

Acts Chapter 20 Continued

Acts 20:17 "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church."

These "church" leaders from "Ephesus" are called "elders" (Greek presbuteros), and overseers or bishops (Greek episkopos; in verse 28). Two names are given for one office, the former designating their character, the latter their responsibility to superintend.

It seems that Paul's stopping at Miletus was to avoid the opposing Jews in Ephesus. These elders of the church needed last minute instructions from Paul, and that is why he sent for them. This would be Paul's last time to see them.

Acts 20:18 "And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,"

Paul tells them here, that he had not elevated himself above them, but had actually lived with them and been one with them while he was here in Ephesus.

Acts 20:19 "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:"

"With many tears": Paul wept because of:

- (1) Those who did not know Christ (Rom. 9:2-3);
- (2) Struggling, immature believers (2 Cor. 2:4); and
- (3) The threat of false teachers (verses 29-30).

"Lying in wait of the Jews" (see 2 Cor. 11:24, 26). Ironically it was the plot of the Jews at Corinth that allowed the Ephesian elders this opportunity to spend time with Paul (see note on verse 3).

Paul tells them that he shed many tears over them and suffered all sorts of hardships that the Jews brought just to bring them the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:20 "[And] how I kept back nothing that was profitable [unto you], but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,"

"Publicly, and from house to house": Paul taught in the synagogue (19:8; see note on 6:9), and the school of Tyrannus (19:10). He reinforced that public teaching with practical instruction of individuals and households.

Paul tells them here, that he has revealed to them all that God had revealed to him. He had held back nothing. He says, I didn't hide to preach this gospel, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He also, reminds them that before there was a church, he went from house to house preaching. When they started the church, he spoke boldly in the church, never fearing for his own life.

Acts 20:21 "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

“Repentance”: An essential element of the gospel (see notes on 2:38; 26:20; Matt. 4:17; Luke 3:8; 5:32; 24:47).

Paul says; I have not adjusted the message of Jesus. It is the same message to the Jew and to the Greek. The message is the same (repent and be baptized), for all have sinned and need to repent. The repentance toward God, because they have broken His law, and faith in Jesus being their Savior.

Acts 20:22 "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:"

“Bound in the spirit”: Paul’s deep sense of duty toward the Master who had redeemed him and called him to service drove him onward despite the threat of danger and hardship (verse 23).

We see here, that the Holy Spirit has revealed to Paul that he will have troubles when he returns to Jerusalem, but he is compelled to go there anyway. He has no idea what the problems will be, just that there will be problems.

Acts 20:23 "Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."

“Holy Ghost ... witnesseth”: Paul knew he faced persecution in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:31), though he would not know the details until he heard Agabus’ prophecy (21:10-11).

It seems that Paul had been told by the Holy Spirit in each city that he went to, that when he got back to Jerusalem, he was facing imprisonment. He also knows this is the will of God and has set his face to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:24 "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

“The ministry ... received of the Lord Jesus” (2 Tim. 4:7).

“Gospel of the grace of God”: An apt discretion, since salvation is solely by God’s grace (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11).

Paul says, whether life or death to this life awaits him, he will not be upset. He has been dead in Christ ever since his first encounter with Jesus. He does not fear death to the body, because he knows he will be in heaven with God when he departs his body.

He says, I will joyfully preach the gospel to the end. I have no fear of death. I will rejoice that the grace of God saved me to the end.

Acts 20:25 "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."

“That ye all, shall see my face no more”: Aware that he faced severe opposition in Jerusalem, Paul did not anticipate ever returning to Asia Minor. Though he may have done so after his release from his first Roman imprisonment, he could not at this time have foreseen that possibility.

“The kingdom” (see note on 1:3).

Paul is bidding them farewell, because he knows that this will be his last time to see them. It is kind of like leaving your family forever. These are, in a way, his children in the Lord, because he led them to Jesus. This is a sad parting.

Acts 20:26 "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I [am] pure from the blood of all [men]."

“Pure from the blood of all men” (Ezek. 33:7-9).

We read (in chapter 33 of Ezekiel), that a person, who knows the truth and does not tell the ones around them of their errors and their need to repent, will be held responsible for that person when we stand before Jesus to be judged. Paul is saying here, I told everyone and I am not responsible for their sin.

Acts 20:27 "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

“All the counsel of God”: The entire plan and purpose of God for man’s salvation in all its fullness: divine truths of creation, election, redemption, justification, adoption, conversion, sanctification, holy living, and glorification. Paul strongly condemned those who adulterate the truth of Scripture (2 Cor. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Rev. 22:18-19).

Paul reminds them that he has not neglected to bring them the truth. It is their responsibility to do what he preached.

Verses 28-30: A timely warning, proven true by later events at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3-7, 19-20; 6:20-21; Rev. 2:2-1). False teachers were already plaguing the churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:6) and the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 11:4).

Acts 20:28 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves”: Paul repeated this call to self-examination to Timothy when his young son in the faith served as pastor of the Ephesian congregation (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:20-21).

“Overseers”: These are the same as elders and pastors (see note on 1 Tim. 3:1). The word stresses the leaders’ responsibility to watch over and protect their congregations, an appropriate usage in the context of a warning against false teachers.

Church rule, which minimizes the biblical authority of elders in favor of a cultural, democratic process is foreign to the New Testament (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17).

“With his own blood” (see note on 1 Pet. 1:18). Paul believed so strongly in the unity of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ that he could speak of Christ’s death as shedding the blood of God, who has no body (John 4:24; Luke 24:39), and hence no blood.

Paul is reminding these leaders of the church that they are not only responsible for themselves, but for their membership as well. The food that they are to feed the flock is the uncompromised Word of God. Paul also reminds them that the precious shed blood of Jesus Christ has bought our salvation for us.

Acts 20:29 "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

“Grievous wolves”: Borrowed from Jesus (Matt. 7:15; 10:16), this metaphor stresses the extreme danger false teachers pose to the church.

This is a warning from Paul, that the enemy will send liars and deceivers among them to destroy the flock. The good shepherd will protect their sheep from false doctrines and lies. Keep your people in the Truth of God, is what Paul is saying to them.

Acts 20:30 "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

“Of your own selves shall men arise”: Even more deadly than attacks from outside the church are the defections of those (especially leaders), within the church (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17, Jude 3-4, 10-13).

“Perverse things”: The Greek word means “distorted” or “twisted.” False teachers twist God’s Word for their own evil ends (13:10; 2 Pet. 3:16).

This is speaking of people in the church who cause a rift and carry some of the members away with them. This was not a problem for just them, but is a present day problem as well. There is always someone who gets unhappy and leaves the church taking part of the members with them.

Acts 20:31 "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

“Three years”: The total length of Paul’s Ephesian ministry; including the two years he taught in the school of Tyrannus (19:10).

This does not contradict the statement in 19:10. Paul spent a total of “three years” in Ephesus; two in the school of Tyrannus.

Paul had taught them in all sincerity, and now he tells them to be careful to remember what he taught. He was so concerned about their salvation that his prayers for them were accompanied with tears. Paul, like many ministers, feels responsible for those people he has ministered the truth to and cried over them regularly.

Acts 20:32 "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

“Word of his grace”: The Scriptures, the record of God’s gracious dealing with mankind.

“Build you up”: The Bible is the source of spiritual growth (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:2), for all Christians. And since the church is “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), its leaders must be familiar with that truth.

“Inheritance” (see note on 1 Pet. 1:4).

Sanctified means purified or made holy. The study of the Word of God is what builds you up. Paul is telling them here, to stay in that Word and become strong. Through the grace of God, (free gift), we receive the inheritance of eternal life.

Acts 20:33 "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel."

“Coveted”: Love of money is a hallmark of false teachers (Isa. 56:11; Jer. 6:13; 8:10; Mica 3:11; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3), but did not characterize Paul’s ministry (see notes on 1 Tim. 6:3, 5).

Paul was proud of the fact that he had never taken substance from the people he ministered to.

Acts 20:34 "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."

“These hands have ministered unto my necessities”: Paul had the right to earn his living from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:3-14), and sometimes accepted support (2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 4:10-19). Yet, he often worked to support himself so he could “offer the gospel without charge” (1 Cor. 9:18).

Paul was a tentmaker and had worked at that trade whenever it was needful. Paul, not only had supported himself, but he had given to those around him, as well.

Acts 20:35 "I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

“Support the weak” (1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8-9).

“The words of the Lord Jesus”: This is the only direct quote from Jesus’ earthly ministry recorded outside the gospels. The Bible does not record all the words or deeds of Jesus (John 21:25).

We see Paul teaching to help those who cannot help themselves. This weak means physical and spiritual. The strong always has to help the weak. He reminds them of the Lord's statement: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Acts 20:36 “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.”

This is a prayer asking God to watch over his flock. Paul must now place these elders which he had trained in God's hands. This was probably like an anointing service where Paul prayed for each of these elders and the church.

Acts 20:37 "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,"

“Fell on Paul’s neck”: A common biblical way of expressing extreme emotion and affection (Gen. 33:4; 45:14; 46:29).

You can certainly understand the love that Paul has for them, as if they were his dear children. The love that they have for Paul who led them to God is tremendous. Without him and his teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, they would be lost.

Acts 20:38 "Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship."

This is like a death. They are assured that Paul has spoken truth. They will see him no more. As if trying to hang on as long as they could, they go to the ship with him.

Acts Chapter 20 Continued Questions

1. Where did Paul stop for rest?
2. Who did Paul send for to come here?
3. In verse 18, Paul says that he had been with them in _____ seasons.
4. "Serving the Lord with all _____ of _____"

5. Who had lain in wait for him to harm him?
6. How had Paul taught them all that he knew?
7. What two peoples had he testified to?
8. What two things had he testified?
9. Paul said he was going where, bound in the spirit?
10. Where had the Holy Ghost told Paul that he would be imprisoned?
11. Paul said none of these things moved him, why?
12. What bad news did Paul bring them?
13. Paul told them he was pure from _____.
14. Verse 27 says he had not shunned to declare what to them?
15. What did Paul tell these leaders to take heed and do for the church of God?
16. Who had made them overseers?
17. What had Jesus purchased them with?
18. Who did Paul warn would come in among them and would not spare the flock?
19. In verse 30, even who will arise with perverse things and draw away disciples?
20. How many years had Paul been coming to minister to them?
21. What did Paul tell them would build them up?
22. Who did Paul tell them they would have an inheritance with, if they remained faithful?
23. What is the grace of God?
24. What does sanctified mean?
25. Paul said he had not coveted men's _____, or _____, or _____.
26. How had Paul supported himself?
27. What words of the Lord did Paul tell them to remember in verse 35?

28. What did Paul do after talking to them?

29. Verse 37, tells how they expressed their love for Paul, what did they do?

30. What did they sorrow the most for?