

Go Garth Go!

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. (1 Timothy 3:1)

In Acts 20:17-35 we have what could be called Pastoral Theology 101. As he says goodbye to leaders of the church at Ephesus, Paul reminds them of their most basic duties as shepherds (pastors, elders) of God's flock. Nowhere else in Scripture do we have a more succinct statement of what leadership in the church is meant to be. Today, as we ordain Garth Allen to the ministry, this passage can remind us all of what it really means to be a pastor in the church of Jesus Christ.

*¹⁷ Now from Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials (**a pastor's character**) that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house (**a pastor's availability**), ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (**a pastor's message**). ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit (**a pastor's guidance**), not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me (**a pastor's courage**). ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (**a pastor's commitment**). ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you (**a pastor's purity of conscience**), ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God (**a pastor's doctrine**). ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God (**a pastor's mandate**), which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them (**a pastor's warning**). ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears (**a pastor's compassion**). ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified (**a pastor's confidence**). ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (**a pastor's integrity**).*

Pastor Stan

For a classic exposition of this passage and its relevance for pastoral ministry, see *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter (first published in 1656).