



## The Book of Acts - Chapter Twenty

### VIII Acts 18:23-21:16 - The Witness in Ephesus (continues)

#### Summary to Chapter Twenty

Following three years of mostly fruitful mission in Ephesus, which saw not just the city churches grow but many more in the province of Asia, Paul set off to visit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, intending to collect the substantial offerings made by the churches in those provinces, in order to take the money for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul departed soon after the riots in Ephesus, but he had planned to go before they had started. Even if his 'fighting with beasts in Ephesus' comment in 1 Corinthians 15:32 refers to this incident, it was not the cause of his departure.

Paul initially headed north, probably to Troas, before crossing over to Macedonia, visiting the churches there and being joined by Titus, who had come up from Corinth. He then headed south and spent three months in Corinth. He had intended sailing directly from Achaia to Syria but another plot by the Jews forced a change of plans and he again headed for Macedonia, where he stayed for Passover. He then crossed the Aegean Sea to Troas.

Paul spent a week in Troas, and on his last night there he hosted a large gathering in a room on the third floor of the building. A young man named Eutychus had chosen to sit by an open window and then fell asleep. He toppled out of the window, fell to the ground and was killed. Paul went down to him, laid on him and the Holy Spirit restored Eutychus back to life, totally unharmed.

The disciples departed the next morning by ship but Paul decided to walk to Assos, where he joined the ship before continuing the journey. Having spent 3 years in Ephesus, Paul knew that if he called in there, it would be difficult to make a quick exit, as many people would want to meet with him. So he sailed past there and stopped at Miletus instead, sent for the Ephesian elders and held a final meeting there. Paul's discourse in Miletus is the only example in Acts of him speaking to a purely Christian congregation and it reads more like one of his epistles than the other speeches he made that are recorded in Acts. It was a very emotional meeting with people who had become good friends of Paul. He was clearly loved and respected, and many knew this would probably be the last time they would ever see him. They sailed the next morning for Syria.

#### VIII.d Acts 20:1-6 - Through Macedonia and Greece

Paul made a further visit to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, probably spending the winter in Corinth.

<sup>1</sup> When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-bye and set out for Macedonia.

The Aegean Sea area map shows the route Paul would have taken during this part of his missionary journey.

[Acts 20:1](#)

The uproar most likely refers to the riot recorded in Acts 19:23-41.

Paul departed from Ephesus for Macedonia, probably going first to Philippi.



In the final days of his Ephesian ministry, after writing First Corinthians, see comments made on Acts 19:22, Paul had had considerable conflict with the Corinthian church. He had made a painful visit to them, probably by sea, and wrote a tearful letter upon his return to Ephesus (2 Corinthians 2:1-4), which he at first regretted having sent (2 Corinthians 7:8-9). That letter is now lost to us. As his time in Ephesus neared its completion, Paul wanted to return to Corinth, but feared how he might be received there after having sent the harsh letter. He evidently sent Titus ahead to 'test the waters' at Corinth. Upon leaving Ephesus, Paul did not head directly to Corinth by sea, but first went north, visiting the Christian communities along the way and hoping to meet up with Titus, as he returned from Corinth. Paul went to Troas, and then possibly on to other churches in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). In Macedonia, perhaps at Philippi, Thessalonica, or Berea, Titus finally joined him and brought the good news that the church in Corinth had repented of its opposition to Paul's leadership, and had become reconciled to him (2 Corinthians 7:5-16). Paul then wrote 2 Corinthians.

Paul wrote at least four letters to the Corinthian church, two of which were lost before they could be included in scripture, possibly being destroyed shortly after being received. Logical examination of scripture shows that, had the lost letters still existed and had become part of scripture, they would be 1 and 3 Corinthians, and the two letters we do have would be 2 and 4 Corinthians respectively.

<sup>2</sup> He travelled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece,

[Acts 20:2](#)

Many words of encouragement. The language used indicates his preaching and exhortations in Philippi, Berea and Thessalonica, and indeed everywhere he went, were long and many, ensuring he left them fully equipped and healthy in the knowledge of Jesus.

Greece, Greek Hellas, is another name for the province of Achaia, where Corinth was located.

<sup>3</sup> where he stayed three months. Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia.

[Acts 20:3](#)

Paul stayed at Corinth for three months, probably over the winter, when sea travel was more dangerous: <<Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go>> (1 Corinthians 16:6).

The Jews made a plot, not for the first time and, once again, they were unsuccessful. Some commentators suggest the Jews planned to attack Paul in or near Corinth in order to get the money, but that seems most unlikely as they would not begrudge alms for the poor in Jerusalem; they just wanted rid of Paul and all that he stood for.

Syria. Paul's goal was to sail to a Syrian port, with Jerusalem as the intended destination, before setting out again: <<After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also" >> (Acts 19:21). Paul wrote Romans, circa AD 56/57, during this final Corinthian visit. In it he explained that his reason for going to Jerusalem was to take a collection from the Gentile churches to the needy Christians in Jerusalem (Romans 15:22-29). For other references to this collection, see Acts 24:17, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9. Gathering this collection was one of the purposes behind the final visit to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, and the need to go back to Jerusalem before heading out for Rome and Spain: <<So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way>> (Romans 15:28).

He decided to go back through Macedonia. This would take Paul once again to the churches of Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi.

<sup>4</sup> He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.

Acts 20:4

He was accompanied. In discussing the collection for the saints in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Paul noted that it would be accompanied by official representatives from the churches. Their presence would give safety from robbery and also would provide a public guarantee of Paul's integrity in handling the funds. The men listed here as accompanying Paul represented all the areas of his missionary work.

Sopater of Berea is probably Sosipater in Romans 16:21.

Aristarchus, Gaius. See comments made on Acts 19:29.

Trophimus the Ephesian was later with Paul in Jerusalem and some Jews falsely accused Paul of taking him into the Temple Courts and gave that as one of the reasons for beating Paul, see Acts 21:29.

<sup>5</sup> These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas.

Acts 20:5

These men went on ahead. This group may have included all the representatives or just the two Asians, who perhaps arranged for the final voyage from Troas. See comments on Acts 16:8 for more information on this city.

Waited for us indicates that Luke is also a member of the group with Paul.

<sup>6</sup> But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

Acts 20:6

Feast of Unleavened Bread. The seven day festival that follows immediately after the Passover celebrations was a traditional holy time for Jews to celebrate their release from bondage in Egypt. It now represents the release of all Christians from the bondage of slavery to

sin, as it marks the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul would no doubt have reminded the Macedonians as well to: <<Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth>> (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

#### VIII.e Acts 20:7-12 - Eutychus raised from the dead at Troas

The journey to Jerusalem continued, with an incident at Troas in which Paul was involved in the restoration of the life of a young man called Eutychus. Paul's key activity in Troas was on the last day, a Sunday, of his 7 day stay. The room they were in was no doubt full and airless; oil lamps were burning to allow people to read scriptures, and to light the room, adding to the smoky, airless atmosphere. Eutychus no doubt sat in the open window space on the third floor to get some air but, being a young man, he perhaps lost his focus and was overcome by the late hour and the smoky atmosphere. He then fell asleep, toppled from the window and was killed by the fall. Paul went down to him, laid on him and then declared him to be fit and well again. This is another example of God's miraculous powers, and of his grace and mercy.

<sup>7</sup> On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

#### Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week. This is the first reference in Acts to worship on Sunday.

To break bread is communion, which was probably a regular event at church meetings rather than specific to Sundays.

Sunday is the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10). Some people hold Sunday to be the Christian Sabbath, due to the resurrection and Pentecost both occurring on a Sunday, and they believe the Sabbath Day commandment to be perpetual and not part of the now superseded ceremonial law. Others are more relaxed about Sundays.

<sup>8</sup> There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. <sup>9</sup> Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead.

#### Acts 20:8-9

The story has a touch of humour and a happy outcome. The etymology of the name Eutychus is 'lucky, fortunate'.

The many lamps (v.8) and long sermon likely led Eutychus to seek air in the window, but he fell asleep anyway, and fell three stories to his death.

Picked up dead, not as dead, indicates his actual death.

<sup>10</sup> Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" <sup>11</sup> Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. <sup>12</sup> The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

## Acts 20:10-12

Threw himself on the young man. Paul went down to him, laid on him, similar to Elijah: <<Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him!">> (1 Kings 17:21), and Elisha: <<Then he got on the bed and lay upon the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out upon him, the boy's body grew warm>> (2 Kings 4:34). Eutychus' spirit returned and Paul resumed the meeting, albeit in a different format, taking communion and talking more informally as a group. Verse 12 is a real understatement: The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

Broke bread and ate. They took communion as a standard part of their meeting rather than in celebration of Eutychus' life, as some commentators claim. It was a planned part of their meeting (v.7). Of course, it would have been appropriate to give thanks for the young man's restoration but the Lord's Supper is far more than that.

Talking until daylight. This was Paul's final meeting with most of these disciples and so he spent a long time teaching, just as Moses had done: <<Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey." Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words">> (Exodus 24:7-8).

Jeremiah 9:21a states: <<Death has climbed in through our windows>>. As noted earlier, Eutychus means one that had good fortune. He fell from the window to his death but the Holy Spirit intervened and restored his life through the actions of Paul. The message here is clear: 'don't fall asleep during sermons; you might get a rude awakening'.

Some say Satan designed this event to disrupt Paul, others that God wanted to warn people to heed his word. It could just have been an avoidable accident. It was an example of God's love, grace and mercy, and of his awesome power over all life. It was also a sign to strengthen Paul's Gospel message.

## VIII.f Acts 20:13-38 - Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders

This section commences with a detailed itinerary of the voyage to Miletus (vv.13-16). Paul's Miletus address is the sole example in Acts of a major speech to Christians. Of all Paul's speeches in Acts, it has the most in common with his letters, which were addressed to Christians. Paul held out his own ministry as an example for the Ephesian elders (vv.17-21), spoke of his future prospects (vv.22-27), warned of coming heresies (vv.28-31), and encouraged a proper attitude toward material goods (vv.32-35). Paul says his final, emotional farewell and sets sail for Jerusalem (vv.36-38).

<sup>13</sup> We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot. <sup>14</sup> When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene.



A view of Assos harbour in the distance.

#### Acts 20:13-14

Paul chose to walk to Assos while the rest sailed, perhaps seeking solitude to be with the Lord, whom he clearly trusted for, although it was quicker to walk to Assos, it was reputed as a difficult and dangerous journey, according to Homer Iliad 6. Eustathus, commenting on Homer says, 'It

was enough to kill one to go on foot to Assos'.

Paul would follow his own teaching as he instructs Timothy to: <<Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus>> (2 Timothy 2:3).

Going there on foot. It is often good to seek time alone with God and just to wait on him. Jesus too had sent his disciples and friends away in the boat to allow him to be alone: <<Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd>> (Mark 6:45), and: <<Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself>> (John 6:15), then rejoined them later on: <<Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down>> (Mark 6:51a).

The remains of Assos include a monumental temple of Athena on the acropolis, a market, portions of the city wall, and a Greek theatre.

<sup>15</sup> The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Kios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus.

#### Acts 20:15

Kios was the birthplace of Homer, and Samos was the birthplace of the mathematician Pythagoras.

Miletus was a major Aegean harbour, one of the great cities of the province of Asia in Paul's day.

The map shows the route taken with the ship traversing through the many islands that litter the Aegean Sea and are mostly tourist destinations today.

<sup>16</sup> Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

<sup>17</sup> From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.



#### Acts 20:16-17

Paul stopped at several places, perhaps unknown to many of us, but familiar to the ancient poets and historians. He was on his way to Jerusalem, where he last was about 6 years before,

see Acts 18:21-22. He came to Miletus as he didn't want to stay in Ephesus just to the north as he would have been tempted to stay and he had work to do, wanting to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost. So he sent for the elders and other key people in Ephesus to come and see him for one last meeting.

Having spent three years in Ephesus, Paul knew he would be delayed with too many farewells there, so he chose to sail past the city so that he could reach Jerusalem by the feast of Pentecost.

The four harbours of Miletus have long since filled up with sediment from the Meander River. Excavations at Miletus have revealed the substantial theatre, an odeion, i.e. a small covered theatre, an agora or market place, and the Delphinium, dedicated to Apollo. One excavated building at Miletus is considered by some to be a synagogue.

The Ephesian church leaders are called elders, Greek presbyteroi, and are in v.28 addressed as overseers, Greek episkopoi, sometimes translated as bishops, who are to care for or shepherd the flock, i.e. the role of pastors. This overlap of terminology indicates that elders, overseers, and pastors likely refer to the same office in the NT era at least.

<sup>18</sup> When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. <sup>19</sup> I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. <sup>20</sup> You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.

#### Acts 20:18-20

When they arrived. The elders are probably a mix of those Paul taught personally and others who were trained by those he left behind. Some commentators say it included the 12 disciples who had only been baptised by John prior to meeting Paul, but there is no supporting evidence either way.

I served the Lord. Paul had a servant heart like his Lord: <<For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” >> (Mark 10:45), and: <<Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God>> (Romans 1:1). He had served in all humility: <<Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave>> (Matthew 20:26-27).

Have not hesitated. See comments on vv.26-27.

Great humility and tears. Just as: <<Jesus wept>> (John 11:35), and Jacob <<struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favour>> (Hosea 12:4a), Paul was also an emotional man: <<For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ>> (Philippians 3:18).

Taught you. Paul reminded them of what and how he taught, and the work he had done. He was now passing on the work for them to continue likewise: <<Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you>> (Philippians 4:9). Paul had treated them respectfully and gently as with others: <<but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you>> (1 Thessalonians 2:7-10).

From house to house reminds us of the early church model in Jerusalem some 20 years or so before this: <<Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ>> (Acts 5:42).

<sup>21</sup> I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

#### Acts 20:21

Paul was a catholic preacher. He proclaimed the word to Jew and Greek alike. As a Jew, he loved his nation, his people and his heritage. As a follower of Jesus, specifically chosen as an apostle to the Gentiles, see Acts 9:15, he had no problem in breaking down his inner prejudice against Gentiles that were part of his heritage and former mindset, and found he could mix freely and comfortably with all who would listen to him concerning Jesus and the Gospel. Paul preached the word as a testimony to them, if they received it, and against them, if they rejected it. God's teaching is our gain: <<You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them? "From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you>> (Isaiah 48:6). The word is intended for public proclamation to individuals and groups. To reach those who did not come to church he went from house to house.

Have faith in our Lord Jesus. Paul's lack of fear from the outcome of his life was his faith in, and perhaps his great desire to proclaim, his Lord and saviour: <<Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long. But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot>> (Jeremiah 20:8-9).

<sup>22</sup> "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup> I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

#### Acts 20:22-23

Compelled, Greek *deō*, 'to bind, tie, constrain', indicates that the Holy Spirit was giving Paul an exceptionally strong sense of compulsion that he had to go quickly and directly to Jerusalem, even though he knew that prison and hardships awaited him there.

Paul must have reflected on the similarities between his present journey and Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, where he was to die (Matthew 16:21 and 20:18, Mark 10:32-33, Luke 9:51, 9:53 and 18:31-33). Paul must have wondered if his life would also end there, see v.24.

Not knowing what will happen. Although he sensed danger ahead, Paul did not spend time worrying or contemplating what might happen, but focused on his work. After all, his Lord had commanded all disciples not to worry: <<Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear>> (Luke 12:22), and Paul was not a man to deliberately go against the will and command of God.

In every city the Holy Spirit warns me. Such testimony probably came to Paul through both direct revelation from the Holy Spirit and from Christian prophets: <<After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judæa. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles'" >> (Acts 21:10-11).

Prison and hardships are facing me. Discipleship is a tough choice: <<If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters —

yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple>> (Luke 14:26). That does not mean hate your life in a hasty fashion as: <<If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me!>> (Job 14:13); see also Job 3:1-16 and Jeremiah 20:14-18; but in regard to Christ being Lord of our lives and living in full submission to him. Paul did not want to discard his life but to endure everything that came his way until he had completed faithfully all that he had been instructed to do; to finish his testimony as the two witnesses will: <<We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign>> (Revelation 11:17). It was Jesus that had established Paul's ministry: <<I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service>> (1 Timothy 1:12), and through him we will all receive the strength to conclude it.

<sup>24</sup> However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

#### Acts 20:24

Paul often expressed his willingness to suffer for Christ, e.g. 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 6:4-10 and 12:9-10, Philippians 1:20-21, 2:17 and 3:8, and Colossians 1:24. In 2 Timothy 4:7, he used the same expression of finishing his race or course, Greek *dromos*.

Our life's work is a race: <<Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us>> (Hebrews 12:1). We should, like Paul, desire to run our race and finish it with joy. A Christian life should be a joyful life, irrespective of our circumstances, because of our hope in the promises of God through Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. <sup>27</sup> For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

#### Acts 20:25-27

None of us know the hour our soul will be demanded of us, see Luke 12:20, or if we will see friends and loved ones again, but Paul stated with certainty and accuracy that he would not see these people again, clearly through a revelation from the Holy Spirit. All we can be certain of is the Kingdom of Glory is our end and the Kingdom of Grace is our way.

For Paul's claim to be innocent of their blood, see Ezekiel 33:1-6, Ezekiel's responsibilities as a watchman, and comments on Acts 18:6. Paul is saying that he is not accountable before God for any future doctrinal or moral error that might come to the Ephesian church, for giving the reason why he is not culpable; he did not hesitate to proclaim to you the word of God.

The whole will of God refers to the entirety of God's redemptive plan, as it is revealed in scripture. Even though some parts of God's word were unpopular or difficult, Paul did not omit any of them in his preaching. In refusing to pass over teachings that might have offended some, Paul gave a courageous example that is a model for all who would teach God's word after him.

<sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

## Acts 20:28

Keep watch over yourselves. Spiritual leaders need first of all to guard their own spiritual and moral purity. Paul exhorted the leaders to care for themselves first, as it is leaders who are often the first to be attacked either spiritually, verbally by strangers or members, and physically. Unless they are strong in mind, body and spirit, they cannot fulfil Paul's second point - to care for the flock. The church is precious: <<For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life>> (Isaiah 43:3-4), and then he gave his own blood as the full purchase price, not as a deposit.

The church of God, which he bought with his own blood. The last part of this phrase refers to the blood of Christ, poured out in his atoning death on the Cross, e.g. <<God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood>> (Romans 3:25a), <<Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!>> (Romans 5:9), and: <<In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace>> (Ephesians 1:7). The reference to God in the first part of this phrase, the church of God, most likely is a reference to Christ as the head of the church and as God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. Alternatively, if God the Father is in view in the phrase the church of God, then his own blood is a reference to the blood of God's own, that is, of 'God's own Son', which would be a legitimate alternative reading of the Greek. Some Greek manuscripts read 'the church of the Lord' rather than the church of God, which would clarify it as Jesus in view, but this may be a human copyist's interpretation.

<sup>29</sup> I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup> Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

## Acts 20:29-30

Paul showed remarkable insight into the future situation of the Ephesian church, probably through a revelation from the Holy Spirit. The letters of Paul to Timothy, who served Ephesus several years later, attest to the presence of false teachers, who were ravaging the church for their own gain and who had indeed come from within the church, in fact, from among the elders themselves, even from your own number. See 1 Timothy 1:19-20 and 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 1:15, 2:17-18 and 3:1-9. Hermogenes and Philetus are two such men who appear to mislead churches.

Paul warned them to beware of the wolves that will decimate the flock from without, and also from within. Beware not just the wolf in sheep's clothing but also the wolf in shepherd's clothing.

<sup>31</sup> So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

<sup>32</sup> "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

## Acts 20:31-32

Three years included the three months and the two years in Ephesus that Luke had mentioned earlier, see Acts 19:8-10. Paul again challenged the elders to follow the example of his ministry with them, circa AD 52-55, and offered a benediction dedicating their service to the power and leadership of God.

Warn night and day shows the level of intensity and commitment he had, just like the prophetess Anna: <<There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying>> (Luke 2:36-37), and those determined to kill Paul, at that time known as Saul, at the very beginning of his journey in Damascus: <<but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him>> (Acts 9:24).

Paul commits them to God: <<So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good>> (1 Peter 4:19).

He particularly emphasised that the word of God was to be central in their ministries, for the word can build up believers; it teaches the Gospel of salvation by grace so that the final inheritance, i.e. end-time salvation, is received by those who belong to God.

Sanctified. That is, made holy in heart and life by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>33</sup> I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. <sup>35</sup> In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Acts 20:33-35

I have not coveted indicates Paul's contentment: <<I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances>> (Philippians 4:11), and does not desire or begrudge any of the trappings that the wealthy believers from Ephesus had: <<Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account>> (Philippians 4:17), Moses had taken nothing from his people: <<Then Moses became very angry and said to the Lord, "Do not accept their offering. I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them">> (Numbers 16:15), neither had Samuel: <<Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the Lord and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right." "You have not cheated or oppressed us," they replied. "You have not taken anything from anyone's hand." Samuel said to them, "The Lord is witness against you, and also his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand">> (1 Samuel 12:3-5), so too Paul, although he seems to indicate covetousness may have been an inherent weakness in his original character: <<But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead>> (Romans 7:8). He had been content, in fact determined, to work for his living and for that of his companions.

The words the Lord Jesus himself said. This saying from Jesus is not recorded in the Gospels, a reminder that Jesus did many things that are not recorded in scripture: <<Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written>> (John 21:25). This saying was no doubt passed on to Paul by those who had heard Jesus teach.

Give. On Christian generosity, Paul wrote: <<For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your

completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little" >> (2 Corinthians 8:9-15); the latter statement refers to manna and is from Exodus 16:18.

<sup>36</sup> When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. <sup>37</sup> They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. <sup>38</sup> What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

#### Acts 20:36-38

He knelt down with them all and prayed. Paul and all the others were on their knees: <<For this reason I kneel before the Father>> (Ephesians 3:14), just as we all will be one day: <<It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God'" >> (Romans 14:11), no doubt giving mutual thanks for all that God had done to build such a strong, vibrant, growing community in Asia, and surely asking his blessing for all of that to continue. It was probably in response to the word Paul had just brought to them as the text suggests Paul's messages were always powerful, warranting a response, usually of thanksgiving and repentance.

As Paul prepared to depart, the Ephesian elders grieved most of all because they would not see him again (v.25). Although Paul was in frequent conflict with hostile unbelievers and with false teachers in the churches, this verse shows that Paul's churches had deep affection for him; no doubt many thought of him primarily as a kind and gentle pastor, 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Timothy 3:3, 2 Timothy 2:24 and Titus 3:2. They probably supplied him with provisions for his voyage.

They all wept. It is proper that friends weep at parting as with Jonathon and David: <<After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together – but David wept the most>> (1 Samuel 20:41): tears of sadness at parting; tears of thanks and blessing for the knowing of each other in friendship; and that they are going away on God's mission.

Paul travelled to Jerusalem by sea and then by land. Along the way he had sorrowful farewells and ominous warnings from each Christian community about the dangers facing him in Jerusalem. The warnings were reminiscent of the forebodings that had accompanied Jesus on his own final journey to Jerusalem; see Luke 13:33-35 and 18:31-33.

Prayer should always glorify God: <<After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you">> (John 17:1).