as well as a source of guidance. He conveyed the word to the Ephesian elders in this manner: as commands, directions, and guidance.

Paul opened his speech to the Ephesian elders with a defense similar to that contained in 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12, according to Gaebelien (1984). Just as in Thessalonica, people who opposed him at Ephesus had doubted his authority, particularly when he was absent. He wanted his listeners to understand that he felt compelled to

defend his conduct and teaching in the face of this circumstance. In essence, despite different approaches, the information he imparted might be viewed as a testament or message that comprised principles applicable to pastoral ministry and that the elders were supposed to uphold in the future.

In delivering the principles of his ministry, Paul did not just speak without meaning; this signaled that before he communicated these important aspects, he had lived them in his own life. The phrase "you know" had a special meaning, indicating confirmation that he had consistently practiced these important principles in his life, and many people had seen and known that this was an integral part of his character. The meaning of the word "epístamai" involved an effort to draw someone's attention, influence someone's thinking, change someone's view or thought, and focus someone's mind on something to understand or comprehend it (Strong, 2009, *ἐπίσταμαι*).

Paul's speech begins in verse 18 and continues until chapter 21, giving us a glimpse of his previous work at Ephesus (Haenchen, 1971). He successfully reviewed his ministry-related activities through his words, hoping that the elders serving the church would do everything as an example while performing their pastoral duties in the future. He employed his experience as a means of delivering crucial teachings concerning pastoral ministry.

It is important to pay attention to the statement "you yourself know" as it serves as an affirmation and confirmation of his effective ministry, which has been observed by several others. With integrity and accountability, Apostle Paul affirmed the truth of his statement. The word "you" was used in reference to his request that the Ephesian elders consider their own accounts of his time there. He reminded the elders of his own example and encouraged them to examine their lives closely. By doing such things and supporting his words with examples from his own life, he showed his integrity. The idea that church leaders should set an example for others to follow and that this lesson should not be ignored is reiterated in large part by this line. He considered the elders of Ephesus, who held positions of authority in the church, would accept his messages.

Serving with Humility

As Paul demonstrated throughout his life and career, humility is a necessary quality in service (verse 19a). "With all humility" (Greek: *μετα πασης ταπεινοπροσωνης* - *meta pases tapeinophrosunēs*) appears in verse 19a. This term was then employed by non-Christian writers to describe a contemptuous and insulting thinking. However, he adopted the use of this word as Christ did, to refer to humility, a humble mind that should be characteristic of every Christian, especially preachers (Robertson, 2000). The word *ταπεινοφροσυνη* (*tapeinophrosune*) describes the quality of voluntary self-surrender and humility that does not prioritize oneself, avoiding arrogance or exhibitionism (Friberg et al., 2006).

Serving God in humility has been linked to one's personal Christian journey in addition to faithful and committed performance. It thoroughly considers the duties of an apostle in order to confirm their election and calling as Christians (Robertson, 2000). This mindset may be perceived as a willingness to submit oneself to the Lord Jesus Christ in all areas of one's heart, mind, and conduct, keeping oneself apart from any kind of pride or arrogance, including attempts to gain favor for oneself. In order for every activity in ministry to be motivated by the desire to exalt God alone and not oneself, the elders are supposed to possess the character and attitude of submission to God as the ruler of their lives (Acts 20:19-20, cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Murdock, 2001).

Paul also gave similar advice to the Philippians, reminding them to maintain unity in humility, love one another with the same love, unite in fellowship and one mind (Laird & Hidden, 2016). He emphasized that there should be no deed done out of strife or arrogance, but in humility, everyone should esteem others higher than themselves, and not only think of their own interests, but also the interests of others (Phil. 2:2-4, AV). In a humble attitude, there is unity with others and understanding in achieving a common goal. Conversely, arrogance and pride will only lead to conflict and disharmony in the community. Therefore, humility is an important attribute that every individual in a community must have.

Serving With Shedding Tears

Acts 20:19 relates that Paul frequently burst into tears while ministering. There are interpretations that suggest this is a description of his nature and character as well as his suffering during his ministry. He was an emotional and passionate man, despite many seeing him as a harsh and heartless figure. The elders had seen him set an example of godly sorrow.

According to Luke, Paul served while weeping, using the Greek term *δακρυ* (dakru) or *δακρυον* (dakruon). According to Robertson (2000), Paul was a person who, given his high intelligence, also had highly intense emotions. In Acts 20:31, when he mentions his tears, revealed that they were tears of sorrow and anguish. In his fourth correspondence to the church in Corinth, he also mentioned his tears (2 Corinthians 2:4). All of this illustrates his gentle character, his tender heart, and his ability to fit in with the surroundings. He was very empathetic and sympathetic toward other people.

Ellicott (2018) states that one of Paul's defining characteristics is his tendency to burst into tears. His empathy and sensitivity are evident in these weeping. He was a man of great compassion for other people, and this was an expression of his faith that the Lord Jesus had shown him mercy and love (Mihoc, 2017). As a result, his ministry was marked by humility, weeping, and even Jewish persecution—never traits that would have diminished him (Haenchen, 1971). This was not a flaw in his character; rather, it was his

strength. As a result, a leader has to have a strong, compassionate, even emotional character.

Serving with Great Struggle during Persecution

Paul endured several hardships in his ministry as a servant of Christ, which made his task difficult since he had to endure many different kinds of external obstacles. One such is the threat of death from the Hellenistic Jews, which forced him to relocate and spend around 10 years in his birthplace (Douglas et al., 2011).

After experiencing a very emotional farewell with the elders of Ephesus, he continued his journey to Jerusalem in a situation full of threats and almost certain to end with arrest and detention. However, all these challenges never made him flinch, because he had embraced the call of the Gospel with a strong determination (Douglas et al., 2011). In every step of his ministry, Paul was always faced with various challenges and difficulties, and had to struggle to overcome them all.

The Greek word used for "trial" in Acts 20:19 is "*πειρασμος*" (*peirasmos*). God used trials through the people around him, in this case in the form of a threat of murder by the Jews, to put pressure and test how steadfast his heart was in following God and his calling. God often used trials as a means to strengthen the faith of believers, in accordance with the principle taught by Jesus in some parables, as recorded in Matthew 13 (Doma & Christiani, 2022; Nainupu, 2022).

This opinion is also supported by Bengel's (2011) interpretation, which states that various temptations that come in various forms are truly a test and training for Paul's mind. Sometimes God allows such trials to prove and improve the strength and quality of the faith of believers, and to show God's faithfulness to His servants. Every trial becomes a test of faith designed to strengthen it; but if someone fails to face the test correctly, then the test can turn into a temptation that leads to falling into sin.

Other details of Paul's suffering include the fact that he was imprisoned or convicted as guilty several times—not because of committing a crime or other criminal conduct, but rather as a consequence of sharing the gospel. One instance is that he felt like the lowest person when he set out on his journey to Rome. He was without authority, responsibility, or rights. He was at the bottom, socially and physically, as a prisoner (MacArthur, 2011). However, he did not consider this a loss since, as 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 states, he focused more on the eternal value that he would receive from God. All of these experiences showed his unwavering faith and commitment to serving God in spite of numerous hardships and obstacles.

Serving with Teaching

The apostle Paul's next message focused on the aspect of teaching. In his teaching messages, there are a number of topics that worth further study. The elders should take

these things into consideration as they are highly relevant (Acts 20:20, KJV). Acts 20:20 does not provide an extensive overview of his teaching strategy, but generally speaking, this passage covers preaching and teaching (Christopher, 2021).

Paul has strong teaching abilities and used them as a means of serving God. He imparted and taught all that was beneficial, revealed by his statement, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you..." (Acts 20:20). His instruction focused on the important points, which the text's use of the term "what was profitable" highlighted. Goodness, benefit, and positive value are the hallmarks of beneficial teaching. His virtue, advantage, or benefit is not the only thing at stake here. Others, particularly the Ephesian elders and the congregation he led, also stand to gain from this. According to Swindoll (2016), Paul constantly evaluated how his choices and actions might benefit the Ephesian church. He made a concerted effort to create everything that might help in the development and education of the Ephesian church. From this, it is evident that he was teaching with the intention of helping his audience grow and gain insight on a personal and community level. He was driven to learn more since he was not content with what he already knew about the truth.

Afterwards, it is important to look at what Paul taught, why he taught it, and how he taught it. He actively engaged with people, attempting to leave a long-lasting impression on anybody who was open to listening, in addition to teaching at the school of Tyrannus, where he stood in line and imparted knowledge to anyone who came to listen to him (Farrar & Perowne, 2016). In addition to talking about his obedience to God, he demonstrated his commitment by teaching a large number of people. His efforts to use various teaching methods to spread truth to a diverse range of individuals demonstrated his sincerity. By sharing his experience, he inspired the elders to serve God as he had previously served.

It is impossible to overlook the setting and means Paul used to teach as they are crucial in understanding his actions. According to an interpretation, his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders was obviously centered around "doing." Preaching and teaching on a variety of platforms, both in public and privately, is one of the four acts that he used to represent the aspect of "doing" in his farewell speech (Westfall, 2010). According to Strong's Concordance, "demosios" means "in public" (Strong, 2009, *demosios*). The definition of "public" suggests that his teachings were intended for a broader audience than only followers of Christ; in fact, they were intended for a homogenous society. Consequently, his teaching was not just applicable to those in his immediate geographic area. The fact that the Apostle Paul was well-known allowed him to speak in front of an audience. The citizens of Ephesus were aware of his social standing, which gave him the freedom to talk in "private" settings like gatherings in houses in Troas (20:7) as well as "public" ones like the hall of Tyrannus (19:8–10), (Parsons & Talbert, 2008, p. 292). It was therefore easier to do when he taught a large group of people. It was crucial for the

teacher of God's word to have his presence, which was well-known, in order to teach as many listeners as possible about God's truth.

Serving with Testimony

Various forms of ministry that Paul did, besides using the preaching method, included approaches with power such as healing various diseases and casting out evil spirits, as well as involving approaches through testimony. In Acts 20:21 ITB, he stated, "I always testify to the Jews and the Greeks, ..." The testimony approach is an important element in his ministry, which allows the Gospel to be declared and preached, with the hope of bringing souls to God for salvation.

The statement "I always testify" captures the intensity of Paul's ministry of testimonies. This testimony was constant and unbroken, showing his perseverance and sincerity. The word "always" emphasizes how important it is to give testimony with a sincere and serious attitude. Giving a testimony ought to be done with a strong commitment; it shouldn't be done haphazardly or superficially. Every Christian has to live a life of testimony, especially church leaders.

Paul is also shown in verse 21 as a responsible member of Christ's servant who was charged with spreading His gospel. He served as a gospel witness. The translation of "diamartyromai" as "declared" highlights the serious nature of evangelism, which entails urging individuals to believe and repent (Fernando, 2009). Assuming this responsibility also entails making a sincere effort to successfully complete the task at hand. This passage calls for giving testimony and urging individuals to repent and turn from their sins.

Paul's deeds need to serve as a model for the leaders in carrying out the enormous mandate and mission of the Lord Jesus. The apostles, Paul most notably, ought to be held up as models for imitation. The Great Commission of the Lord must be obeyed by present followers of Jesus, despite the fact that circumstances may alter. They must learn and imitate the apostles' evangelizing methods (Schnabel, 2008; Shipman, 2011).

According to the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus, as stated in Matthew 28:19–20, the message of repentance is meant for all souls from all nations in the world that are bound by the power of sin. Paul, however, had a unique emphasis in this situation as he focused on the Jews while still taking note of other non-Jewish countries. Paul frequently began giving testimony to the Greeks and Jews by addressing the Jews, as demonstrated by his three-month sermons in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10) (Clarke, 1967; Schnabel, 2008). The need that Paul considered to be important and urgent was also represented in this testimony. According to a different perspective, the sermon he gave included the same content despite a different presentation, similar to what is frequently observed in the sermons in Acts (*kerygma*). First and foremost, Paul prioritized sharing the gospel with the Jews (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 24) (Schnabel, 2008; Utley, 1996).

Paul highlighted that both Jews and Greeks needed to turn from their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ. The passage from verse 21, "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus," illustrates how important it is for everyone, regardless of background, to turn to God in repentance and to have faith in our Lord Jesus (Fernando, 2009). While some interpret these two phrases as referring to two distinct messages for two groups, it's possible that they are emphasizing the two key elements of salvation. For everyone, even Jews, the first stage is repentance; they must acknowledge Jesus as the living Messiah and repent from their sins. In addition, Paul attempted to teach the Athenians about the true God, reminding them that God "commands all people everywhere to repent," before introducing them to Jesus. That being said, repentance before God is not a substitute for faith in Christ; rather, it is the initial step toward a greater degree of salvation (Mcgarvey, 1872, p. 229). The path to redemption and forgiveness of sin is the testimony of repentance to the true God, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and it has to be taught to everyone, regardless of background or ethnicity (Prihantoro & Nugroho, 2020).

Paul's gospel teaching focused on the Jews and the Greeks, who were regarded as representative of all the world's nations that the Lord's gospel was intended to reach. The notion that first and foremost the audience of gospel preaching was (and is) everyone—generally represented by the two large groups of Jews and Greeks—supports this point of view. The gospel is an universal message for humanity's universal need. Second, the people who are represented by the Greeks and Jews are the target audience for the sermons (Moody et al., 2019).

Servant (2014) referred to Genesis 22:18 and claimed that in Christ, all the nations of the world would be blessed. The promise to Abraham showed that thousands of different ethnic groups would receive blessings in Christ (Servant, 2014). Furthermore, Servant (2014) also stated his view that these various ethnic groups had differences in terms of geography, race, culture, and language. However, salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is a common need for everyone, as everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (see 1 John 2:2). In this view, Paul conveyed the message of repentance to the true God in the name of the Lord Jesus to everyone, regardless of ethnic boundaries.

According to Paul's testimony, his mission was to lead people to genuine repentance toward Christ so they would be saved. He highlighted "doing" in his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders. The term "doing" entailed affirming to everyone that they should turn to God in repentance (Westfall, 2010). Repentance, in this sense, is the act of turning to God, which is the human response to God's call. Although only God has the power to do such repentance, humans can play a part in this process by giving testimony of God's love to others (Thiessen, 2010).

As a result, all believers—including church leaders—are tasked with sharing the gospel and giving testimony to their repentance in order to contribute to God's mission.

Serving both other believers and unbelievers is the purpose for which all believers were made. Being a witness for Christ, who bears witness of Christ's love to the world of sin, is an essential aspect of this mission (Wiersbe, 2009). The objective of believers' mission is to promote God's plan of salvation and is an integral part of their ministry within the body of Christ.

Repentance plays a very important role in human life before God, and is the main foundation for the growth of one's faith to achieve God's purpose in the life of His people. According to Swindoll (2016), the fundamental component of Christian theology and practice is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance toward God. Abandoning this truth might put the church's entire doctrinal structure in jeopardy. It is critical to understand what repentance entails and the significance of the gospel in revealing the importance of repentance to God and putting one's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Moody et al., 2019).

According to this viewpoint, repentance is the next phase of one's growth in faith, transforming the individual's sinful heart into a completely transformed one. According to Berkhof (2013) and Henry (1985), all people are born into a state of sin, which leads to a love and practice of sin. Repentance is a transformational act that involves turning away from sin and giving one's everything to God. A transformation in heart, mind, and will is necessary for repentance (Thiessen, 2010). According to Strong (2009), repentance is the act of transforming one's thoughts to loathe previous transgressions. The term "changing" is crucial in this definition since it indicates a transformation from the prior state in both mind and conduct.

Paul foretold in verses 20:22–24 that his future would be marred by hardship. This was a foreshadowing of what awaited him on his journey ahead, following his farewell to the Ephesian elders. Despite the fact that Paul had endured several challenges during his ministry (see 2 Corinthians 11:23–33), he realized that each one of them had a profound meaning. God employed Paul's challenges as instruments to refine and test the strength of his faith and ministry calling. He intended to use these experiences to inspire others and serve as an example for God's followers to grow in their faith, particularly the elders who would eventually lead the church. Therefore, while suffering may be a useful learning opportunity and a teaching tool for leaders and followers in church ministry, repentance is a fundamental component of the Christian faith.

Challenges for Pastoral Leaders

It might be difficult for pastoral leaders today to imitate the methods used by Paul in Acts 20:17–38. Pastoral leaders may encounter the following challenges while attempting to follow his example.

Challenge of Loyalty and Consistency

It might be difficult to stay devoted and consistent in the fast-paced, easily distracted environment of today's church. Pastoral leaders should uphold moral principles and remain faithful to the pastoral call (Swindoll, 1998, p. 12). Acts 20:17–38 highlights the ongoing difficulty of loyalty and constancy in pastoral leadership, a challenge that still affects today's church leaders. This has profound implications for the understanding and practice of church leadership.

One of the main challenges in pastoral leadership today is maintaining loyalty to the divine call of ministry. The book *Acts of the Apostles* by F.F. Bruce (1990, p. 396) highlights Paul's commitment to his calling to serve the church. This underlines the importance of church leaders keeping their focus on their calling despite facing pressures and challenges from various directions. The decision to remain faithful to the pastoral call could mean rejecting compromises that could undermine the principles of Christianity.

In addition, today's pastoral leaders also have challenges related to consistency in teaching and behavior. This is very important for church leaders. Keener (2013, p. 2422) shows that Paul was always faithful to the pure Gospel message. This becomes a model for today's church leaders to maintain their loyalty to biblical teaching. However, the challenge here is that the modern world often presents pressure to change or compromise the principles of faith. Church leaders must consider how they will maintain consistency in teaching and behavior in a changing context.

Another challenge is loyalty to moral principles. It is an issue that is increasingly important in the ever-changing world. Ronda (2011) reflects that church leaders need to maintain moral integrity in all aspects of their lives. The main challenge is how to maintain high moral standards in a culture that may ignore or even oppose them.

Loyalty to the congregation presents the next challenge. A pastor should have the congregation's best interests at heart. This calls for a ministry that is selfless and full of love in order to support the congregation's growth. It is emphasized by Polhill (1992, p. 389) that Paul was a prominent figure with a deep connection to the Ephesian church. This serves as an example for today's church leaders on how to put the needs of the congregation above their own.

The Challenge of Willingness to Suffer

Being willing to endure hardship and persecution in order to serve the church is another challenge. Church leaders may come under pressure to restrict their ministry and teaching in an increasingly secular world in order to avoid creating conflicts (Stott, 2021). Paul said, "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me" (Acts 20:22-23). This shows how he was very aware of the threats and dangers he might face (Schnabel, 2008). But his fear did not stop him

from remaining faithful to his calling. For him, loyalty to Christ was more important than his personal safety (Mihoc, 2017). This gives an important picture of what should be the priority for church leaders.

For today's pastoral leadership, Paul's story is a challenge. In a world where many church leaders may be tempted to avoid controversy, conflict, or even oppression for the sake of comfort and personal safety, his story reminds that loyalty to Christ and His flock should always be a priority (Peterson, 2009). Peterson (2009) in his commentary on Acts, writes, Paul showed the attitude of a servant who was truly faithful and ready to suffer. His willingness to suffer showed how he valued his calling and how he saw suffering as part of his duty as an apostle. So, the challenge for church leaders today is to always make Christ the center of everything they do and to be ready to accept whatever challenges come because of their loyalty to Him.

The Challenge of Avoiding the Desire for Wealth

It can be difficult to avoid materialistic or greedy motives in a world that frequently places an emphasis on wealth and personal success. Pastoral leaders must continue to put the needs of the church above their own interests (Blanchard & Hodges, 2016).

In Acts 20:33, the Apostle Paul emphasized his integrity and faithfulness in serving, showing that he was not driven by the desire for wealth. He made sure that he never coveted anyone's silver, gold, or clothing. His attitude showed how he served with the right motivation and encouraged the elders in Ephesus to work hard and help the weak (Acts 20:35).

In the context of today's pastoral leadership, the challenge of avoiding the desire for wealth is increasing with the presence of misleading prosperity theology and pressure to make the church a profitable business. This raises a fundamental question about what should be the motivation of a spiritual leader. Bruce (1990) wrote, Paul gave an example that a servant of the Gospel should be more focused on delivering the message than the material benefits that might be obtained. This emphasizes that the core of ministry is loyalty to the call and message of the Gospel, not the pursuit of personal gain. The same thing was conveyed by Witherington (1998) and Burrell & Rahim (2018) that, in a world where many spiritual leaders are tempted by wealth and luxury, Paul's example challenges to rethink what is really important in ministry. Witherington's comment stresses the importance of having the right perspective on wealth and riches in the context of spiritual ministry.

The Challenge of Serving with Humility

Being an example of humility and selfless service may be difficult in a culture that often emphasizes achievement and personal exposure. Pastoral leaders need to consider the motives and intentions behind their actions.

In Acts 20:19, Paul described that he served "with all humility and with many tears and trials" in Acts 20:19. This emphasizes that spiritual leaders need to be prepared for the fact that helping others is not always simple in the context of modern pastoral leadership. There will always be tough times, tears, and obstacles to overcome. In response to this background, Stott (2020, p. 302) in his book "The Message of Acts" highlights that pastoral leadership effectiveness is primarily dependent on a blend of humility and unwavering obedience to God's purpose. Larkin (2011, p. 289) supports this perspective, saying that while Paul taught that helping others comes at a tremendous cost, it also showed that serving others has far higher value than any sacrifice. This serves as a reminder to the spiritual leaders of today to put service before self-interest at all times.

The Challenge of Readiness to Give Warnings and Teachings

Giving warnings and teachings based on the Word of God can cause tension or conflict in the church. Pastoral leaders need to have wisdom in delivering difficult messages without sacrificing the integrity of biblical truth (Dever, 2021, p. 138; Kammeraad, 2016).

Acts 20:17-38 gives a deep insight into the Apostle Paul's commitment to advise and teach the church in Ephesus (Stott, 2020). In this emotional encounter with the elders, Paul affirmed that he never hesitated to proclaim the whole truth of God and always warned them every day with weeping (Christopher, 2021). First of all, his willingness to give warnings showed his courage in facing the problems. In the world of pastoral leadership today, it is sometimes easier to ignore controversial issues or avoid conflicts. However, his example shows that spiritual leaders must be brave to deliver warnings when needed, even if it means facing unpopularity or opposition.

Marshall (2008, p. 341) writes, "Paul's commitment to give exhortations and teachings shows a combination of pastoral care and theological integrity that every spiritual leader must have." This highlights the fact that serving involves more than just imparting knowledge; it also entails making sure that the knowledge is used with integrity and truth. In the same manner, Peterson (2009, p. 565) points out that Paul demonstrated that a primary responsibility of spiritual leaders is to ensure the safety and spiritual growth of their congregation, even at the expense of personal risk. This serves as a reminder to spiritual leaders that in order to best serve the needs of the congregation they serve, they must be willing to take on risks and challenges.

CONCLUSION

In Acts 20:17-38, the Apostle Paul presents the principles of pastoral ministry that are timeless and relevant, even in the context of local church ministry today. Here are the key principles taught by Paul and the challenges faced by pastoral leaders today: First, making the most of time. Paul took every opportunity to spread the Gospel. Pastoral

leaders in the present era are challenged to maximize every opportunity in their service, especially in the midst of many distractions and demands of the times. Second, serving with humility. Paul emphasized the importance of humility in service. Today's pastoral leaders must be aware of the threat of arrogance and constantly realize their true source of strength. Third, serving with tears. Paul not only served with enthusiasm but also with deep emotion. This challenges today's church leaders to engage emotionally, empathize with the congregation, and feel grief and joy with them. Fourth, serving with great struggle in time of persecution. Paul often faced threats and dangers in his service. Church leaders must be ready to face opposition and challenges, especially when voicing the truth of the Bible in an increasingly secular cultural context. Fifth, serving with teaching. Paul emphasized the importance of correct and profound teaching. In the information era that is full of false teachings, pastoral leaders are challenged to continue to provide teaching that is based on the Bible and relevant to their congregation. Sixth, serving with witness. Paul always gave testimony of the work of Christ in his life. Church leaders today are challenged to be living witnesses of the love and power of Christ, so that they not only teach but also practice their faith.

Thus, the principles of Paul's ministry in Acts 20:17-38 provide a solid foundation for pastoral ministry. Although the context and challenges have changed over time, the essence of ministry remains the same. Pastoral leaders in the context of today's local church are expected to integrate these principles into their service, ensuring that they remain faithful to their calling and effective in serving the congregation.

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