

Acts 20 Paul's Farewell Sermon

Details build up an impression of love and unity in these Churches created by the power of Paul preaching the Gospel. The Apostle leaves the Churches he had established as a redemptive ever-lasting life giving force in their communities across the empire.

Acts 20:1-5 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto [him] the disciples, and embraced [them], and departed for to go into Macedonia. 2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, 3 And [there] abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. 4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater (so-PEE-ter) of Berea (ber-EE-ah); and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus (air-is-TAR-chus) and Secundus (Sey-CUHN-duhs); and Gaius (GAY-us) of Derbe, and Timotheus (TIM-ah-thee-uhs); and of Asia, Tychicus (TIH-kih-kuhs) and Trophimus (tro-FEE-muhs). 5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.

Ministering at Troas:

Acts 20:6-12 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. 7 And upon the first [day] of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. 9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, (U-kuh-s) being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing [him] said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. (the Greek is very violent like Elijah)

I Kings 17:12-23 And she said, [As] the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I [am] gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go [and] do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring [it] unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day [that] the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat [many] days. 16 [And] the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah. 17 And it came to pass after these things, [that] the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. 18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? 19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. 20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? 21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

Acts 20:11-12 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he

departed. 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

From Troas to Miletus:

Acts 20:13-15 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos (AS-sos), there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. 14 And when he met with us at Assos (AS-sos), we took him in, and came to Mitylene (MIH-til-lean). 15 And we sailed thence, and came the next [day] over against Chios (CHI-os); and the next [day] we arrived at Samos (SAY-mahs), and tarried at Trogyllium (tro-GUY-lee-uhm); and the next [day] we came to Miletus (my-LEE-tuhs).

Paul tarried at Troas while his mission group pressed on by sea. Paul hurried by land to Assos by Mitylene, crushing his natural desire to see Ephesus, and sending for the elders to meet him at Miletus. He offered his farewell exhortation.

Acts 20:16-38 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. 17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, 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 Asia, 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 publickly, and from house to house, 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 Save that the Holy 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 Jesus, 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. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. 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. 33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed 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. 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.

The reason why Luke details only this one farewell address, is that it was typical of all his farewells.

Acts 20:16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

The Ephesian Elders Exhorted

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

Elders of the church ... These are the same men addressed as "bishops or overseers" in Acts 20:28. There was a plurality of elders in every church.

"... Elders ..." Shepherds, Pastors, Elders, Bishops, Presbyters & Overseers Why are three Greek words and classes of terms and six English words used to refer to just one office? The first class: shepherds and pastors Greek: poime'n (POY- men) beautifully describes their work as shepherds or pastors of God's flock (His people). The second class: elders or presbyters Greek: presbyteros (pres-bi-TER-os): speaks of their person as regarding their age and Christian experience. The third class: Bishop or overseers Greek: episkopos (eh-pis-KO-pus) refers to their being teachers visiting the members and superintendents of the congregation.

I Peter 5:1-2 The elders (Greek: presbyteros / pres-bi-TER-os): which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight (Greek: episkopos / eh-pis-KO-pus) [thereof], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Paul's will use the same 2 Greek words that Peter uses for "Elders" and "overseers" showing again they are used interchangeably.

Here is Paul's View of his Christian Ministry:

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's appeal was made more meaningful to them by his reminder of the hardships and sufferings he endured among them. Look at how I lived, Church leadership and be ye humble ... don't Lord over the flock.

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them [unto him], and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

This is the beginning of Paul's review of his three years with the Ephesians:

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:

Paul's hardships and trials were of epic proportions. Even the journey coming to meet with the elders from Ephesus had been drastically revised due to a plot against his life by the Jews V:3.

Tears ... This mention of Paul's weeping was repeated later (Acts 20:31). We can conclude that there were many occasions when the great apostle poured out his grief, disappointment, and frustrated love of his countrymen in tears.

The gentleness of his ministry ... "humility" ... lowliness of mind:

Tender hearted ... "with many tears"

Patient ... in trials ... “temptations”

Acts 20:20-21 [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 Jesus Christ.

Paul discusses the integrity of his ministry and Apostleship:

Neglected no truth ... “I kept back nothing that was profitable [unto you],”

Neglected no sphere ... public or private ... “publicly, and from house to house”

Neglected no race or class of persons ... “the Jews, and also to the Greeks”

**The Message of his ministry ... “repentance toward God, and
faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”**

Repentance ... and faith ... are not mentioned here in the chronological sequence of their occurrence in sinners' hearts. Faith always comes from hearing God's word

Romans 10:17 So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

You must be convicted by the Word of God before repentance can appear in any heart.

II Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Our Lord Jesus Christ ... This use of the compound name "Jesus Christ" is extensive in the Pauline epistles and in Acts. The title is

used here, in the year 55 AD. The title itself was given in the great high-priestly prayer of Jesus on the night he was betrayed.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

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

Paul's Present Position: "I go bound in the spirit"

Paul's Present Purpose: "... Jerusalem ..."

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

Paul's Present Prospect: "... bonds and afflictions abide me"

The Holy Ghost witnesses or testifies unto me ... How did the Holy Spirit witness or testify unto Paul? We might not have known unless Luke, a little later cf: Acts 21:10-11, had revealed the manner of it. It was not by means of dreams, premonitions, or any subjective impressions or "feeling" borne inward upon Paul's consciousness but it was by words clearly spoken by a prophet of the Lord.

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.

Paul's Final Purpose: "... that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry

The unselfish devotion of Paul to the Christian gospel was too intense and fervent to be diminished by considerations for his personal safety. Not merely "living," but "accomplishing his course and ministry" was the dominant purpose of the dauntless apostle.

“... to testify the gospel of the grace of God and establishing churches everywhere - this is exactly the same thing as "preaching the kingdom" of God (Acts 20:25).

Again in the New Testament, the fact is confirmed that the church of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of heaven are one and the same.

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.

Paul's Painful Premonition: “... shall see my face no more”.

Paul was not speaking as a prophet, but was merely giving utterance to an overpowering conviction that the time of his death was near ... just as mine is ... Paul did his best to prepare them and I hope to do ...

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

Paul has discharged all his responsibilities. “... that I [am] pure from the blood of all [men].”

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

Jesus said those who believe not "all that the prophets have spoken" are "fools KJV or foolish ones RSV" Luke 24:25.

A mere smattering of religious truth not sufficient it is only by heeding the "whole counsel of God" that either an individual or a church may be considered in the line of duty.

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.

No verse in the New Testament, nor any other statement that could be imagined, could possibly exceed the power of this in declaring the eternal importance and necessity of the church Christ established ... for it is a blood bought Church.

Romans 5:8-9 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

I Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Paul speaking of the continuing responsibilities of elders and their motives to do their duties:

The "... Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" or "elders" V:17

This trust was purchased at a heavy price: "he hath purchased with his own blood"

Their duties: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock"

Awesome Responsibilities: "...to feed the church of God ..."

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

Much more is intended in this than just a prophetic reference to the heretics and heresies which arose in Paul's lifetime. This is one of several extensive passages in the New Testament foretelling the great apostasy which would come about through the development of the historical church.

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

"From among your own selves ..." indicates that the central apostasy would concern the government of the church. The early Protestants have all affirmed, "The Pope himself is only an elder gone wrong!"

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.

Be watchful for you must give an account.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule (hayg-eh'-om-ai lead, command or chief) over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.

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.

Paul committed them to God and His Word, this was common and typical of all his farewells and salutations cf:

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ:

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

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

Paul worked as a tent-maker to earn funds for himself and his co-workers on the mission field; and the imagination quite easily sees the gesture which accompanied the words, "these hands."

I gave you an example ... Nothing corrupts religion any more rapidly than providing too much filthy riches and earthly gain for its preachers and teachers ... the price of the "hireling" having a

tendency to attract self-seekers who care not for the truth, but only for the filthy lucre. Paul set an example of faith that shall live forever. This is not to deny faithful ministers their right of maintenance and a reasonable living. The Apostle Paul himself diligently defended a preachers need of a living ... but this is said to point out the historical undeniable dangers of shameful greed in the professional “priest-craft”.

I would like to encourage faithful “well off” preachers why don’t you go buy some radio time ... call me and I’ll help you and tell you how to do it inexpensively ... you don’t have to be perfectly spoken, just prepared I Peter 3:15 and be for real with God ... for He wants His word preached to “all the world” and He wants “every creature” to hear ... HE LIVES, He is not dead He will help you.

Acts 20:35 I have shewed 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.

Paul’s labor an example to them:

“ ... it is More blessed to give than to receive ...” The desires and ambitions of men are opposite to these words! In a society where the goal and the end of all of living is "getting," these words have a heavenly ring.

No other New Testament writer ever mentioned these words spoken by the Lord, and it remained for Paul who himself had given so much to remember and record it for the ages to come.

The teaching of Jesus enjoins us to conduct ourselves properly.

Acts 20:36-38 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.

At Ephesus Domitian Caesar naming himself the “lord god”, instituted imperial worship, he had a Temple built for a 21 foot image of himself and required everyone to worship the image or be considered atheists. Don’t be afraid, Jesus alone is eternal not any Caesar. cf:

Revelation 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Jesus in revelation tells the Church “don’t be afraid” of a 21 foot idol

Revelation 1:17-18 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: 18 I [am] he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Jesus rebukes the cooling off of the devotion of the Church at Ephesus cf:

Revelation 2:1-7 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4 Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear

what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The elders temporarily get the message for in cf:

Revelation 4:10-11 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

The Continuing story of Ephesus:

Apparently they forgot and their repentance must have been short lived because, true to Jesus words: today there is not one vestige or trace of the Church at Ephesus remains. It has disappeared and no longer exists.

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent

Sources: KJV Bible, theWord.com, Burton Coffman, BW Johnson, Adam Clark, FF Bruce, McKnight and JW McGarvey Commentaries, Wikipedia, and World Conquest.