

The Challenge of Leadership in Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17–35)

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Abstract

This article seeks to interpret Paul's Miletus speech in Acts 20:17–35 against the backdrop of the notions and practices of leadership prevalent in the Greco-Roman world. It becomes clear that with his references to his own ministry and his charges, Paul challenges these notions and practices significantly. The elders are to pay heed to personal integrity and avoid favouritism and factionalism. They must remember that their office came not by status but by appointment by the Spirit and also consider the status of those entrusted to them. Office is not an opportunity for material gain. The elders are to resist the lure of status and draw on divine resources for fulfilling their task. A final section applies Paul's counter-cultural charges to present day leadership challenges in Christian and secular contexts.