

Acts 20:17-38

13 The 7 men in verse 4 and Luke leave by ship and Paul goes overland to make the most of his visit.

14-16 Notice all the details because Luke is with them. These are short stops to probably pick up cargo and people. Some of them are island ports. Miletus is 30 miles south of Ephesus. Paul had been in Ephesus 3 years. It would be difficult to pass by without contacting the leadership and making sure things were on track. That Pentecost of AD 57 fell on May 29. It would be the 25th anniversary of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

17 This is one of the few messages of Paul in Acts that is delivered to Christians. That is why it sounds more like his letters than it does the previous sermons. He sent a letter to the church asking for the elders to come and meet with him in Miletus. He would minister to the church through ministering to the elders that oversaw the church. It would take them about two days to get there.

18-19 Even though Paul was a powerful personality and highly intelligent, he had the tenderness and compassion of the Holy Spirit as he ministered. His love for the flock was evidenced by his tears. Humility was not something the Romans esteemed, but it is an absolute necessity for a leader in the church. Paul was following Jesus' model of servant/leader. Paul is not sailing directly to Syria because of one of these plots he mentioned.

20 Sometimes, what is helpful is not what is appreciated, but Paul didn't hesitate. His concern was for their eternal good, not to be popular. "house to house" may indicate that the Ephesian church is a network of house churches. Church buildings won't come until much later in church history.

21 The message is the same for both Jews and Greeks, yes even for the world. Repent of our sins and have faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

22-23 Literally "bound in Spirit" as if a prisoner of Christ going where he was ordered to go. It is the same term used in 22:29. He knows it will end in great difficulty, but he also knows he cannot be disobedient to God. He will be warned by a prophet in the next chapter but it sounds like he has already received numerous warnings presumably from those with the gift of prophecy in various churches.

24 Paul understood that to lose your life is to save it. (Mark 16:25) God had given him such a heart of love for his Lord, that he just wanted to complete his God given mission faithfully. May God give us all such a heart! May our lives testify to the gospel of God's grace.

25-27 He is saying "goodbye". He is also declaring that he has delivered his soul. The language reminds us of Ezekiel 3:18-19. What is the whole will of God? (Romans 12:1-2; 1Thessalonians 4:3; 5:18)

28 This is the God given job of all elders. First, we watch over ourselves. As we are to be examples to the flock, we must first make sure that we are staying submitted to the Lordship of Christ. Secondly, we are to watch over the flock and make sure that they continue to walk with the Lord. Notice that the Holy Spirit is the One that makes someone an elder. We are never clearly told in Scripture how elders are selected. We know the qualifications, and we know that Paul appointed them or his representatives such as the case with Titus. We can be certain they weren't elected.

This is an important verse in that it declares the elders should be the overseers (*episkopos*) and shepherds (*poimaino*/pastors) of the church. Jesus bought it with the precious price of His own blood, so we must be very careful in how we oversee and shepherd His flock.

29 Wolves are coming! They do not love the flock but want to use them for their own advantage. Shepherds are to stop wolves from doing their damage. (Ezekiel 22:27; Zeph 3:3; Mark 7:15; John 10:12-13)

30 This may be a prophetic utterance. John did have to deal with false teaching in Ephesus at the end of the first century. (1John 2:18-19; 2John 7)

31 Elders are to be constantly watching, discerning what is happening within the flock. Paul uses himself as an example of constantly warning people of the dangers of falling back into sin, and how he did this with a broken heart.

32 –34 Though Paul had a right to be supported, he worked to support himself. In that day there were itinerant preachers (the Cynics) that took up collections and used coercion to become wealthy. (They are still around) Paul did not want to give the appearance of doing something that could be used by Satan to stumble new believers. This was not always the case. He did accept support. It was case by case depending on the weaknesses of the local church. (2 Corinthians 11:8; Philippians 4:14-18) He actually supported some of his co-workers.

35 The quote is not in the Gospels and must be oral tradition or in a lost writing. The Greco-Roman culture emphasized reciprocity, but Jesus taught, and Paul reiterated, giving to those who cannot pay you back. (Luke 14:12-14)

36-38 Paul is planning on going to Rome and Spain. He will be incarcerated and eventually go to Rome. If the Pastoral Epistles are written during the imprisonment, as is suspected, then he actually does see Ephesus again. (1Timothy 1:3) Sometimes we draw wrong conclusions about what the Lord shows us, even the great Apostle Paul.