



**Sunday School Lesson for November 27, 2005
Released on November 23, 2005**

"Paul's Farewell"

Printed Text: Acts 20:17-28, 36-38

Devotional Reading: Acts 20:31-35

Background Scripture: Acts 20:17-38

Time: A.D. 56

Place: Miletus

Acts 20: 17-28

17 And from Mi-le'tus he sent to Eph'e-sus, and called the elders of the church.

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

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:

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,

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Je'sus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Je-ru'sa-lem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Ho'ly Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

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 Je'sus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

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.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*.

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

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.

ACTS 20: 36-38

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

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

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.

Lesson Aims

1 - To examine portions of Acts 20 that provide a record of Paul's final meeting with the Ephesian elders.

2 - To teach that Christian leadership requires setting a good example and cultivating good relationships with others.

3 - To encourage students who aspire to Christian leadership to follow Paul's example.

How to Say It

ACHAIA. Uh-*kay*-uh.

EPHESIANS. Ee-*fee*-zhunz.

EPHESUS. *Ef*-uh-sus.

MILETUS. My-*lee*-tus.

INTRODUCTION

The church was purchased with the precious blood of Christ. He is not only the Saviour of the body but also the Head of His church (Eph. 5:23).

To accomplish His goal of building His church, the Lord has ordained certain people to serve in leadership roles (Eph. 4:11). In the infancy of the church, apostles and prophets were foundational to its structure (2:20). Others, however, would perform more permanent functions throughout church history. Among them are evangelists, elders, pastors, teachers, and deacons. As both leaders and servants, these individuals help equip all believers to minister to the Lord and to one another in the body (4:12).

Of course, no congregation can be better than its leaders. This is why various qualifications are laid down for church leaders (I Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

LESSON BACKGROUND

During his third missionary journey, Paul was headed for Jerusalem but planning to go to Rome as well (Acts 19:21). He had established new churches in territories such as southern Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia. Many had been baptized into Christ, and churches had grown stronger in spite of the persecution they often faced. Paul's journeys were carried out with the help of several traveling companions. Frequently he depended on coworkers to provide leadership in his absence.

The book of Acts records much of this activity, but many of the details must be collected from the letters of Paul. Among the churches he established, the evidence tells us that at least some congregations formed a very close bond with the apostle. (See Philippians 4:10-20 and 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16.) Today's text will show us that Paul also developed a close relationship with the Ephesians elders.

Profitable Good-bye with Memories (Acts 20:17-21)

1. Where was Miletus? Why did Paul stop there? Where was he going? (Acts 20:16,17)

After Paul ministered at Troas, he and his traveling companions departed. They (without Paul) boarded a ship and sailed down the coast of Asia Minor whereas; Paul chose to travel by foot and met them in Assos (where he then boarded the ship). After several stops, Paul and his companions arrived at Miletus. Miletus is a city in Asia Minor, about 30 miles South of Ephesus. Paul decided to sail past Ephesus because he was trying to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost.

2. Who did Paul summon to Miletus? (vs. 17-19)

When Paul arrived at Miletus, he sent word to the elders of the church in Ephesus that he wanted them to meet him in Miletus. Paul sent for the elders (as noted above). They came straightway and did not hesitate to travel the 30 miles to Miletus. It is apparent they had a deep love and high regard for Paul. Upon their arrival, Paul reminded them of the way he served and in what spirit he had served the Lord

during the whole time (three years) he had spent with them. Please do not misinterpret this as Paul boasting - he was merely stating facts that the elders themselves had witnessed. They knew Paul had served the Lord with great humility and that he was clearly magnifying the crucified and risen Savior.

3. What kind of opposition did Paul face in Ephesus? (v. 19)

As Paul continued in his address to the elders, he told them about the trials he was confronted with. Although, he shed many tears, he did not allow his trials to separate him from the work of the Lord. Paul cried tears of sorrow 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 mentioned in the latter verses of Acts (v. 29,30). One particular incident Paul mentions here is the plotting of the Jews. If you reference 2 Corinthians, Ch. 11, (vs. 24-25), Paul gives an account of how he was beaten by the Jews on five occasions where he received 39 stripes. He was beaten three times with rods and was also stoned. Despite the trials and tribulations Paul encountered, he continued to *Press toward the Mark for the Prize of the High Calling in Jesus Christ*. The tears Paul shed were for his fellow Jews who were blinding themselves to the free salvation accessible to them in the Savior.

4. What may teaching "from house to house" (v. 20) refer to?

As we look at verse 20, Paul provides a model for all ministers, teachers, and witnesses of Christ. Paul describes the content of his preaching ministry - that it has been nothing but that which is truth. He had not withheld anything that was of help to them. He has not watered down the word of God for the "itching ears" but has preached nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul states: "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*". Not only did Paul preach the gospel, he taught it and demonstrated it throughout his life. During his ministry, Paul taught in the synagogue (Acts 19:8) and the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:10). He reinforced public teaching with practical instruction of individuals and households ("*from house to house*").

5. Why is repentance essential in coming to Christ? (v. 21)

Repentance is that divinely wrought conviction of sin in the heart that the soul is guilty before God, and a resolute turning away from sin in which the sinner identifies himself with the gracious act of God in redeeming him. Repentance involves both a change of mind about sin, and a change of heart-attitude toward sin. It is at the time a renunciation of sin and an acceptance of the Holy Spirit's enablement to holy living. Repentance is necessary to salvation. Jesus asserted that it was a necessary condition (Matthew 4:17). Both Paul and Peter identified it with true salvation (Acts 20:21; 2 Pet. 3:9).

Profitable Good-bye with Commitments (Acts 20:20-24)

6. How did the Holy Spirit warn Paul concerning events that were going to transpire in Jerusalem? (v. 22)

Paul told the elders that the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that imprisonment and hardships were awaiting him (v. 23). Nevertheless, Paul stated that he was going as one "bound" by the Spirit," though he did not know just what would happen to him once he reached Jerusalem.

7. How did Paul view the possibility of suffering for Christ? (v. 24)

Paul did not allow the sufferings to deter him from his ministry. When Paul stated his life was worth nothing, he meant he was not only ready to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. His only purpose and goal was to "finish the race and complete the task" the Lord Jesus had given him which was the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Paul knew that death was not far away but he also knew God had enabled him to endure until the end. It is important to note that he does not specify his death will be in Jerusalem but he does tell the Ephesian elders they would not see him again (v. 25).

Let us be reminded that Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had a task also, it was to die for the sins of the world. Despite the suffering road that was ahead of Him (being falsely accused, spat upon, beaten, etc.), He still drank of the cup of death so that we (who repent and believe upon Him) would have a right to eternal life.

Good-bye with Challenges (Acts 20:25-28)

8. How was Paul "pure from the blood of all men"? (v. 26)

If we reference Acts 18:6, Paul held his opponents completely responsible for blaspheming Christ and rejecting his message. Here in v. 26, Paul says he is "pure from the blood of all men" meaning: On Judgment Day not one of the lost will be able to say that Paul was responsible for his eternal death in hell. Paul was able to make this claim because he had not fallen short of proclaiming "the whole will of God" (v. 27). The whole will of God" plainly comprises every doctrine or truth of the Scriptures.

9. How are the terms "elder", "overseer" (or "bishop"), and "pastor" used in the New Testament? (v. 28)

As we looked at the character of Paul, he presented himself as a faithful witness and loyal servant of the Lord Jesus - in all humility! - In order for the elders to imitate him in this regard. An "elder, overseer/bishop or pastor", were leaders of churches who were to give guidance and direction to God's people under their leadership. They were to be effective in their leadership ministry in order to bring others to subject themselves in willing, loving obedience to the Lord who bought them with a price. Paul told the elders in vs. 28 to keep a close watch on themselves and the flock(s) they were leading. If the overseer, pastor....find himself struggling daily against the

sinful passions that endanger his own soul, how much better he is equipped to comfort, strengthen, and encourage believers engaged in the same daily struggle if he daily drinks deeply at the well of Scripture. He will be more able to dispense the living water to the souls in his charge. A faithful minister will be all the more intent on guarding or taking heed to himself when he realizes the high obligation under which God has placed him.

Good-bye with Prayer (Acts 20:36-38)

10. How did Paul's meeting with the Ephesian elders end? (vs. 36-38)

The concluding verses of this chapter ended with a prayer meeting, crying and kisses. Paul, no doubt, was held in high regard for who he was in Christ. The embraces and tears of the Ephesian elders tell us that their father in Christ was dear beyond words to them. That they should never again look on the face of their beloved, honored apostle - this thought made their hearts heavy with grief. When men such as these escorted Paul and his companions to his ship, according to the custom of the day, it was much, much more than a formal gesture of courtesy they accorded him.

Works Cited:

MacArthur Study Bible

Bible History Commentary - New Testament, Vol. 2

Conclusion

When times are difficult, it is important that Christian leaders share words that keep the church focused on the things of God. Paul's words were spoken at a moment when believers saw gloomy times coming. But his words and example gave them courage. What opportunities will we have to speak words that bring comfort and courage? Can we use our words to lift the spirits of those whose faith may be threatened or overwhelmed? Our words can inspire faith and dedication in those who are weak and vulnerable. May the Lord help us find ways to build up the church in times of distress.

Prayer

Heavenly Father thank you for your Word. Thank you for being our joy in the midst of sorrow. Thank you for being our hope for tomorrow. When we are weak, Heavenly Father, Thou art strong. Thank you for your grace and your mercy. Continue to manifest your Spirit in the Body of Christ, guiding our footsteps in Thy divine Word - teaching us how to be godly examples to a lost world. Psalm 119:1 says: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." Like Paul, and like your beloved Son, Jesus, our desire is that we develop a habitual pattern of living that is pleasing in Thy sight. For we have a truth to share with the world, and that is The Gospel of Jesus Christ! In Christ Jesus - **Amen**

Thought to Remember

Words of faith and courage can make good-byes easier to bear.

Next Week's Lesson

Study *Isaiah 42:1-9* **Justice for All**

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-Jesus Is All Staff**

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