

ACTS LESSON 20

Acts Chapter 20

Distributed by: KJV Bible Studies

Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

e-mail: mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com

Memory verses for this week: *Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

Introduction: In Chapter 19, God allowed Paul to perform miracles of healing by giving out aprons and handkerchiefs to people who were sick. He soon faced great opposition by the silversmiths in Ephesus when he preached against the false idols. The silversmiths had made great money making the Dinah of the Ephesians images, and they did not want the money to be stopped. Paul was driven out, and this week we see him going into Macedonia and Greece.

Chapter 20 covers Paul's ministry over the course of the next year. It includes his departure from Ephesus, his return to Macedonia and Corinth, and his roundabout journey back to Jerusalem, meeting with the leadership of the Ephesian church again in Miletus on the way. In the final segment of the chapter, Paul concludes his farewell to the elders of the Ephesian church. Insight into the very heart of this apostle is in view.

I. Paul Goes into Macedonia and Greece

Acts 20:1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

The uproar was that of Demetrius of chapter 19. Paul, deeming it wise to depart called to him the disciples at Ephesus, embraced them, and departed back to Macedonia. It is quite possible the events described in the next several verses occupied a year in the life of Paul. The time was probably the mid to late 50s A.D.

Acts 20:2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

Acts 20:3 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.

The “those parts” noted, undoubtedly, refers to the churches of Macedonia which Paul started several years earlier. He once again returned to strengthen young Christians and young churches. It was at this general time that Paul also preached at Troas as noted in II Corinthians 2:12. This probably also was the same general time when he went to Illyricum as noted in Romans 15:19.

Rom 15:19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

He likely after arriving back in Philippi wrote his second epistle to Corinth. His ministry was that of “much exhortation.” The idea is of much encouragement. The word translated as exhortation (parakaleo), among other things, has the sense of encouragement. Young Christians need much encouragement in the faith and Paul no doubt did just that.

He then traveled southward to Greece which otherwise was known as Achaia. Though Athens was a part of Greece, in all likelihood, the reference is to Corinth where he had previously had such a fruitful ministry. Titus had been there and subdued the Judaizers. Now Paul goes back in person to receive the missionary offering he had urged them to take for the needy brethren in Judaea (II Corinthians 8- 9).

Paul stayed in Greece for three months. Once again, opposition from Jews of the region forced him to move on. The word wait (epiboulē), has the sense of planning a plot. Paul, catching wind of it, gave the appearance of sailing for Syria and home. It may be the plotters planned to kill him on the busy docks of Cenchrea or perhaps push him overboard while in route. Paul eluded them by traveling north and overland back to Macedonia and Philippi (verse 6).

If you remember at the end of chapter 19, the town clerk had asked the people to realize how unreasonable they had been, and apparently it had worked and the silversmiths stopped accusing Paul and the disciples before all the people. The crowd had turned into a rioting mob, and it was good that cool heads prevailed. After the uproar passed, Paul called the disciples together and bid them farewell as he intended to sail into Syria.

Acts 20:4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

Acts 20:5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.

Though Paul returned to Philippi, a party of seven delegates from churches of the region planned to accompany him once he got to Troas. Other churches of the region had taken an offering for the brethren in Judea (II Corinthians 8:1) and evidently sent men along with Paul to personally deliver their gift. These included Sopater of the Berean church, Aristarchus and Secundus from the Thessalonian church, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy of Lystra, and Tychicus and Trophimus of the churches of Asia. This party of seven responsible brethren waited for Paul at Troas as he journeyed up on foot to Philippi and then by sea to Troas.

Paul exhorted the brethren as he made his journey to Greece where he stayed for three months. Once Paul learned that the Jews were waiting for him, he changed his plans and returned through Macedonia. Paul had several of the disciples go with him on this journey including Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timotheous, Tychius, and Trophimus.

II. Paul at Troas

Acts 20:6 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.

Acts 20:7 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.

Luke joins with Paul once again. Here, Luke uses the first person plural we (also 'us' in verse 5). The last time he noted himself with Paul was in Acts 16 when he was in Philippi the first time. Whether he had remained in Philippi this entire time or had done otherwise, we are not told. It was spring, and they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Philippi.

Though Paul as a Jew took great pains to not force the Jewish ceremonial law upon gentiles, he himself as a Jew still observed major Jewish holy days. After these holy days, Paul and Luke sailed from Philippi on the European mainland across the Aegean Sea to Troas (Troy) on the Asian mainland. Unfavorable winds turned what was normally a quick journey into a five day wait. Though he had been in Troas briefly prior (II Corinthians 2:12-13), he now spent a full week preaching to the brethren there.

Here is one of several clear references to the early church beginning to meet on the first day of the week. As gentiles, they were not constrained by the Jewish Sabbath. Rather in observing the day of the resurrection—the first day of the week, churches began meeting on the first day. Paul already had urged the Corinthian church to receive offerings on the first day, clearly implying they met on that day. John, in Revelation 1:10, refers to the Lord’s day which clearly refers to the day of the resurrection.

The Seventh Day Adventists’ claim that the church shifted to the first day through the later influence of the Roman Catholic church is untrue. At Pentecost, the church was assembled on the first day. The reference to the disciples coming together “to break bread” made reference to an evening meal. Afterwards “Paul preached unto them . . . and continued his speech until midnight for he knew he would be leaving the next day. Not knowing whether he would ever see them again, he was long winded. He had much to say to them. This is not an example for preachers to practice on a regular basis.

After the Passover, Paul and Luke left Philippi and in five days arrived at Troas where his companions awaited him. It says they stayed in Troas seven days. After Jesus died, the traditions of meeting on the Sabbath day was changed to gathering on the first day of the week to worship God. We see that when they came together on the first day of the week, Paul preached to them. And like some other preachers you may have heard, he preached a long time. It is a blessing to have someone preach with great power from the Holy Spirit. Apparently Paul was greatly empowered as he continued preaching until midnight.

Matthew Henry pointed out that we are to gather today on Sunday to worship God.

Note, The first day of the week is to be religiously observed by all the disciples of Christ; and it is a sign between Christ and them, for by this it is known that they are his disciples; and it is to be observed in solemn assemblies, which are, as it were, the courts held in the name of our Lord Jesus, and to his honour, by his ministers, the stewards of his courts, to which all that hold from and under him owe suit and service, and at which they are to make their appearance, as tenants at their Lord’s courts, and the first day of the week is appointed to be the court-day. 3. *They were gathered together in an upper chamber* (v. 8); they had no temple nor synagogue to meet in, no capacious stately chapel, but met in a private house, in a garret. As they were few, and did not need, so they were poor, and could not build, a large meeting-place; yet they came together, in that

despicable inconvenient place. It will be no excuse for our absenting ourselves from religious assemblies that the place of them is not so decent nor so commodious as we would have it to be. 4. They *came together to break bread*, that is, to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper, that one instituted sign of breaking the bread being put for all the rest. *The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ*, 1 Co. 10:16.

In the breaking of the bread, not only the breaking of Christ's body for us, to be a sacrifice for our sins, is commemorated, but the breaking of Christ's body to us, to be food and a feast for our souls, is signified. In the primitive times it was the custom of many churches to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day, celebrating the memorial of Christ's death in the former, with that of his resurrection in the latter; and both in concert, in a solemn assembly, to testify their joint concurrence in the same faith and worship. 1

Acts 20:8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

Acts 20:9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, 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.

Acts 20:10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

During this long meeting, a young man by the name of Eutychus was struggling to stay awake as Paul preached long. The house in which they were meeting was evidently a three-story house and Eutychus was sitting in the open window of the top floor. He went to the window perhaps for some air so he could stay awake.

Well, he went to sleep and fell out of the window from the "third loft" and was dead. What a shock that must have been to this young church! Paul "embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves: for his life is in him." Many speculate on whether Eutychus actually died and the Lord miraculously restored him to life, or whether the shock of the fall merely knocked him unconscious. The end of verse 9 strongly states he died. Paul's statement in verse 10 says he was alive. I believe both statements are accurate. Try to stay awake in church and if you do happen to fall asleep, don't sit near a window.

1Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

We see that while Paul was preaching, one young man fell into a deep sleep and fell down from the third loft. I guess if the preacher is long in his message, good advice is to stay away from the window. While this may sound a bit humorous, the young man wound up dead. Being human, we need to realize that no one can stay awake for hours on end without help. It says the young man was taken up dead. Apparently, Paul went down and brought life back to the boy by a miraculous power. And then what did he do? He continued to preach.

III. Paul Leaves Eutychus

Acts 20:11 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.

Acts 20:12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted

After the long preaching and the scare over Eutychus, they finally ate. Paul then spent the rest of the night until dawn, talking and fellowshiping with them. The reference to him therefore coming up again refers to Paul and not Eutychus as clarified in verse 12. Evidently, at about this same time, Eutychus was brought back to the church alive and they “were not a little comforted.” Paul then departed.

It says that Paul come up again to the disciples and ate, and after that, they talked a long while. When morning came, they were still talking and he departed. It is not clear for sure, but I think the Word of God was so fresh and real in these people that they were all rejoicing in hearing what Paul had to say.

That is how our minds and hearts should be. The things of God should be foremost on our minds and we should hunger to hear the word of God. Remember what Christ told Satan at the end of his temptations.

Luke 4:4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

IV. From Troas to Miletus

Acts 20:13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

The party of eight, now including Luke, sailed down the coast to Assos. However, Paul decided to walk overland upon the paved Roman road which was shorter. I'm not sure of why he chose to walk the road. It was spring, and perhaps Paul wanted to spend time alone with the Lord in walking what was about a day's journey.

Acts 20:14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

Acts 20:15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

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.

In rejoining his party at Assos, they began a voyage down the western coast of the province of Asia. They evidently were upon a coastal vessel making stops at various ports according to need and the hire of the passengers, in this case Paul. They went from Assos to Mitylene, to Chios, to Samos, staying overnight at Trogyllium, and finally arriving at Miletus. Miletus was about thirty miles south of Ephesus, but Paul had determined to not stop there for several reasons.

It had only been a year since he had earlier left following the uproar of Demetrius. He perhaps deemed it expedient to not return so soon thereafter. He was in somewhat of a hurry to reach Jerusalem with the offering they were carrying. He also wanted to make it by Pentecost which was in late spring or earlier summer and that was only about a month away.

Paul chose to walk from Troas to Assos. At that point, he met with his other company and they sailed along the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea until they arrived in Miletus. Paul was in a bit of a hurry as he had a great desire to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. But he was determined to go to Ephesus, but due to lack of time, they stopped at Miletus, which was the port of Ephesus. If you remember the feast dates, there were 50 days from the Passover feast until the feast of Pentecost.

V. Paul and the Ephesian Elders

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

Rather than journey overland back to Ephesus, he sent a messenger requesting the leadership of the church there to come to him. Those requested were the pastor of the church at Ephesus those involved with the missions of the church nearby. Their multiplicity stems from the fact that the church at Ephesus had grown significantly; In the earliest days of the church, missions started in locations scattered across the city. How many were involved is not noted. However, these leaders journeyed immediately to Miletus where Paul was at to meet with 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,

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:

In beginning of his address to them, Paul bares his heart in a way of which we have rare record of. He was not speaking to a restless synagogue or even young Christians. Here, he was speaking to men he had helped groom for the ministry. They were all preachers. As will be noted in his remarks, he sensed he might never see them again.

He began by reminding them that they had known from his first contact with them his manner with them the entire time. He collectively had spent nearly three years there. They had a chance to see him from every angle. They knew him.

Paul reminded them of the manner in which he had served God in Ephesus. The word translated as serving (douleuw douleo) has the sense of the servitude of a slave. That is evident as Paul described his ministry. It was "with all humility of mind." There was no pride of accomplishment or ministerial condescension in Paul. There had been tears, no doubt, in prayer for this young church. There had been temptations by the plotting of Jewish enemies, not to mention the uprising by the silversmiths in Ephesus. An example of spiritual humility, a heart burdened to tears, and much testing characterized his ministry.

When the Ephesian elders come, Paul reminds them of his ministry among them.

In John Calvin's Commentary on Acts, he noted some things about Paul. "You know. In this sermon Paul chiefly devoted himself to encouraging those whom he had appointed pastors at Ephesus to follow his example in doing their duty faithfully. This is the right way to censure people and to gain authority for teaching, when the teacher prescribes nothing that he has not done himself. There was nothing wrong in Paul speaking of his own virtues. Nothing is more intolerable in Christ's servants than ambition and vanity, but since everyone knew very well the modesty and humility of this holy man, he did not need to fear incurring suspicion of vain boasting—especially when it was necessary for him to speak of his faithfulness and diligence in order that others should follow his example. He did, indeed, extol his labor, patience, courage, and other virtues, but not to win praise from his listeners; it was so his exhortation would stick in their minds. He also had another aim, that his integrity might afterwards reinforce his teaching. He appealed to eyewitnesses lest he appear to be speaking about thing unknown."

Paul lived the life that made people know that his Christianity was real. When we talk the talk and don't walk the walk, we are very ineffective in our witnessing.

It says that his service had been done with all humility of mind, with many tears, and many temptations had come his way. We know it was the Jews who brought the tears and the temptations.

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

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

Paul noted further that he had kept back nothing that was profitable unto them. Paul had given them all that which was helpful to them spiritually. His methods had included showing them and teaching them. The word translated as shewed (anaggellw anangelo) has the sense to 'declare' or to 'announce.' It, in this context, implies preaching.

He had also taught them. Both a preaching and teaching ministry are clearly in view. He did both "publicly, and from house to house." The word translated as publicly (dhmosiov demosios) has the sense of 'openly' or in a 'public place.' Paul's ministry was not only in public places, but also in homes in winning people to Christ and teaching then teaching them.

In verse 20, Paul declared his methods. Here he summarizes the very essence of his message. Whether it was Jew or Greek, he preached “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Repentance toward God is a turning of one’s heart to God. It is not an act or a work. It is a change of heart. It is turning to God from within. It is the antithesis of Isaiah 53:6 wherein “we have turned every one to his own way.”

Coupled with that then is a total trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. The final phrase literally reads, ‘and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.’ The two elements—turning to God (repentance toward God) and trusting in Christ—form the complete essence of saving faith.

Paul was a true man of God, and he tells them how that he had held back nothing that was profitable to them. When a preacher picks specific verses and refuses to preach others, he is showing what he thinks is favor to man. But when God wrote the words of the Bible, they were all to be preached and taught. When sin is in our lives, we may not want to hear the condemnation of our sin, but the preacher has that responsibility to preach the whole counsel of God. Paul was that kind of man, and that glorified God. It says he taught them those things both in public and in their private homes. And the most important message that can be preached is the Gospel, which he preached to both the Jews and the Greeks, telling them to repent of their sins and have faith in Christ.

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

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

As Paul continued his farewell to his beloved co-workers in the ministry, he commented to them that he was headed “bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem.” The reference is not to the Holy Spirit, but rather his own spirit. He had a ministry to accomplish and, by the grace of God, he was determined to fulfill it.

Recall that he was taking an offering particularly from the Greek churches to the impoverished brethren in Judaea. He was well aware of the reception he might receive in Jerusalem. He indicated that he wasn’t sure what would happen to him. But he added that the Holy Spirit had witnessed to him in every city that bonds and afflictions awaited him. The word translated as afflictions (yliquiv thlipsis) has the sense of ‘trouble.’ In retrospect, in virtually every city where he had preached the gospel, that indeed is what had befallen him.

Whether it was Lystra, or Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, or Corinth, not to mention the riot at Ephesus; wherever he had gone, there been trouble. The Holy Ghost had evidently indicated to him that this would continue to be his fate. In more than one situation, he had been spared only by the providential hand of God and frequently at the last instant. Paul knew more of the same lay ahead and he did not know if the enemies of the gospel would in fact prevail against him once and for all.

VI. Paul Recognizes His soon Departure

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.

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.

“But none of these things move me.” The idea is how none of these things would deter him. Though Paul knew from much experience the opposition he had received, and of which he expected more, it did not deter him. In fact, he did not count his life dear unto himself. Paul was willing to sacrifice his very life and soul. The phrase “so that” is a connective showing purpose. The reason Paul was willing to sacrifice even his life was in order 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.”

On several occasions, Paul used the metaphor of finishing his course. It likely was a take-off from the Greek games and the long distance Marathon type of race. Though it was possible for a runner to win the Marathon, the real goal was to finish the course. The rigors, pain, and near exhaustion was such that every runner was tempted to quit. Paul’s course was “the ministry” which he received of the Lord Jesus. Specifically, it was “to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

The major essence of Paul’s ministry was to testify (i.e., to witness) of Christ. The very essence of the gospel is the grace of God. “For by grace are ye saved by faith.” God’s grace is that broad stream emanating from His love from whence His kindness to us through Christ Jesus is made available. It is the headwaters of salvation. It is the source of God’s goodness and strength to those who will trust Him. The ministry for which Paul was willing to lose his very life was testifying of God’s grace through Christ. That example and pattern remain for us to this day.

In knowing the opposition which lay ahead, the Apostle lamented that he feared for his beloved co-workers in the faith, the elders of the church of Ephesus.

These were among whom he had gone preaching the kingdom of God. He feared they would see his face no more. Paul feared the worst for his part, and for the most part he was correct in his expectations. However, what he later wrote to Timothy would indicate that near the end of his life he had full expectation of visiting Ephesus after his release from his first imprisonment (I Timothy 3:14, 4:13).

1Ti 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Later, in writing to Timothy again in his final imprisonment, he indicated that he had recently been back in the region. See II Timothy 4:13, 20.

2Ti 4:13 The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

Troas was in the region of Ephesus and particularly Miletus. It is likely that in returning to the area one final time, he once again met with the leaders of the Ephesian church.

Paul is quite prophetic in telling them that they will not see his face anymore.

Paul's number one purpose in life was to finish his course with faithfulness. Remember what he told young Timothy.

2 Tim 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

2 Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Acts 20:26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, 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.

Paul was "pure from the blood of all men." Though no locale is noted, Paul evidently meant that he had taken every opportunity he ever had faced to tell others about Christ. Paul likely had in mind the same admonition God gave to Ezekiel the prophet in Ezekiel 3: 17-19. There, God had told Ezekiel that if he failed to warn the wicked, their blood would be upon his hands.

Eze 3:17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel:

therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

Eze 3:18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Eze 3:19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

What a pattern and goal for us to seek today. Might it be said of us that we are pure from the blood of all of whom we have had contact. Lest there be any question of his intent, he declared that he had “not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God.” In coming to the region of Ephesus earlier, Paul had not only preached the gospel of the grace of God, he had made known unto them the entire “counsel of God.” He had taught them fully.

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.

The Apostle warned the Ephesian leadership to take heed unto themselves. It should be remembered his audience was the elders of the Ephesian church (verse 17). He in effect urged them to take stock of their ministry. It was the flock God had given them.

A significant metaphor used throughout the New Testament of the local church is that of a flock of sheep. It flows from Jesus’ lesson on the good Shepherd in John 10 through 1 Peter 5 where Peter refers to the chief Shepherd. These pastors were urged to take heed to their church. The concept of plurality of elders is nothing more than adapting to the practical needs of a given situation. It by no means is a practice to be necessarily adopted in every church.

Notice that Paul describes the elders of verse 17 as the overseers of the church. The word translated overseers is (episkopov) episcopos which is more commonly translated as ‘bishop.’ Clearly, the elders of the church were the bishops. The term elder is more Jewish in character stemming from the earlier associations with the synagogues. The word bishop is more gentile in nature. It is accurately translated here as overseers. That is exactly what the leadership of the local church has been called to do.

Notice also that the call and appointment of these pastors is by the Holy Ghost. The word translated as made (tiyhmitithemi) often is translated as ‘appoint.’ Insight is given into how the chief Shepherd works in conjunction with the Holy

Spirit in calling men into the ministry and appointing them to a given church. To interfere with that calling and appointment is serious business.

Continuing, Paul admonished these elder/bishops “to feed the church of God.” The word translated as feed (poimainw poimaino) is the verbal derivative of the noun (poimhn) poimen. A ‘poimen’ was a shepherd. To ‘poimaino’ the flock literally meant to ‘shepherd’ it. The idea of feeding is a secondary concept. Of course the word poimen is the word translated as ‘pastor’ in Ephesians 4:11. In effect, the apostle charged the elders of the Ephesian church to (1) oversee it overall and to (2) pastor the people individually.

The term bishop (episkopov episcopos) here translated as ‘overseer’ deals with spiritual as well as administrative oversight. The term pastor deals with the personal love, encouragement, and help a pastor gives to the sheep individually as they have need.

Finally, Paul notes that the church of God has been purchased by His very blood. The Deity of Christ comes again into view. Redemption of both the individual and the church as a whole are exclusively by the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

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

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

Paul now warns of spiritual attacks against them which are bound to come. He indicates two sources. From without and from within. From without— “grievous wolves will enter in among you not sparing the flock.” In the north country, there are two types of wolves. One is the brush wolf which is little more than a coyote. They are predators but usually not able to bring down a deer. The other kind is the timber wolf. It is a much larger creature and heavier in weight. They are able to take not only a deer, but even the massive moose. Few creatures can withstand their attack. That is the idea Paul intended here.

Whether he was referring to the persistent attacks by Judaizers or the coming attacks of the government, in any event, he warned the church of attacks from without. He then warned them, of “your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.”

The word translated as perverse (diastrefw diastrepho), among other things, has the sense to ‘distort.’ As wolves in sheep’s clothing, warned against by Jesus in Matthew 7:15, there would arise from within the church ambitious would-be-

leaders, pushing their own distorted doctrine. They existed then and they exist today. Beware!

Why was Paul from the blood of all men? It was because he had not shunned to preach the entire counsel of God to everyone. Paul gives a charge to the Ephesian elders. He tells them to take heed unto themselves and the flock which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. They were to feed the sheep in the churches, because Christ gave himself for the church with His own blood. And he warns them that after his departing, there would be grievous wolves that could come among them. God hates the man that sows discord in the church. And those that are in the church that are not of God but of Satan can do a great deal of harm if we are not watching and being careful in all that we do.

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.

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 reminded them that his initial ministry at Ephesus was over the space of three years and during that time he had “ceased not to warn them night and day with tears.” Insight into the intensity of Paul’s ministry is found. He went night and day. Moreover, he literally wept over the burdens of the ministry and the young Christians there. A lesson for the present-day ministry is clear.

Paul now begins the conclusion of his remarks. He commended them to God. The word translated as commend (paratijhmi paratithemi), among other things, has the sense to ‘commit.’ As he was about to depart, all Paul could do was commit them to God and “the word of his grace.” They had been saved by grace and now Paul committed them to that same grace to spiritually preserve them.

The grace of God has the power to build us up. The word translated as able (dunamai dunamai) literally means ‘to give power.’ It is God’s grace which enables us to be built up spiritually. The word translated as build you up (epoikodomew epoikodomeo) is related to the idea of edifying. Both have the sense of ‘finishing a building’ or of ‘strengthening a building.’ It is the grace of God which strengthens both the believer individually as well as the church collectively. See I Corinthians 3:9, II Corinthians 5:1, and Ephesians 2:21.

That same grace is able “to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” As God’s children and joint heirs with Christ, we have a great potential inheritance awaiting in heaven. The degree of the inheritance is in

proportion to the degree which the grace of God is allowed to work in our lives in serving Him.

Paul warns of how that some would rise up speaking perverse things and drawing away those who are weak in their knowledge of God. Paul had been faithful to preach and teach for 3 ½ years. And I know he had prayed for the churches with great compassion and tears. But if they would draw to God's word, Paul tell them that it would build them up. Nothing strengthens a child of God like reading the Bible and drawing close to the Lord.

VII. Paul Reminds Them of His Honest Lifestyle

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.

Acts 20:35 I have showed you all things, how that so labouring 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.

In closing, Paul reminded the leadership of the Ephesian church that he had coveted nothing of them, which they well knew. He had worked on the side as a tentmaker to provide his necessities for he and his cohorts when occasion demanded it. Moreover, in so doing, he had set an example that in "so labouring 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 was no stranger to work. And in having an income, he was willing to help others. The comment of our Lord's statement may be a reference to the parable which He taught in Luke 14:12-14. Indeed, there is greater blessing in giving to another than in receiving for one's self.

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

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

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.

Paul then knelt in prayer “and prayed with them all.” Their mentor and perhaps their father in the faith was departing for what they all thought would be his last time. They all, one by one, fell upon his neck weeping and granting the kiss of brotherhood.

Though later events would allow Paul one more visit to the region, they did not know that then. They therefore sorrowed over the prediction he made that they “should see his face no more.” They thereupon accompanied him to the waiting ship which would take him to the vicinity of Jerusalem. Paul said he had coveted no man’s silver, gold or apparel.

Matthew Henry said this:

“Paul never aimed at worldly wealth. “I have coveted no man’s silver, gold, or apparel”; nor do you, then you will be easy. There were many in Ephesus, and many of those that had embraced the Christian faith, who were rich, had a great deal of money, and plate, and rich furniture, and wore very good clothes, and made a very good appearance. Now, Paul was not ambitious to live like them. Paul in effect was say I neither condemn them nor even them. I can live comfortably and usefully without living great. The false apostles desired to make a fair show in the flesh (Gal. 6:12), to make a figure in the world; but Paul did not do so. He knew how to want how to be abased.”

Paul says he taught them how to support the weak and reminded them of the words of the Lord when He said it is more blessed to give than to receive. In verse 36, Paul closes his message in prayer. And it really affected these elders. They were in great sorrow over the fact that they would not see Paul again. Those that we love are hard to lose, but if it is in the Will of God, we should accept it and rejoice that we can do things for God’s honor and glory. I am sure it affected Paul to know he would not see these men again on this earth.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.