

## Acts 20:25-38

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 18 June 2017

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] A copy of God's Word, which I hope is with you and well read and meditated on day and night and treasured in your heart.

! And turn with me to the book of Acts chapter 20. This morning's text for our consideration is Acts chapter 20 verses 25 through 38.

That's to the end of the chapter. This is the second half of Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders. Last week we looked at the measure of successful ministry as Paul holds up his ministry as an example in the beginning of this address.

He shows us ways in which we can see that a ministry is successful, which so often does not look the way the world measures success. This week we'll look at specific exhortations that Paul gives to the Ephesian elders.

That's the turn he takes as we begin in verse 25 this morning. Paul in effect says to them, to these Ephesian elders, shepherd the church well in the following ways.

[1:18] So today there's very clear instruction to the leaders of a church. Explicit instruction to the leaders of a church.

But I also want us to consider the implications of this text for all of us. As we're all given some measure of charge over someone, somebody that we're responsible to, to shepherd.

And particularly this morning, I want fathers and future fathers to consider some of these implications. As that's the case, I'm going to structure our study of Acts 20, 25 through 38 in six points.

They do not alliterate this morning. And they are as follows, and of course I'll go back through them. But I want to give you the structure in your mind before we read the text and launch into our study. Faithful shepherds, number one, look after themselves.

Number two, lead their people. Number three, protect their people. Number four, pray and study.

[2:30] Number five, serve the weak. And number six, love and are loved. So let's read together our text for today.

But I think to be fair to Paul's address, we ought to back up and start in 17. So we looked at verses 17 through 24 last week. But I want to start reading in 17, and then we'll pick up at verse 25 and read to the end of the chapter.

Before we read, beloved, let me remind you that this is God's word to us. It was written for His glory and for our good. And as such, we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

So I'll begin in verse 17 of chapter 20. Now from Miletus, He sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to Him. 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.

[3:58] 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 count my life of any value nor as precious to myself. If only I may finish my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

And our text for this morning begins here. 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'm 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 everyone with tears.

[ 5 : 17 ] 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.

They would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship. Now in verse 25, Paul states that he will never see these men again.

He's confident of this fact. He'll never see them again. So these are his parting words, right? In his thinking, these are his parting words.

[ 6 : 27 ] Later, he writes a letter to them. So there's more instruction given to the church of Ephesus. But in his mind, these are parting words. It's the last time he'll speak to them.

And I think that that fact really punctuates this address, right? The closing address for the church at Ephesus in Paul's thinking.

What does Paul deem of greatest importance to remind these men of before his departure? Verse 25 is clear about that, right?

You'll never see my face again. And the first point that Paul makes about the faithful shepherd is that faithful shepherds look after themselves.

They look to themselves. The beginning of verse 28. Pay careful attention to yourselves. In order for the man of God to lead others to God, he must be pursuing and growing in holiness.

[ 7 : 32 ] That is to say, you cannot lead others faithfully if you yourself are not walking uprightly. If you yourself are not excelling in things of holiness.

If you're not ahead of the people that you're leading. Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2, verses 20 and 21.

And do you recall where Timothy's at when Paul writes 1 and 2 Timothy? He's in Ephesus. Now in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay.

Some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use.

Set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So as faithful shepherds, we must be putting off those things that are dishonorable.

[ 8 : 36 ] Putting off sin. And putting on rather than righteousness. Right? Excelling in holiness. And as such, the faithful shepherd is set apart as holy.

Sanctified as holy. I think one of the most wonderful examples I've ever heard, household simple example of what it means to be set apart in this way, and something we do in our families, the idea of a special birthday plate.

If any of you do that. But we have a plate at our house that's bigger than you should ever eat off of, and very colorful, and it says on it, I am very special around the edge. And it only gets used on someone's birthday.

So I get to eat off of the I am very special plate on my birthday. So the plate is set apart for the purpose of celebrating a birthday.

And that's what Paul's communicating here to Timothy. Right? And what Paul's communicating to the Ephesian elders, and what he's communicating to us. If we want to be useful to the master of the house, we must be pursuing holiness.

[ 9 : 46 ] We must be becoming a vessel for honorable use. Faithful shepherds are out ahead of others in their pursuit of holiness.

In their pursuit of the God who is holy. Faithful shepherds ought not be like the Pharisees of whom Jesus said the following in Matthew chapter 23 verse 27.

He said to them, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead peoples, bones, and all uncleanness.

And this is not to say that the faithful shepherd is perfect. This just means that the faithful shepherd is pressing on, by the grace of God, in perfection.

A Puritan pastor by the name of Richard Baxter wrote a book called The Reformed Pastor. If you have any inkling of becoming a pastor, you need to read his work.

[ 10 : 53 ] In it he said this, Take heed to yourselves, lest you live in those sins which you preach against in others, and lest you be guilty of that which daily you condemn.

Will you make it your work to magnify God, and when you have done, dishonor Him as much as others? Will you proclaim Christ's governing power, and yet contemn it and rebel yourselves? Will you preach His laws and willfully break them? If sin be evil, why do you live in it? If it be not, why do you dissuade men from it?

If it be dangerous, how dare you venture on it? If it be not, why do you tell men so? If God's threatenings be true, why do you not fear them?

If they be false, why do you needlessly trouble men with them, and put them into such frights without a cause? Take heed to yourselves, lest you cry down sin, and yet do not overcome it.

[ 12 : 01 ] Lest while you seek to bring it down in others, you bow to it and become its slaves yourselves. Oh, brethren, it is easier to chide at sin than to overcome it.

And so faithful shepherds look after themselves, examine themselves, press on by God's grace in holiness themselves.

Secondly, faithful shepherds lead their people. You see this in the last part of verse 28. Take careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock.

And Paul here is referring specifically to the Ephesian church. And I would suggest those who would be added to that number. Right? 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. Whether you have been charged by God with the care of a church or with the care of a family, in some cases both, you are to give those people leadership.

[ 13 : 17 ] If you are a man, then you most likely have been given the responsibility to lead someone. Do not shrink from that responsibility. Do not think that your job ends with the chauffeuring of your wife and children to school or to practice or to church.

Do not think that your responsibility to your family and friends and neighbors and co-workers ends with an invitation to a church event.

We are meant to lead the people that God has given us charge over in our lives. Sometimes that's more clear than in other cases.

Certainly, fathers, we know who we've been given charge over. What is the tool of the faithful shepherd in leading His people?

The Word of God. It's the Word of God. Paul states in verse 26 and 27 as an example himself. He says, Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all.

[ 14 : 27 ] The saying is, I have done everything I could possibly do for. Verse 27, I did not shrink from to glaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Paul says that he has done everything that he could do to lead the Ephesians because he had boldly declared to him the whole counsel of God.

Now, I do not believe that this means that Paul preached an expositional sermon on every text of the 39 books of the Old Testament. What they had in that day as their Bible. I don't think that it means that.

I do believe it means that Paul was very clear to them how a man is to be saved, God's purpose in his salvation, and the way of obedience to God, which meant he preached a lot of that text, but probably not every bit of it.

They understood all things necessary to be in relationship with the Lord and to please Him. The whole counsel, the whole purpose of God.

[ 15 : 31 ] He gave to them a biblical theology. There is great need in our day for faithful shepherds to lead their people by the Word of God.

In Amos 8, verses 11 and 12, God issues a frightful prophecy which I believe that our nation and our community is now participating in.

Listen to these words. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east. They shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.

Is Christ's family church and our influence in our community a place where people can find the Word of the Lord? Let's be bastions of light so that our people know God's Word and can share it with those who so desperately need it, those who run to and fro.

[ 16 : 45 ] God's Word is good for His people and we should be concerned about the good of God's people because God's people were obtained with Jesus' own blood.

Jesus died for the church. It is true, if you have placed believing faith in Jesus Christ, that Jesus died for you. But I think it's wrong for us to constantly have this personal relationship with Jesus Christ mentality because Jesus died for the church.

He saved a people for His own possession. And beloved, if you love Jesus, you will love the church. And therefore, you'll be concerned for the way that it goes.

So faithful shepherds lead their people. Thirdly, faithful shepherds protect their people. Faithful shepherds protect their people.

Verses 29-31, and we'll pick up a little bit from verse 26-27. Paul says that people will come from outside and inside the church to deceive the disciples.

[ 18 : 01 ] So both from without and within. How is it that our people are deceived? How is it that people are led astray? through the transmission of ideas.

This is how they're led astray, which means that in our day, we will have to be all the more vigilant as media brings ideas of all varieties to the minds of our people.

The teeth of the ravenous wolves, the fierce wolves, are ideas. we affect people at the level of their thinking.

Men, you must protect your homes from ideas that are not consistent with the teaching of God. And this is a work. We have to be paying attention to what's coming into the minds of our wives, to our children, our extended family, our friends, our co-workers.

We must pay attention to all of the winds of philosophy and their contradiction. to the word of God. We find ourselves every day in a war of ideas and the faithful shepherd protects his people.

[ 19 : 18 ] We must be so careful in the matter. Listen to the warning of Jesus from Matthew chapter 7 verse 15. He said, Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

So we see someone who appears to be a follower of Jesus, and therefore we listen to whatever it is they may have to say. Some will be part, seem to be part, of God's people.

Will not be at all, but they will work to devour sheep. What do fierce, ravenous wolves do amongst sheep? They don't sit quietly. They devour sheep.

sheep. The faithful shepherd is like the Berean believer who searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so. And beloved, we live in a day that we need a new reformation.

In Luther and Calvin and Zwingli's day, people didn't know the Bible because the Bible was printed in Latin. It's difficult for them to know the Bible.

[ 20 : 27 ] We have no excuse. We have the Word of God in our language with lots of helps. We have no excuse not to be like those Bereans, to search the Scriptures, to be sure that the things that are being told to us are in fact true.

And we have a standard of that truth. We ought to say less and less, I believe, and more and more, the Bible says. Paul issues similar warning in Romans 16, verse 17 and 18, where he says, I appeal to you brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles, contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught.

Avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. And by smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the hearts of the naive.

Beloved, the church is meant to be set apart from the world so that it can serve the world. We're meant to be distinct from the world.

We're meant to contend for the faith. Turn with me, please, to the book of Jude. You can mark Acts 20. We will come back to it.

[ 21 : 50 ] Turn to the book of Jude. It's just before the book of Revelation. Jude was one of the brothers of Jesus.

We are not sure who this letter is addressed to specifically, but we know that it was addressed to either a church or to a region of churches. It could have been an open letter, quite possibly. Anything we might think is really conjecture. We're not exactly sure. However, it is addressed to Christians, and it contains the theme that the church must contend for the one true faith once for all delivered to the saints.

That's in verse 3. And people of faith must preserve to the end by resisting the false teachers and following the truth.

So I want to read to you just a few verses from Jude, beginning in verse 3. This is verse 3 and 4. Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

[ 23 : 12 ] Seems that Jude really just wanted to write and rejoice in this common salvation. Just speak of these beautiful doctrines that they believed together, but instead he's compelled instead to say hold fast to those things that we've said we believe to be true.

Verse 4, 4, certain people have crept in unnoticed. Wolves and sheep clothing who long ago were designated for this condemnation.

ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. And then skip down to verse 10.

But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand and they are destroyed by all that they like unreasoning animals understand instinctively.

Woe to them for they walk in the way of Cain and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's heir and perished in Korah's rebellion.

[ 24 : 23 ] We won't get into all of that. These are hidden reefs at your love feast. Hidden reefs cause ships to shipwreck. As they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds swept along by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted.

Wild waves of the sea casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

So Jude gets rather poetic to say these are serious infractions to the church of God. Serious matters that must be dealt with.

These people are damaging to the church of Christ. I'm in no way suggesting that we're unloving toward these people, but we must contend for the truth, for the sake of God's people.

We must stand for the truth. So the faithful shepherd must protect their people. But the aim is not just that our people would know some things about God, that someone could recite to us orthodox doctrine, just knowing it, but that they would know God.

[ 25 : 47 ] Not too many decades after Paul says his final goodbye to the Ephesian elders, the apostle Paul receives a vision. So this is 20 to 45 years later.

I'm on the longer side of that. About four decades later, the apostle John receives a vision which is recorded in the book of Revelation. So turn with me to Revelation chapter 2.

By the time of the apostle John's vision, what had happened to the Ephesian church? Beginning in verse 2, Revelation 2.

Jesus says, I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

So they're commended, in verse 2, right off the bat, good for you guys, right? You have been holding orthodox belief. Good. In verse 3, I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary, but I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

[ 27 : 13 ] Remember therefore, from where you have fallen, repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Yet this you have, verse 6, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Boy, I would have hated to be a Nicolaitan, wouldn't you?

They had defended the church against false teachers. They hated the Nicolaitans, and we don't know exactly what the heresy was.

However, contextually, it would seem that Jesus is calling them to repent and return to works of love, things that are driven and fueled by love, things that are consistent with God's moral law. And so there's some conjecture at this point, but many believe that the Nicolaitans believed the heresy of antinomianism, which means without the law, that they had disregarded that there was any necessary to keep any of the commands of God any longer, which is just not true.

[ 28 : 21 ] It has been renounced as a heresy again and again and again, this morning as well. We're still meant to keep the moral law of God, not to be accepted by God, but out of loving obedience to Him.

So probably that's what they had hated, was that kind of teaching. But, they were failing to love one another.

They were failing at this, the love that they had at first, which means that they were not rightly believing the truth of God's love for them.

They knew about it. They knew about it, but they were failing to believe it the way they should. So as we lead our people and as we protect our people, we want to do so in a way that doesn't just stack up information in their heads.

That they would be able to refute false doctrine and know right doctrine, which is good. We want to lead people and protect people so that they will know God himself.

[ 29 : 27 ] So faithful shepherds protect their people. Let me at this point give you an unplanned aside. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ and you are not committed to a local fellowship of believers, you have not been given the tools that God intends for your protection.

You have not joined yourself to a group of people who are meant to work with you, to keep you accountable, not to be your assurance, but being a member of a biblical church is an element of assurance.

That a group of Christ followers have said to you, we have a confidence that you are in the faith. The biblical doctrine, the not often practiced, but altogether biblical practice of church discipline is about taking sin seriously and steering people as they should away from error and to the truth. Loving restoration, walk in the ways of God, it's the best thing for you. We want you to know Him and be obedient to Him, to serve Him as you should.

The final step of church discipline is that a person is removed from the fellowship of a church. Because the church no longer can be confident that they are in fact in the faith.

[ 30 : 55 ] Their works are evidencing otherwise. Their unrepentant sin says no. So for their sake, we say we just can't say this anymore. We love you and we want you to come back and be in fellowship with God and in fellowship with the church, but we just can't.

Yesterday I heard a quote by Jay Adams, a pastor and a newtetic biblical counselor. And he said this, if you are not a member of a local church, you have excommunicated yourself.

So be part of a biblical church with faithful shepherds, a group of people who want to love you with the truth of the gospel. I would suggest to you that you are sinning not to, so do so.

Okay, back to the script. Number four, faithful shepherds pray and study. Pray and study.

Verse 32, we're back in Acts 20 now. Paul says, and now I commend you to God. And I recognize that this text is not specifically calling the shepherds, these elders in Ephesus, to pray.

[ 32 : 10 ] But it is another example of Paul and his commitment to prayer. prayer. And if we rightly understand the gravity of the task of faithfully shepherding God's people, we will pray.

I find my prayerlessness is most often because I don't get the gravity of it. It is a serious, serious matter, which I am not capable of accomplishing on my own.

I must cry out to God to help me in giving leadership in our church and to my family. Prayer expresses a dependence on God and biblical prayer lines up our wills with His.

A shepherd who does not pray shepherds in vain. I love the Latin phrase sine qua non.

Knowing Latin helps me remember things. Maybe it doesn't for you. Sine qua non, which the reformers applied to prayer, which means without which nothing. Sine qua non.

[ 33 : 22 ] At least remember the English. Prayer without which nothing. God moves in the hearts of His people to pray and He empowers our lives in our praying.

And we can pray in confidence that our people would know God and walk in His ways. Jesus states in John 14 verse 13, whatever you ask in my name, and He's not instructing us just to tack His

name to the end of any prayer that we would pray.

What He's saying is whatever you ask that is consistent with my person, in my name, with my person, consistent with my character, and consistent with my commands, which we have here, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

So we can pray with confidence that God would help us in giving faithful leadership to our people.

We can pray that with confidence and know that He'll supply what we need.

So my encouragement to you would be to pray and then act. Pray that it'll work, pray that it'll give you what you need, and do so confidently, and then go lead by the Scripture's standards.

[ 34 : 35 ] So Paul commends them to God. That's an example in prayer. And he also commends them to the Word of His grace. The Word of His grace, the Bible.

If we are to look to ourselves to lead and protect our people, then we must be students of the Word. We must be. We must know it and be increasing in our knowledge of it and our understanding of its application.

This means we must read. I find a Christian who says they don't like to read to be inconsistent. We have to. We have to.

God's very Word is conveyed to us in words recorded on pages. You have to read.

It's been a great work of missionaries throughout history to educate people, to teach them to read so that they could read the Word of God. What a privilege that we're readers.

[ 35 : 42 ] The people who can't read in our congregation are few and were probably sitting on the floor earlier this morning. We have the opportunity to take up and read.

And beyond the Scripture as the most important book we could ever read, we have such a wealth of other things to read. That's why I'm promoting reading in our church. Books that systematically take themes of the Bible and lay them out for us, help us to understand and to comprehend.

We have access to the church across history which is such a blessing, beloved. I get to sit down on any given afternoon of the week and have a conversation with Jonathan Edwards.

It's a wonderful thing that I get to sit with him and hear all that he has to say about the Scripture. It's a great thing that we get to do to pick up and to read.

If you don't fancy yourself a reader, you need to start working at it. You need to become a reader primarily of the Word of God. Read more, read more broadly, read books that speak of God's Word if you're reading books that aren't God's Word.

[ 36 : 57 ] Paul says to Timothy 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17. All Scripture is breathed out by God. He's the very source of it. And it's profitable.

It's profitable. It's good for us. For teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. These are all just different words that give this idea of guiding in the ways of God. Guiding people to God himself. 17, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So if we're to be faithful shepherds, we must pray. We're dependent on God to move into work in our activity. And we must study. We must know this precious book that is so useful in giving leadership and protection to our people.

So faithful shepherds pray and study. Number five. Faithful shepherds serve the weak.

[ 38 : 03 ] Faithful shepherds serve the weak. Verse 33-35 of Acts 20. For the sake of time, I won't belabor this point. The faithful shepherd does not look to his own self-interest but rather serves others.

Humbles himself, becomes the least of all. Someday he'll be the greatest of all, but here the least of all, a servant to all. Not lording this over people like the Gentiles do, but becoming a servant of all. Paul said to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 12-15, I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.

The faithful shepherd puts aside his self-interest and pours out his life for the sake of his people. Dads, this needs to be true of us.

We are not meant to have family so that they can serve us. We have family so that we can serve them to the glory of God. Empty yourself. Lay your life down on the altar of Christ and then get up and love your family with the gospel of Jesus.

[ 39 : 23 ] And this is not burdensome. This is not burdensome. Paul said, I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.

So faithful shepherds serve the weak. Just in case any of the ladies think I'm calling them weak, I'm not. Sixth, faithful shepherds love and are loved.

Love and are loved. Verse 36, 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. Most of all, he said some things to them, some charges, right? There's going to be error in the church, protect the flock.

Most of all, the reason that they're so sad is because he had said that he would not see his face again and they accompanied him to the ship. So I take the all to mean that Paul also wept.

[ 40 : 30 ] There was much weeping on the part of all. If you do not love your people, sacrificially love your people, most most gladly willing to lay your life down for your people, pray with desperation that God would work in you a love for them.

You will not effectively serve them until you're ready to sacrifice for them. If you love people well, they will love you.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 13, which I'd like for you to turn with me to we will conclude with this. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 13 concerning love, the famous love chapter which is so often read at weddings and certainly applies in that setting but it's written to the church.

It has a much broader meaning, a much more layered and textured meaning for our everyday lives. And Paul elevates, he gives us a high view of what love looks like.

Unconditioned, right? In the way that God has loved us, we then turn around and we love others.

Paul wrote this, if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol, worthless, no good.

[ 42 : 08 ] And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have and if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind.

Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

[ 43 : 20 ] When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now, faith, hope, and love abide. These three, but the greatest of these is love.

So faithful shepherds look after themselves, lead their people, protect their people, pray and study, serve the weak, and they love and are loved.

Let's pray together.