

“If we read Acts 20:17–38 with a sterile detachment, we deprive ourselves of the life and resulting benefit of the passage. The image called to mind by Paul’s meeting with the Ephesian elders is that of a group of soldiers still soiled by the dust and blood of war, drawing together with their revered general for some final wisdom.” **R. Kent Hughes**, *Acts: The Church Afire* (p. 276)

**The pastor-elder is a living display of the Christian life (18b: *You yourselves know how I lived among...*).**

- The call of the pastor-elder is the call to serve God (*servicing the Lord*).
- 1. *This means* his life demonstrates dependence upon Jesus (*with all humility*).
- ❖ We have many misconceptions about “humility” and what it looks like.

“Your patient has become humble; have you drawn his attention to this fact? All virtues are less formidable to us once the man is aware that he has them, but this is [e]specially true of humility. Catch him at the moment when he is really poor in spirit and smuggle into his mind the gratifying reflection, ‘By jove! I’m being humble,’ and almost immediately pride – pride at his own humility – will appear.” **C.S. Lewis**, *Screwtape Letters* (70)

Humility is ‘...a willingness to serve, conforming to [Christ’s] example. The meaning of self-humiliation is...defined in Jesus Christ.” **H.H. Esser**

- ❖ A man who feels a burning desire to be a pastor-elder must be a dependent man!

“If Paul mentions his own humility, isn’t that proud? Does the gospel produce self-commendation?”

**Calvin** believes Paul does this so...

- 1) “that his holy exhortation may pierce more deeply, and may stick fast in their minds.”
- 2) “that his integrity and uprightness in dealing might serve afterward to commend his doctrine.”

“By [humility]...our Enemy [=God] wants to turn the man’s attention away from self to Him, and to the man’s neighbors.” **C.S. Lewis**, *Screwtape Letters* (72)

2. *This means* his life demonstrates the raw pain of ministry (*with tears*).

- ❖ The call to be a pastor-elder is the call to tears.

- ❖ One can only persevere in a ministry of tears – as pastor or congregant – if the gospel is our constant grid.

Christ “came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” **John 1.11** ESV

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!  
How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!* **Matthew 23:37** ESV

3. *This means* his life demonstrates the difficulties of ministry (**with trials**).

*Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.* **2 Corinthians 11:24-28** ESV

❖ **Few pastor-elders know how difficult the trials of ministry are before entering the position.**

“The ministry of the gospel, like the book which the Apostle John ate, is a bitter-sweet; but the sweetness is tasted first, the bitterness is usually known afterwards, when we are so far engaged that there is no going back.” **John Newton**, pastor & author of *Amazing Grace* (*On Being a Pastor*, p. 296)

3 kinds of pastoral trials:

- “The **first** are those of a general nature such as the common difficulties of life: suffering, accidents, dangers, and sadnesses from which we are not exempt as God’s servants.”
- “The **second** group are trials inflicted by others through their too high expectations and demands, or misrepresentations or misunderstanding, or simply the unceasing demands of people to be cared for, with the consequence that we never feel our work is done.”
- “The **third** group are self-inflicted for the sake of the work, in our constant availability to people, our refusal to work set hours, the loneliness of avoiding special friendships so as to serve the whole flock, the burden sometimes of leadership and of maintaining confidentiality, and our denying ourselves the luxury of self-pity when the going is tough.” **Alistair Begg** and **Derek Prime** *On Being A Pastor* (p. 296)

“Out of love, true elders suffer and bear the brunt of difficult people so that the lambs are not bruised. They bear the misunderstandings and sins of others so that the assembly may live in peace. They lose sleep so that others may rest.” **Alexander Strauch**, *Biblical Eldership* (98)

*He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.* **John 10:12-15** ESV

❖ **But the call to endure trials – for the sake of the church – is the call to every saint!**

*Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.* **Hebrews 12:3** ESV

“Christ builds his church in the territory where Satan prowls, seeking to destroy every effort. Trials and tribulations are to be expected.” **Derek W.H. Thomas**, *Acts* (580)

**The pastor-elder does what is best for the local church (20a: *how I did not shrink...*).**

1. *This means* his preaching involves doctrinal instruction (**20b: *teaching you...public...house to house***).
2. *This means* he preaches the gospel with gravity and without discrimination (**21**).

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* **Galatians 3:28** ESV

Because of the cross, “old divisions and wrongful attitudes of superiority and inferiority are abolished.” **S.M. Baugh** in *ESV Study Bible: Gal. 3.28*