

PAUL WRAPS UP THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Acts 20:1-38 / May 56 A.D. – May 57 A.D.

As Paul wraps up his third missionary journey, he delivers a moving challenge to the Elders of the Ephesian Church.

Acts 20:1-6 Personal Encouragement

Luke compresses several things that happened during this out and back. During his three years in Ephesus, Paul wrote at least two, maybe three letters to the Corinthian church. He promised them he would return which he did on this trip. Also, Paul was collecting money from the churches in Macedonia to give to the Jerusalem Church. Be that as it may, the men who accompanied Paul were men he had led to the Lord and it must have been very special for them to join him on his journey. Notice, also, the “we” language which indicates Dr. Luke joined the team as they went through Philippi.

Because of the plot against Paul, they retraced their steps and came again to Troas.

Acts 20:7-12 Personal Ministry

The moral of this story: don't fall asleep in church or you could die!

After teaching literally all night, Paul left on the next leg of his journey.

Acts 20:13-38 Challenge to the Ephesian Elders

Why did Paul walk from Troas to Assos? Nate suggested, and we agree, it was probably because there were people from Troas with whom Paul wanted to spend more time discipling and encouraging them in their walk with the Lord.

Why did Paul pass Ephesus and call for the Elders of the Ephesian Church to come to him in Miletus thirty miles away? Most likely, because Paul knew that if he went into Ephesus it would be weeks before he could get away.

In his challenge to the Elders of the Ephesian Church, Paul reminded them of his ministry as a model for them to follow; he served in humility and he taught the Word (vv18-21).

As Paul traveled from church to church, the Holy Spirit continually revealed that imprisonment and affliction awaited Paul. This was probably through certain believers exercising their spiritual gift of prophesy in the various churches. This revelation Paul shared with the Ephesian Elders in verses 22-27 along with his opinion he would not see them again in this life.

Then, in verses 28-32 Paul exhorted the Elders to guard and care for the church family in Ephesus. He warned them that even from the ranks of the Elders, some would attempt to gain a following and lead believers away. He again emphasized the teaching of God's Word as the primary means of guarding and caring for the church family.

In 33-34 Paul reminded the Elders he had financially provided for himself so that no one could bad mouth Paul as being in ministry for the money.

In 35-38 Luke recorded the tearful goodbyes. Paul really loved these men and these men really loved Paul. Again, we see that wonderful balance in Paul of a rugged man with a soft heart.

Did you notice who Paul sent for from Ephesus? Was it *the* Pastor of the Ephesian Church?

Jesus' design is that the local church is to be guided, guarded and cared for by a plurality of Elders. He never intended one man to be the spiritual authority of a local church. Some might say that Acts 20 simply describes how the early church was governed but doesn't prescribe how the church is to be governed. But in his letters to Timothy and Titus where he gives the qualifications for Elders, the Holy Spirit, through Paul prescribes that the local church is to be led by a plurality of Elders.

And it makes so much more sense. It is far better to be led by the collective wisdom, experience, knowledge, spiritual gifts and temperments of several godly men than by one man.

Acts 20 is a reminder of two primary tasks of the Elders to guard the church family and to care for the church family. The way to both guard and care is through teaching and applying God's Word.

I so appreciate and love the Elders and Elder candidates of Grace Church. I deeply trust these men; I trust their character, their motives and their wisdom. And I want to reiterate to you, our church family, that the Elders are available to you if you need counsel or encouragement or prayer. We would love to have you join us Wednesday evenings or if that is not convenient, we will meet you at a place and time most convenient for you.

For those new to us, our Elders are Bob Bush, Jim Croman, Phil de Martimprey and myself.

Our Elder candidates are Eric Benson and Nick Lowther.

Voice of the Martyrs Needs for November:

bath towels, wash cloths, disposable antiseptic wipes.