

September 25, 2022 by Steve Brandon



Counsel for Shepherds (part 1)

Acts 20:13-24

1. Paul's Ministry (verses 18-21)

2. Paul's Destiny (verses 22-24)

Rock Valley Bible Church began as a small group from a church in DeKalb, Illinois (about 40 minutes from here), Kishwaukee Bible Church. We met for the first time on Thursday evening, July 2, 1998. That's 24 years ago. We met in the basement of a home in Rockford. On Sunday mornings, we would attend church in DeKalb. On Thursday evenings, we would meet as a small group, laying the foundation for a future church. Exactly two years later, on Sunday evening, July 2, 2000, we rented out a church building and began meeting publicly. We still met in DeKalb on Sunday mornings with our sending church. But Sunday evenings found us gathering together in Rockford. As we grew in numbers, I quit my job as an I. T. Professional, and moved here to Rockford. we continued to meet on Sunday evenings.

Eventually, we reached an agreement with Rockford Christian High School to rent their building for us to meet on Sunday mornings. And on March 3, 2002, twenty years ago, we met on Sunday morning for the first time as "Rock Valley Bible Church." The occasion was so momentous that I have some pictures from that day! It's nice to look back and see the faithfulness of God.

Well, on that day, I preached from Acts, chapter 20, when Paul was giving his parting advice to the Ephesian elders at Ephesus. It was my opportunity to put forth everything that I wanted to be as a pastor of Rock Valley Bible Church. Again, with the advantages of modern technology, we actually have a recording of the sermon that I preached. On that day, I said the following:

I would have you to open your Bibles to Acts, chapter 20.

A special occasion like this demands a special message. Of any passage in the Scripture, I feel like this is one appropriate for us this morning. It deals with Paul bidding farewell to the elders at the church of Ephesus, bidding them on, never to see them again (as verse 25 says). He gave them the advice that they needed to shepherd the church without him. I think as we (in some sense) depart from Kishwaukee Bible Church today, it's appropriate for us to look at the apostle's admonitions.

If Paul would tell us anything in his visit to Rockford off to China to his death as he expected persecution there, what would he tell us? I think he would tell us what he told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.

Much of this message will be personal and from the heart. It's going to be my heart to your heart. I want to use Paul's words as a springboard to affirm my desires for you at Rock Valley Bible Church, my desire for myself of shepherding the church of God. [\[1\]](#)

And now, 20 years later, and 900+ Sunday morning sermons later, I have an opportunity to come back to that text.

In some ways, it's an opportunity for me to see how well I have lived up to my own hopes and dreams of all that I would be as a pastor of Rock Valley Bible Church. It's a sort-of Mid-term exam for myself. As I look toward the future, on the day that I preach my final sermon at Rock Valley Bible Church, I have little doubt that Acts 20 will be my text, as I pass the reigns onto whatever future elders or pastors we have at that time. That day will be my final exam. But, today, we get the Mid-term.

So, if you haven't done so already, I invite you to open in your Bibles to Acts, chapter 20. The title of my message this morning is this: "Counsel for Shepherds," because this is what the text is. It is Paul, giving his final counsel to the elders of the Ephesian church.

This is a unique passage in all of the Bible. Alexander Strauch says of this text, ...

Paul's message, recorded by Luke two thousand years ago, is as relevant today as when it was first delivered. There is really nothing else in the New Testament comparable to this passage. It is the only place in the New Testament in which Paul directly speaks to the church's elders, giving them their final marching orders. As Paul's parting message, it has special importance and requires our full attention. Any church elder who does not know the content of Paul's message to the Ephesian elders is ill-equipped to lead and protect God's people. [\[2\]](#)

So, Darryn and Ryan and Brian, pay attention. My challenge to you is Alexander Strauch's challenge. He added, ...

I challenge you to make it your goal to master the content of Paul's prophetic, apostolic message—study it, memorize it, think deeply upon it, discuss it, teach it, and live it. If you invest the time to prayerfully study and meditate on this God-given challenge to all Christ's undershepherds, you will find warnings and exhortations essential to the task, as well as fresh motivation and divine comfort. [\[3\]](#)

So this morning, as I preach my message in thinking about my ministry the past 20 years, I'm also preaching to you elders, to think about

your own ministry to this flock. As I preach to the elders, you in the congregation can get a sense of their duties and responsibilities as well.

Now, 20 years ago when I preached this passage, I gave a little bit of context before diving into the passage. However, this time, we come to the passage in context, as we have been working our way through the book of Acts for the past two years.

We know that Paul is on his third missionary journey. In reviewing, we know that Paul was sent out from that great church in Antioch. He headed out north and then west across southern Galatia. He landed in Ephesus, where he spent three years in the church there. During that time he was preaching and teaching and caring for those in the church. From there, he sent out on a fund-raising trip, to collect money from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to give to the suffering Christians in Jerusalem who were living in poverty. He began by going north through Troas. Then he crossed the Aegean Sea. And passed through Macedonia (Acts 20:1-2), visiting churches, encouraging those who were there, and collecting funds for those in Jerusalem. He also passed through Achaia, where he spent some time at the church in Corinth (Acts 20:3), where he wrote the book of Romans. Although he wanted to sail off to Jerusalem, to be there in time for the Passover, he got wind of a plot against him. So, he set out to journey north. He got as far as Philippi, where he celebrated the Passover, referred to as "the days of Unleavened Bread" (Acts 20:5). He then arrived in Troas (Acts 20:6). That's where Eutychus fell out of the window. (We looked at that last week.)

Our text this morning begins in Acts 20, verse 13. In the first four verses, we find Paul traveling down the coast to Miletus. He travels on land through Assos. Then, he hops a ship and travels south down the shore. He ports at Mitylene, which is on the island of Lesbos. He ports opposite Chios on the mainland. and he ports on Samos, which is even further south. Finally, he lands at Miletus. Verses 13-15 tell the story of Paul's travel.

Acts 20:13-15

But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus.

There's really not much remarkable here about Paul's travels. We don't know of anything particular that happened during this travel. Sir William Ramsay in his commentary makes the observations that "The ship evidently stopped every evening" as the wind dies down in the late afternoon in those places.^[4] So, it probably took Paul less than a week to travel down the coast.

Verse 16, however, is helpful to us as it sets the context for our text today. It speaks about why Paul remained for some days in Miletus.

Acts 20:16

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

If you look at the map, you will see that Miletus is very close to Ephesus. Miletus is on the coast. Ephesus is inland. As far as the crow flies, it was only 30 miles between these cities, though the road that takes you there is a bit longer as it winds through the hills.

It would have been easy for Paul to have disembarked the ship, and traveled to Ephesus to see the church he loved. where he spent three years ministering to the people there. He could be in Ephesus in a day or two. But Paul had an agenda. He wanted to get to Jerusalem, "if possible, on the day of Pentecost" (verse 16). Paul knew that if he traveled to Ephesus, he couldn't leave quickly. There were too many people that he would want to see. There were too many people there who would want to see Paul. There was too much to say to the people. He would never get to Jerusalem by Pentecost.

So, he does the next best thing. He sends a messenger from Miletus to Ephesus to call the elders of the church to come to him, that he might see them once again. This is what we read in verse 17.

Acts 20:17

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

In verse 18, we see the elders assembled. We see Paul giving his parting counsel to these shepherds of the church. So, I want for you to picture the scene. The elders of the church in Ephesus had met a messenger that had come from Miletus on the coastline. He said that Paul had arrived in Miletus, and is summoning them to come to him, so that he could see them before his ship left port. And the elders packed quickly and followed the messenger along the windy road to the coast.

Acts 20:18-38

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, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 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. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 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, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 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. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. 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.'

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

What a tender scene it was! Here the elders had their opportunities to say their final goodbyes to the apostle Paul. They felt deeply for this man, who loved the elders in Ephesus. So, this morning, I want to begin working our way through Paul's counsel to the Shepherds of the church in Ephesus. This morning, we will get through only half of the passage. We will pick up the other half next week. So, the title of my message is: "Counsel for Shepherds (part 1). Here's my first point:

1. Paul's Ministry (verses 18-21)

(This is the same point that I used in my message 20 years ago).

Before he would go on to exhort the elders in what they are called to do, Paul first tells the Ephesian elders what he did in his own ministry. There is a little message here for parents. Don't tell your children to do what you are not doing yourselves. You do first. You show and model. Then you encourage your children to follow after your example.

We see Paul's heart of service.

Acts 20:18

You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia,

In verse 18, Paul speaks about his pastoral ministry. He wasn't distant. He was right there with the people of Ephesus. As I said 20 years ago, ...

The pastors of a church shouldn't be untouchable and unreachable and distant. Pastors should be with the people of the church. That's what Paul said. "I was with you." We know from verse 31 that Paul was with the Ephesians for three years, night and day with them. The sense here (in verse 18) is that he was with them, serving them, helping them, and teaching them. He wasn't simply in his ivory tower enjoying his Puritans. He wasn't a fly-by-night evangelist, who held a few meetings and then left town. He wasn't a seminar speaker, who came into town and spoke about his particular area of expertise at a Bible Conference. Rather, he was with them and among them, as any pastor should be.

This is my desire—to be with the people of Rock Valley Bible Church. I want to serve you and help you and teach you and guide you in whatever way that I can.^[5]

After 20 years, I guess that you can be my judge. Have I been with you? Have I been in your home? Have you been in my home? Have we socialized together? Have I gone to your children's games? Have I been with you when a loved one has died? Have I called when you lost your job or had a health scare or had a need? Have I been accessible? Have I returned your phone calls? Have I loved you?

I'm sure that there are some of you with whom I have done this very well. I'm sure that there are others of you with whom I have failed. I'm sorry if I have failed you. This continues to be my heart for all of you at Rock Valley Bible Church.

Just this past week, I traveled with a few pastors in the area to Madison to attend an event with other pastors. As we shared lunch together, we shared our places of ministry. I mentioned how I have been pastoring Rock Valley Bible Church for more than 20 years. Some of the guys were asking me what it's like to be at the same church for so long (which is rare). My response was this, "I have never considered Rock Valley Bible Church to be my job or place of employment." We started the church more than 20 years ago, and I have considered the church my extended family.

My phone calls and my visits and my emails and texts and written notes to you all have been like a father to his children. You call and visit and communicate to your children, not of any obligation. but of love. That's the advantage that I have of planting this church.

At that same meeting of pastor's this week, one of the men shared of his time ministering in Kosovo. A pastor in Kosovo said to him, "I don't understand the American pastors. They go from job to job, church to church, ministering to people who will pay them for their services. American pastors are mercenaries." In other words, pastors in America often service as pastors there because they can make a living there. I sense that Paul's ministry to those in Ephesus was more like a family than a job.

Well, in verse 19, Paul continues to describe his ministry. He was ...

Acts 20:19

serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;

Paul brings out three characteristics of his ministry: humility, tears, and trials. He served in humility, sacrificially giving of himself. We see his tears in verse 37. We read about his trials in the plots of the Jews in Acts 20:3. Now, I spoke very little about these three things in message 20 years ago. I think that it was because I knew little of humility and tears and trials.

In these past 20 years, I have been humbled. I used to think that we were going to do a great thing in Rockford. I used to think that I was a

great leader! I used to think that I was a great preacher! I used to think that we were going to do what no other church had been able to do. I don't think those things any more. God has been gracious to humble me.

In fact, today, I believe that if you want to be humbled, try being a pastor. and you will see just how non-important you are in the eyes of many people. especially when people leave the church. In some regards, it is usually a declaration of your failings to pastor them well.

Before pastoring Rock Valley Bible Church, I had shed few tears in my life. But ministry, and the difficulty of ministry, and the trials that have come through ministry, has driven me to tears on a number of occasions. There have been occasions when I have sobbed from this pulpit because of the trials of ministry that I have faced.

People have plotted against me. People have written letters against me. People have sent out emails to the entire church against me. People have told me that I'm not qualified to be a pastor. People have sought my resignation. I have found pastoring very hard. It is only by the grace of God that I'm still standing after 20 years of ministry.

Well, Paul's ministry was not merely one of "service." It was also one of "speaking." He says in verse 20, ...

Acts 20:20

how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house,

This describes Paul's teaching ministry. It was public, in the synagogue (Acts 19:8) and in the Hall of Tyrannus. It was private in the homes of those in Ephesus.

Regarding his teaching, he said, ...

Acts 20:20

I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable

After 20 years of public and private ministry, I know what it is "shrink back." It means not saying what needs to be said. It means skirting the issue. It means not confronting people in their sin. It means taking the easy path. There have been times that I have done that. I have not said the hard things. I have not confronted the sin. But there have been many times that I have done the hard thing. I have said the difficult things. I have not shrunk back.

Many times in doing so, it has meant that people have simply left the church. It's the culture in which we live. If people don't like what you are saying to them, they can leave and find a church down the street. It's one thing to say the difficult things in public. It's another thing to do it in private. It's hard. Only you can judge if I have told you the difficult things.

In verse 21, Paul give a summary of his message.

Acts 20:21

testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the message of the Bible. This is the message that I have sought to proclaim. Repentance and faith.

Repentance is turning from your sin and turning to God. It requires hatred of your sin. It requires a desire to turn from your sin. It requires confession of your sin. Your repentance will be demonstrated in your life. turning from the things that the Lord hates. turning to the Lord for mercy and strength.

Faith is simply belief. But in our culture, "belief" is often too soft a word. It conveys an intellectual understanding. But the word "faith," is best understood as "trust." "Trust in our Lord Jesus Christ." This means that you aren't trusting in your own righteousness, or your own works, or your display of repentance. No, it means trusting in the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross for your sins.

Have you repented of your sin? Are you trusting in Jesus?

This is the gospel. This is our message. This is what I have sought to proclaim these past 20 years at Rock Valley Bible Church. This has been proclaimed because, this is the message of the Bible. From the prophets to John the Baptist to Jesus and the apostles, this is what they preached.

Now, before we move on to my next point, one thing that I also want to point out here in verse 20 is how Paul went "house to house." He said he was "... teaching you in public and from house to house." It seems as if Paul's teaching in the homes of those in Ephesus was systematic. He went from house to house to house.

In my message from 20 years ago, I didn't mention anything about this. But we, as elders, have been thinking much about this in recent days. Particularly, we have been thinking about it in terms of church membership. As most of you are aware, as a church, last year, we transitioned from a church that practices an informal membership to a formal membership model.

This process was really an opportunity for us to define our relationships at Rock Valley Bible Church. That is, you would have an opportunity to formally state that you are committed to devote yourself to this church, to the teaching, to fellowship, to breaking of bread, and to prayer. These four things are in accordance with Acts 2:42, what the early church committed themselves to, "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

In bringing in formal membership at Rock Valley Bible Church, it was an opportunity for us, as elders, to commit to shepherding you as well.

Our commitments read as follows:

We, the undersigned elders of Rock Valley Bible Church, make the following commitments:

- We will care for you, as one purchased by the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28).
- We will shepherd you willingly, sacrificially, lovingly and with humility (1 Peter 5:1-4).
- We will remember that we will give account to the Lord for how we have shepherded you (Heb. 13:17).

Certainly, much of this happens on Sunday mornings, in our small groups, and in our daily interactions. But we, as elders, have thought about being more intentional in going "house to house." We want to visit every formal member in their home. We simply want to provide a forum where we can see how things are going for you.

1. We want to ask you about your life, and what's going on.
2. We want to ask you about your spiritual life, and what we might do to help you in your walk with God.
3. We want to ask you about your involvement in the church.
4. We want to pray with you in your home.

So, if you have become a "formal member" of the church. Please expect a call sometime this fall from one of the elders. We want to do what we can do to shepherd your all "from house to house." Please know that this isn't a time of brow beating you to confront you in your sin or to demand that you work harder for the church. That's not it at all.

Rather, these visits are intended to help us to fulfill our commitment to shepherd each formal member of Rock Valley Bible Church, by caring for your soul. and doing whatever is in our power to help you. We hope to be done by the fall. We are planning for another "Membership Celebration" near the beginning of 2023.

If you aren't a formal member of the church, but want to be, I encourage you to pick up a form from the back table. Fill it out. And talk with one of the elders. This is coming from Paul's words about shepherding people "house to house."

Well, let's continue on. We have seen "Paul's Ministry" in verses 18-21. Let's now look at ...

2. Paul's Destiny (verses 22-24)

Acts 20:22-24

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 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.

In working our way through Paul's missionary journey, we know that his plan is to get to Jerusalem. In Acts 19:21, we read, "Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'" We have seen him visit Macedonia and Achaia. He wants to continue on to Jerusalem then on to Rome. He will arrive in Jerusalem in Acts 21. He will arrive in Rome in Acts 28.

Though Paul knew some things, he didn't know everything about what would take place in Jerusalem. But Paul knew that it would be hard. Going to Jerusalem, he said, "not knowing what will happen to me there." But he did know that "imprisonment and afflictions await me." Indeed, this came to pass. Paul was imprisoned. He was greatly afflicted.

Yet, he was still willing to go. In fact, he felt compelled to go, even against great warnings. Acts 21 records a warning he received from Agabus.

Acts 21:10-14

While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

We will look at this deeper in weeks to come.

But Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders expressed the same sentiment: "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" (Acts 20:24). This is the call of every elder: not to value your own life, but to desire with your whole heart to serve the Lord, wherever he calls and whatever he does. Here is one last quote from my sermon from 20 years ago.

If my life is to be governed by self-comfort, self-promotion, and self-preservation, I would not be living here in Rockford today [pastoring Rock Valley Bible Church]. At Kishwaukee Community Hospital, where I left to come up here, things were comfortable.

I was earning far more than I needed. I was working a job I thoroughly enjoyed. We were one of the most stable companies in town. A hospital doesn't go out of business, especially if it is the only hospital in town. With my seniority, my job was

secure. My boss liked me. The people liked me and the work I did. I lived in my home-town, with lots of friends and family. ... It was a comfortable life.

But my life isn't about comfort. My life isn't about endearing myself. If I wanted to do that, I would still be in DeKalb. But God has placed such a burden on my heart to know Him and to make Him known. And as Paul said, to accomplish "the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:24). That is my heart to you. Today, God's plan for my life is about pastoring Rock Valley Bible Church. I am thrilled to be here. I believe that God has exciting things in store for us, as we see Him build His church. It has been thrill of my life to see Kishwaukee Bible Church [our sending church] to go from 14 people one Saturday night to what it is today. And I long to see Rock Valley Bible Church do the same things.

Easy things? No. Thrilling things? Yes. There is nothing that I would rather do, than to be here with you all.^[6]

You can be the judge of how well I have continued on with this the past 20 years. You can judge how well I have given myself to the ministry that God has given me to accomplish. With Paul, I really feel that this is the ministry that the Lord has given to me. Apart from planting a church, I don't think that I would ever be a pastor. I don't think that I would ever have gone to a church and candidate for a church, to see if they wanted to call me as a pastor. But through many sovereign circumstances, things falls into place for me to come to Rockford and to be a pastor here.

When we planted the church, I was fully aware that most church plants don't work. In the early years, I was more than willing to drop back into the computer world. I was ready and willing to do that. But I knew that I would forever regret not trying. If I hadn't left my job to come to Rockford to plant a church, I would forever wonder what could have been my life if I had taken the risk to plant the church. What if I had tried to plant a church? What if I would have tried? By faith, I left the comfortable life and took the risk 20 years ago. I'm still going! It has been the thrill of my life to see the small Bible study that we had 24 years ago on Thursday nights in a basement become the thriving and healthy church that we have become.

For 20 years, I do believe that I have testified to the gospel of the grace of God. It is interesting to see how Paul described the gospel. In verse 21, he described it as repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is exactly correct. But the emphasis is upon our human response to the good news. Here in verse 24, Paul describes it simply as "the gospel of the grace of God." This is the gospel from God's perspective. It is God's grace that comes to us.

I believe that I have spent the last 20 years testifying to the gospel of the grace of God. This is the reason why we, as a church, exist. We exist to enjoy his grace and to extend his glory. His grace is the gospel.

In God's grace, he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. We all were going our own way. We were all blind and dead in our sin. But God's grace grabbed us and rescued us from that life. God's grace changed us and transformed us and regenerated us. God's grace made us alive together with Christ. In God's grace, he has granted us faith and repentance. In God's grace, we will be with him forever. God receives us, not because we are worthy, but because of his grace.

God saves us to show off his grace for eternity. God saves us "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). My message has not been one of high-pressure legalism and works. It has been grace. It is, "Come and be happy and be helped here." God is a gracious God. We turn to him and trust him. He doesn't receive us because we are worthy. He receives us because he is gracious. In that, we all have reason to rejoice.

It is God's grace that has kept me these past 20 years at Rock Valley Bible Church. It is only the Lord who knows how long I will be here in the future. Twenty years ago, when I preached that sermon, I did not expect to be here 20 years later. It may be 20 years later that I'm here preaching a similar message to the elders who will come after me.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 25, 2022 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] You can listen/read my message here: <https://sermons.rvbc.cc/sermons/2002-009>. This quote begins at the 4:33 mark.

[2] Alexander Strauch, *Acts 20: Fierce Wolves are Coming; Guard the Flock* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 2021), 9-11.

[3] *Ibid.*, 12.

[4] W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), 294. You can read this great book online here: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.261358/page/n3/mode/2up>.

[5] You can listen/read my message here: <https://sermons.rvbc.cc/sermons/2002-009>. This quote begins at the 17:43 mark.

[6] You can listen/read my message here: <https://sermons.rvbc.cc/sermons/2002-009>. This quote begins at the 28:58 mark.