

Pastor Paul (Acts 19:21-20:38)

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[0 : 00] After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. After I have been there, he said, I must visit Rome too.

He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer. About that time, there arose a great disturbance about the way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said, You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business.

And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus. And in practically the whole province of Asia.

He says that God made by human hands, gods made by human hands, were no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshipped throughout the province of Asia and in the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.

[1 : 10] When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting, Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians! Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristocatus, Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theatres together.

Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theatre. The assembly was in confusion.

Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defence before the people.

But when they realised he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours, Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians! The city clerk quieted the crowd and said, Fellow Ephesians, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven?

Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and do not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess.

[2 : 26] If, then, Demetrius and this fellow craftsman have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and they are proconsuls. They can press charges. If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly.

As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case, we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it. After he said this, he dismissed the assembly.

Thank you. Thanks so much, Naomi. That's a lovely reading. Please keep your Bibles open to Acts chapter 19 and 20.

And we will be taking a closer look at these two chapters. So, just a heads up, we have been journeying through the book of Acts, and there's actually not long left to go.

So, we've actually got five more sermons written on the book of Acts. That will take us to Acts 28.

The chapters are getting longer and longer, so we will take them in a few larger chunks.

[3 : 32] But please, if you can, and it will be great for you to just read up beforehand these chapters. We obviously won't read the whole section each time. And, of course, if you've just joined us and you're like, why are we in the middle of Acts?

Well, you can always look up our previous talks on Acts, and really, you can catch up. Do a bit of a binge through the series. And just a bit of a bonus, a few people have been asking good questions that have come up through the book of Acts, things that we haven't had time to address or dig deep into.

So, if that's you and you'd like to, yeah, you've got questions about things that happen, you know, yeah, we'd love to give an opportunity. So, it'll probably just be a Wednesday night here.

Pretty casual, not recorded, so you can be frank as you like and ask good questions. So, yeah, and AMA, Ask Me Anything on Acts. And so, we'll try and gather a group together and your questions. So, if you're interested, you can post questions. We'll put the links and details on our Facebook page soon. Great. So, that being, yeah, putting that aside, again, this section of Acts is fairly long. [4 : 39] We just thank you, Naomi, for reading the first section. At our church, we don't skip the hard bits of Scripture, and we don't skip the long bits either. But I don't have the stamina of the Apostle Paul.

In chapter 20, he preaches till midnight. So, we will pick and choose a bit about what we look at in the next few minutes. So, shall we pray together, and let's ask for God's help. Amen. Our Lord, we thank you that your word, as we heard, is powerful.

So powerful that evil men and women would choose to oppose the powerful word and the people that you are making and forming in Christ. So, we ask for you to speak powerfully in the same way to us today.

Help us to put our tiredness aside, our worries aside, and sit at your feet. We thank you, and we ask all these things. In Jesus' name, amen.

Let me tell you about a bad habit that I have. It looks like this. I got really self-conscious about it as I was singing, because I was like, oh, there I go again.

[5 : 51] I'm putting my hands behind my back. And, you know, I don't know what your little habit is, but that's my silly little habit. And actually, for years, I didn't realize how weird it was or how distinctive it was until Cheryl and I, we had kids.

And then one day, there's little, you know, our youngest one, just going like this, you know, up to the letterbox and everyone copying her. And then I realized, I have a problem. I keep doing this walk.

Kids, they pick up what parents do so easily, don't they, right? Whether it's our actions, our accents, our attitudes, our aspirations. And look, there are models everywhere, aren't there?

Whether at home, whether at school, in sports, whether at work, whether even here at church, there are good models and bad models. There are great examples and not so good examples.

And in this section, we have the example of Pastor Paul. In our church, we have a couple of pastors. And most of you know and have heard that Pastor James plans to retire at the end of the year.

[6 : 59] And so, actually, there's been a little bit of discussion, hasn't there been, about hiring new pastors. Good questions asked about what do we look for in a pastor, that sort of thing. And I think these are the same questions that actually the first early church who needed to read the book of Acts would have had.

What does a model pastor look like? What does good gospel ministry look like? Because look, actually, we'll flip to Acts 20, verse 18.

And how does Paul speak in his final words to leaders of a church, leaders of the Ephesian church who meet with him? He starts off saying this, You know how I lived the whole time I was with you. This is a very special passage. Here we see Paul, the pastor, kind of unboxing his ministry a bit, lifting the lid, seeing how does he do gospel work?

So if you want to know what the Bible's vision and mission is for leaders of the church, and for future leaders of the church, perhaps, then this is the passage we need.

[8 : 10] What should be our focus in ministry? Who do we look to for a good example? Perhaps even PCBC English, what should you expect and encourage from someone like myself and the other leaders here in church?

It's all here in this speech at the very end of 20. It's a very tearful korero. It's very heartfelt words. And so I think it's worth taking some time to look at it.

Just like bank staff, if you've ever worked in a bank, they teach you how to study real money, right? So that you can spot the fakes. As we hear from Paul and watch his ministry, we're going to see what real, genuine gospel ministry looks like to discern from the fakes.

And maybe even for our church, we'll see how we're doing well and where, perhaps, we need to change. But before we dive into Paul's final conversation, all right, at the end of Acts 20, we're going to rewind a bit.

It's worth reminding ourselves how Paul gets to this point, right? And actually, the simple answer is this. Paul gets to the end of Acts 20 from Ephesus.

[9 : 23] So, last week we heard about Paul and hanging out in two big cities. Well, if we track Paul's GPS history from Acts 19 onwards, it would say Ephesus, right, where we just heard about the riot.

And then Macedonia, 20 verse 1. And then Greece for three months. And then a road trip to Troas for a week. A walk down to a place called Assos. And then island hopping between Middeline and Kiosk and all these other places.

Finally, in chapter 20 verse 15, he arrives in a town called Miletus. Miletus. And it's from here that we see the speech that Paul gives to the elders.

When Naomi read that reading for us, we actually heard, though, Paul's ultimate destination.

Seems like, if we go back to Acts 19 verse 21, Paul, he resolves in his heart to go to Jerusalem.

And then ultimately, he wants to visit Rome as well. It's a little bit of a trailer, a sneak peek at his ultimate destination by the end of the book of Acts.

[10 : 30] But all this road tripping going on did not make Paul forget his friends in Ephesus. Right? Because when he reaches Miletus in Acts 20 verse 17, what does he do?

It says, from Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. Who remembers last week what Ephesus was like as a city?

Anyone? Just call out, you know, how would you describe Ephesus? It was a city that was rich.

Okay, yep. Anything else? Worshipped idols.

Okay. Yeah, we saw a bit of that in the reading. Yep. Anything else? Okay. Well, there's a photo, right, of a drawing of what the Temple of Ardenas looked like, which we heard about.

Yeah, rich, wealthy, superstitious. In fact, Ephesus was so well known for its kind of people being so obsessed with the occult that apparently you could actually talk about Ephesian letters.

[11 : 33] And everyone would know you were talking about these kind of magic books. And yet as these very scrolls are kind of turning to ashes, there's a big bonfire that we heard last week, bigger than Guy Fawkes.

But Luke tells us, in this way, the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. That's where we left off last week. Jesus is more powerful than any city's superstitions.

A God, of course, who can beat the power of the grave, he can stand against any spiritual opposition, right? And through the ministry of Paul, of this message, and through his friends, Priscilla, Aquila, all these other people, it seems like all of Asia Minor, by the end of a couple of years, has heard about the powerful name of Jesus.

And, I mean, part of you might be thinking, wouldn't it be wonderful if, imagine if Paul had kept staying in Ephesus for a few years longer? You know, why not just, why not, why more than three years? Why not more than three years? Really start to bring change, you know, really turn the city around.

But he doesn't get that opportunity. And you've just, you heard why in the reading, right? There's some human opposition that's driven up and it finally pushes Paul to have to leave the city behind.

[12 : 48] All right, what's the beef? Paul's insistence, right, that man-made gods are no gods at all, verse 26 of chapter 19. And it stirs up a guy called Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths.

Now, why were they so upset about this random guy talking about, you know, a random god? Well, Luke tells us, doesn't he? All right, have a closer look at verse 25 of chapter 19 again.

It says, he called them together. He says to the workmen, he says, men, you know we receive a good income from this business, right? One reason is financial. The more Christianity there is, the more less money that's spent on the silver shrines that they sell and they put food on the table with. Perhaps if you've been baking pies for years, maybe that's your line of work, and suddenly there's a new Korean hot dog place in town. Man, you wouldn't be happy with them, right? You'd be thinking, what can I do?

What can I do? Maybe you'd feel how the silversmiths felt at that point. Okay, so Demetrius and his guild, they care about their good income. One reason, financial. Second reason for persecution is religious, of course.

[13:58] All right, we see that in verse 27. Demetrius, he shares this concern that this temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, is going to get discredited, robbed of her divine majesty, Luke records, if it becomes empty.

All right? It's ironic, isn't it? Silversmiths carving little shrines for their nine to five with their hands. These are the ones who find it hardest to believe that man-made gods are not gods at all.

Isn't it ironic? It is very hard to admit that your whole life's work is meaningless without Christ.

Idolatry, of course, is hardest to spot in ourselves, isn't it?

It's here we can laugh at Demetrius. Come on, guys. Surely you know. But the employee pushing out 70-hour weeks just to get ahead in the rat race, maybe they can't see how their work has become their god.

The student who glories or despairs in their identity based on what marks they get or how popular they are. Maybe they need a friend to remind them.

[15:12] That's not everything. Jesus is. Sadly, though, despite the irony, these Gentiles are so devoted to their idols of money, of reputation, they cannot see their blindness.

And they stir up a crowd. They congregate in the theater of Ephesus. This was an outdoor amphitheater. I think Pastor James has actually been there on one of his Israel-Greece trips. And it could hold 24,000 people. It's one of those big stadiums. Think Eden Park, but maybe half the size. And though Paul, we see in verse 30, he desperately wants to go in and address them, he's told to stay away by lots of different people.

It's going to be dangerous for you. And instead, Luke tells us they put two other people forward instead. And there's a little bit of an argy-bargy. There's lots of chanting about how great Artemis is. And finally, they need a city official to quiet things down, as we heard. And for the rest of Luke's narrative, as we generally, I want to just, as we go, let's just notice the kind of things that Paul is guilty of, that Paul is wanting to model for us as a pastor, as a missionary, as a gospel servant.

[16:31] All right? So, number one, Paul knows when to avoid unnecessary conflict. Right? Pretty obvious. Paul knows when to avoid unnecessarily conflict.

Notice his wisdom here. Would it have been a superhero moment if he could have stood up and told 24,000 people the gospel? Yes. Perhaps. But he understands, though, when it's not good to engage in unnecessary danger.

Right? He's happy to skip the super spreader event. And I don't know. Sometimes we need to be wise like Paul. Sometimes we need to just skip some of those unnecessary battles out there.

Do we not? Do we not? Maybe your social media feed is lighting up with some people arguing over something. Does it really mean you have to step in and fight every time?

Paul models to us how to say no to a worthless fight. Simple enough. I think second observation from this Ephesian theater account.

[17:34] Pastor Paul, he keeps a good testimony among non-Christians. Did you notice, actually, in verse 37, what the city clerk says, right? City official, probably not a Christian.

And he says this, You brought these people here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. Do you see what's happening? In the two years of gospel ministry, Paul's preaching the gospel unashamedly.

But he has been impeccable. He has not done anything wrong in their conduct. He has been a good witness, a good example, living in their community.

He has been respectful of the locals, so much so that even the city official notices. Friends, the thing that will attract our non-Christian friends to PCBC is usually not a killer sermon, right?

It's not our extravagant six-piece band worship, although that was great. Thank you. Outsiders are interested in the way of life they see in you, where Jesus is real and brings real change to your life.

[18:38] Where can they tell that Jesus makes you and I more forgiving, compassionate, holy? It should be the church. It should be the church. How's that going for us? PCBC English, are we known for our holiness?

Are we known for our counter-cultural way of living as a good testimony, not sucking up to the gods of this world? A Christian brother once said to me, Just work on your holiness, okay?

Let God take care of your reputation. It's wise advice, isn't it? Just work on your holiness. Let God take care of your reputation. Paul wisely avoids unnecessary danger.

He reflects a good testimony, even to non-Christians around him. And as we hit Acts 20 and hit the road with him, as the clamor of the riot dies down, we see a few other behaviors, I think, worth

watching.

And let me summarize some of these for you here. Number three, Pastor Paul, he travels and does ministry with a diverse team. He serves the Lord with a diverse team.

[19 : 46] Have a look at Acts 20, and look at those first few verses. Skip down to verse 4. And look who goes with him from this Macedonia to Troas. Luke actually named some of these people for us, right?

There's Sopater, a Berean bodyguard, I guess. There's Aristarchus and Secundus. Secundus is Latin for second, right? Who gets a name like second?

You get a name like second if you were a slave, if you had no name before. Can you see that? Paul is honored to bring these kinds of people along to share the gospel with him. And then there's Gaius of Derby, remember?

Derby, Bardgate City. Now he's bringing a fellow worker there. Then there's Triple T crew, right? Timothy, Tychicus, Trophimus. Don't forget, Timothy, his father was Greek, his mother was Jewish. He's kind of like a hafa, is what the Japanese would call it. All right? Paul's proud to bring him along. And there's Tychicus and Trophimus as well. Look, it's a diverse team, isn't it?

[20 : 49] It's a diverse team. Don't be scared, all right? If we do evangelism and there are people who don't speak English hanging out with us, serving alongside us, or vice versa. Don't be scared because Paul is showing us that gospel ministry works great in diverse teams.

And of course, don't forget the author of Acts himself, actually. Did you notice verse 5? It says, These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas, right? Luke's including himself in the story. Again, who's Luke? Dr. Luke, right? Very well educated. Part of this group. PCBC, our diversity, is our strength.

Don't be ashamed of it. The first disciples of Jesus, they were not all the same. They weren't all fishermen, right? There was a tax collector, an ex-terrorist, you know, all kinds of different people joined Jesus on this journey.

And we are not the same. And in gospel service, let's expect, let's thrive, let's celebrate working in diverse teams with people different to us.

[21 : 53] And so maybe even when we pick teams for serving together, maybe let's ask ourselves, are we surrounding ourselves with just clicks to affirm us and do the same old, same old?

Are we going to try and make sure that we are a body serving with different parts, hands and feet, eyes and ears? Which one better models the gospel in all its forms?

I think the second one. I think Paul would say, go with the diverse team. Hang out and work together with people who don't have your same upbringing. We can speak your language.

Because that is our strength. Number four, let's keep moving through this story, right? So they've reached Troas, verse 6. And then verse 7, we get this really interesting scene in Troas, right?

Where on the first day of the week, it's a bit of a church gathering, it seems. They come together to break bread and to hear from God's word. And here, number four, Pastor Paul, he takes every opportunity to church together.

[22 : 56] Did you notice that, right? He's been traveling a long way, right? There's been a lot of road tripping, right? The last thing you might feel like doing is to church together. And yet Paul models for us the priority of gathering together.

Luke has a lot of fun telling this section, right? So if you read it in your own time, in verse 9, he describes how a poor young boy named Eutychus, he was overpowered by a deep sleep.

Some of you know what that feels like, okay? You know the eyelids moment. That's okay. All right. I can relate. Look, verse 8 says, all right. Sorry, I'll skip back.

Look, you know, he sleeps and then, too bad, you know, poor thing, he's sitting on the window. He's actually on the third floor and he falls down. And actually, it says they picked him up dead. The young boy's death and then soon his resurrection, that might shock us today, doesn't it?

All right. That might shock us today. What on earth is going on? But remember, verse 8 says, we were gathered. Who's there? Who was the eyewitness that saw this? It was Dr. Luke.

[24 : 03] All right. I think he would know, all right, if someone's alive or dead. And so among the eyewitnesses of this miraculous revival, right, physically was Luke as well.

And some of you might be wondering, why include this raise the dead moment? Well, this is how Luke connects Paul with the great Old Testament prophets of old, okay?

So if you know your Old Testament Bible stories, look, some of them, they demonstrated God's incredible power to resurrect and raise people to life. You think of Elijah and the widow's son, Elisha and the Shunammite's son, all right?

There's a pattern there, right? Can you remember what the Lord Jesus did sometimes? He raised the dead, too. Lazarus, the little girl. Luke is reminding us Paul is connected to all these people. He has God's power. He is an apostle. He is sent by the risen Lord Jesus himself. He is filled with his power and spirit. He is set apart for the gospel of God. He is able to bring lost sinners home.

[25 : 09] But I actually think even more miraculous than this resurrection moment is the fact that Paul prioritizes meeting together, all right? Why was Paul preaching past midnight in the first place, all right?

You don't do that unless you care. You care. This is your last chance to see your brothers and sisters in Christ. All right, verse 7. He was about to go.

He has one day left in Troas. He doesn't know when he'll see them again. And so, what does he give the whole day and night to? Church. God's gathered people. Even a one-week stay in Troas needs time gathering with brothers and sisters.

Friends, if you had one day left in Auckland, where would you spend it? Let's say you were like Serena, you know, about to move to another city for three months. Your final day, what would you do? For Pastor Paul, he hangs out with God's family.

Day and night. Think about that for a moment. Yes, perhaps his preaching got a bit too deadly, but he takes every opportunity to meet with God's people, to remind one another what matters most.

[26 : 19] Thank you for making gathering a priority, friends. You are in the same shoes as Paul. You are taking every opportunity to church together. Let's keep moving.

Let's keep following Paul's journey, right? It seems like the next couple of verses, yeah, eventually ends up at the city of Miletus. It looks like he takes the Uber boat, right?

Verse 13 to 16. He gets on a boat. It stops in a couple of places. Remember, his final destination is Jerusalem, right? And so, before he gets there, though, he stops in Miletus.

Verse 17 tells us this. And it's from here that actually the genre, what happens in the story, changes. We're not following Paul's road tripping anymore. We pause and we hear Paul's amazing farewell speech, don't we?

Now we hear Paul himself. And Paul shares two main things. And for this section, I think we really want to dig deep into his words because they're so powerful.

[27 : 23] All right? So, look, from verses 17 and 25, Pastor Paul, he models and he shares and recollects his own faithful gospel ministry.

So, I'm going to bring up the verses and we're just going to look at it bit by bit. And let me show you. What does faithful gospel ministry look like? All right? And you want to take notes if you're a leader or if you're supporting and praying for your leaders, if you're going to be a future leader.

What does faithful gospel ministry look like? Being present. Have a look. Verse 18. He was with them. Right? And the original language actually is he was being.

He was in being. He was like Jesus who came and lived and dwelt among his people. Faithful gospel ministry means showing up, being there, face to face, shoulder to shoulder.

It also means serving with great humility and with tears. This is Paul. He could be manly, I'm sure, but he knows how to be humble and he knows how to cry with others.

[28 : 34] Okay? Nothing sappy about that. How about you? When have you grieved over the sickness of a brother or sister? When have you been humble enough to come up to someone and say sorry or ask for help?

This is faithful gospel ministry. What else do we see? We see testing, right? Severe testing. Paul reflects on his own journey and it's been attack after attack along the way.

Friends, faithful gospel ministry will look like suffering coming upon us. Let's not forget that. What else does it look like? I think it looks like being courageous to preach anything that will be helpful to our brothers and sisters.

Right? Sometimes we shy away. We think, oh, that might offend them. I might hold that thought. I'll just pray for them. But Paul's not like that. Share what will be helpful for your brother or sister.

If you see something that shouldn't be happening, talk to them. Ask them why it's going on. Don't hesitate. Don't hesitate. Don't hesitate. Looks like Paul shares the gospel, right?

[29 : 48] How does he do it, though? We learn as well. He says he teaches publicly and from house to house. And you know what? That's an important distinction, right? Some things are not appropriate for me to share out here and blurt in front of everyone.

Sometimes I need to meet up with someone, maybe ones or twos, and sort an issue out. We've got to be wise. Sometimes in gospel ministry, you're going to have to work out when to be saying something to everyone, and we're going to catch up and be discreet and go house to house for their good.

But what is the ultimate message that you're going to be sharing, right? Verse 21 tells us, I've declared to everyone, all kinds of people, they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, gospel ministry, at the very end of the day, ultimately, we are just telling people to repent and trust in Jesus. To repent and trust in Jesus.

That is ultimately the goal of every spiritual conversation. Every, I'll pray for you. Every, how are you going, my sister? And Paul gets this.

[31 : 02] He models this for us. And I hope that you want your pastors, your leaders, to believe and preach in this way. To make that the priority.

There are a lot of things I could help you with in your life. I could matchmake people. I could buy you coffee and just be a tour guide for you. There are lots of things I could do with my time.

But I'm going to prioritize as best as I can to encourage you and me to repent from our sinning and trust in Jesus Christ. Because that is faithful gospel ministry.

Let's make this our job description, perhaps, for any pastors we want to hire, any leaders that step up. Why not? It's biblical.

It's faithful. It's been a busy full week for me. I had the privilege of traveling to Tauranga. Yeah, with Pastor Albert, Pastor James, there's a bunch of other Chinese Baptist pastors as well.

[32 : 04] And we hui, we gathered at Bethlehem Baptist Church for really the first Baptist national gathering in three years, thanks COVID.

And it was so good. There were about 400, 500 people worshipping, praying together, finally just catching up. It was wonderful.

What a privilege it is to be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with these pastors, these chaplains, these other faith leaders in the Baptist family. But we also had to take time to remember one brother who wasn't with us.

Sean Schuter of Mattamata Baptist, just three weeks ago, unfortunately, he died in a car accident. And so we grieve that. And brothers and sisters, you know, as a family, we've joined you for our third year now serving alongside you.

And you know what? To be honest, I love this church. And I hope the Lord gives us, I don't know, three years isn't enough. Maybe, why not 33 years? Wouldn't that be nice?

[33 : 14] But he may have other plans, right? He may have other plans. Paul knew this. Pastor Andrew Nigerian knows this, that we prayed for. In fact, we want to be aware when we do gospel ministry, we may not get another chance to see someone face to face again.

We may have to own up to the fact that, and Paul does, he knows his future, right? Verses 22, he says, I can see it. I'm going to be in chains soon. I'm going to go through trials soon.

If we had that mindset, would we not preach as if it was our last time? Would we not just plead with people, repent, trust Jesus as if it's our last chance?

Imagine if we had this kind of urgency. Don't just imagine it, though. Let's live it out. Because none of us, whether you're a pastor, whether you're not, none of us are guaranteed endless years on earth, endless years in this church, endless years serving together.

I think Paul's ministry was so incredibly fruitful and faithful because he knew how to live. He knew how to prioritize. He knew that there were just two days on his calendar, today and that day when Jesus comes back.

[34 : 33] So how about us? How are we going with faithful gospel ministry? As we present, as we humble and tearful, as we, through testing and trials, just boldly preach whatever's helpful to each other, ultimately leading people to repentance from sin and faith in Christ.

I think we can all do that. That would be faithful gospel ministry that strengthens, that grows the church. And with this in mind, let me join in with Paul's just four final commands.

We see these in verse 26 to 34. How are we going to do faithful gospel ministry? Well, this is what he calls every leader to model for their churches.

And you can push me on this and say, are you doing this? You can push Pastor Albert. You can push our group leaders and everyone else. Is this happening? All right? Pastor Paul, finally, he calls leaders to teach, to shepherd, to watch, and to trust.

Have a look in your Bibles, verse 26 onwards, right? He says here, right, I have not shrunk back. I've not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God, verse 27.

[35 : 49] Right? What does it look like to proclaim the whole will of God? Well, I think, and you've noticed this, it means going through books of the Bible. Right?

How will we know the whole will of God if we don't go through the whole will of God? It means making the diet of our church sermons going through books of the Bible, letting God set the agenda.

Okay? I wouldn't preach a sermon like this if I could choose it. I feel very self-conscious, but this is preaching that will change your life, change our life. We teach the whole will of God.

We don't skip the hard bits. We don't skip the long bits. We don't skip the spicy bits. All right? That is what we will do here. That is what you can ask me to do. Teach the whole counsel of God.

What does it say next in verse 28? We need to attend to ourselves. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock. I was kind of reflecting on this passage, right?

[36 : 46] What does it look like to be a shepherd? Okay? We have a lot of sheep in New Zealand, but I think most of us in this church, we don't hang out with sheep often enough. So we get a little bit, oh, okay, there's sheep. Sheep are hard to gather together, right?

It takes a lot of work. They get stuck in trees and branches, and then you have to work harder to pull them out. They might go down and hide in a hill, and then in three years' time, they look like Shrek, and you've got to shave them for years and years.

Sheep are hard to look after. And this is what it means then. We need to keep watch, but look over yourselves and all the flock.

We dare not be leaders and pastors who go out always fixing other people's problems while we spiritually try. That cannot happen.

Look at the priority. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock. As a brother keeps saying to me, when you fill our own cup, teapot up, then we can fill others up.

[37 : 50] See the priority. Watch over yourselves, friends. Spend time with God. Devote yourselves to Him fully, and then you'll be useful as you keep watch over the flock, brothers and sisters, in your care.

What else can you hold me to and other leaders? You can hold us to watch for wolves, right? Paul warns the Ephesian elders, there's going to be false teachers coming, and they might even be from your own number.

So be on your guard. And so you can pray for us, you can encourage us, you can help us to watch for false teachers.

Sometimes they're easy to spot, right? Okay? Because, you know, they might have an awkward accent, and they might like whisper and try and talk to you in secret. Sometimes they're really hard to spot. For months, a brother of mine was just doing Bible study, Bible study, Bible study, and it was months too late, actually, to pull out, that they realized it was a cult called Shincheonji.

Some of you know the story. We've got to be on our guard. So pray for us to be on our guard as your leaders, to watch for wolves. And finally, you can challenge us and hold us accountable to trust God to provide.

[39 : 09] That's what we see in those last few verses, right? Paul, he trusts ultimately that God will look after the church. He'll never see them again. So what else can he do but commit them to God and to the word of his grace?

And you see how he shares his heart. He doesn't covet people's money. He knows that God will provide for his needs, sometimes through other people, sometimes through miraculous means. Ultimately, he trusts God to provide. And so please help us to keep trusting the Lord to provide. Provide for the leaders of our church.

Provide for all the different ministries that might happen to provide for keeping this place running. Yeah. This is what God calls us as leaders to.

And so I would love your prayers. I would love your support. I would love your encouragement as we keep doing this, as we teach you, as we shepherd you, as we watch out for false teaching for you, as we trust the Lord together.

[40 : 15] And it's so hard, isn't it, sometimes, when we're a church like ours, second generation, filled with people who are trying to work out if they're Kiwi or Asian or neither.

And many of us have never had good role models in the faith. Let's be honest. Sometimes it's hard, right? You want someone to look up to, to follow. But you can't speak the language.

They live in a different world to you. But every Christian, you, me, everyone, everyone needs a model of Christ to follow. Jesus himself said, follow me.

That's how discipleship works. That's how Christianity grows in this world. Paul says, imitate me as I imitate Christ. And so at the end of the day, that is what normal gospel ministry looks like.

Us following after others who follow after Jesus. So feel free not to copy how I walk with hands behind my back. Please feel free not to copy my weaknesses and struggles.

[41 : 23] But as much as I and other leaders, your brothers and sisters ahead of you, as much as we imitate Christ, please imitate us as we teach the gospel to you, as we shepherd you, as we watch out for you, as we trust in God together.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you for PCBC English.

I thank you for PCBC Saturday service and Sunday morning service. I thank you for our family. I want to commend them to you, Lord, and to the word of your grace.

Lord, it is so, so good that you are the good shepherd. And so, may everything we heard today, may the challenges that we have received from your word, impact our hearts deeply, cause us to long for your church to grow, for your kingdom to come.

And ask, we ask all these things in Christ alone. Amen.