

## Part 51 Paul's Final Farewell

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2016

### † Acts 20:17-38

We pick our story up from where we left off last Wednesday night with Paul's continued travels. He is making his way to Jerusalem to give them the collections that were taken up for them from Macedonia and Achaia. Tonight he calls for the elders in Ephesus to come see him one more time so he can bid them farewell. We preached a message about this just this past Sunday morning but we will cover these verses just the same.

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

Paul is still in Miletus and for whatever reason he doesn't travel the 30 or so miles to Ephesus himself, instead he sends for the elders of the Church of Ephesus to come to him so he can talk with them before he sets sail toward Jerusalem. The elders of the Church would have been the Pastors, Bishops, and Overseers of the Church. These were those that made sure the Church operated as it should. I'm sure the elders were anxious to hear what Paul had to say to them and most likely took off as soon as they received the word.

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:

He starts out by reminding them of when he first arrived in Ephesus and all of the problems that he endured to bring them the Gospel. He mentions how the Jews laid in wait for him to try and harm him. Paul's tears were not because of his own personal tragedies, his tears were because of how the Gospel was being impeded from being preached due to the opposition.

20 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.

He goes on to describe the ministry that he had the 3-years he was in Ephesus. He taught folks in the public and in the private. He went from house to house teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't make any difference between the Jews or the Greeks, the Gospel was intended for all audiences and he was faithful to teach it to anyone who would listen.

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

Notice that Paul isn't traveling to Jerusalem because of his own desire to do so; he is doing it because he is bound in the spirit to go. The Holy Ghost is prompting him to go there. It's a strong urging that he cannot escape. And, he has no idea what will happen to him when he gets there. He says "not knowing the things that shall befall me there." He is expecting to perhaps be arrested, stoned, beaten, or killed. But, he isn't going to let that stop him from going. Too many people today will not attempt anything unless they know every single minute detail. They refuse to step out on the things that God is guiding them to step out on because of the fear of the unknown. What will I do? How will I be accepted? What will happen to me? So instead of going in obedience, most will just decide it isn't God's will after all. But not Paul.

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

All Paul has to go on is what he has already experienced in every city he has been to so far and that was opposition to the Gospel. He was in bond and afflictions everywhere that he went. We read off that long list of trials that Paul endured in his travels this past Sunday in our message. He lists 20 different obstacles he faced:

1. Labours	2. Stripes	3. Prison
4. Beaten	5. Stoned	6. Shipwrecked
7. Perils of water	8. Perils of robbers	9. Perils of countrymen
10. Perils of heathen	11. Perils in the city	12. Perils of wilderness
13. Perils in the sea	14. Perils false brethren	15. Weariness
16. Pain	17. Hunger	18. Thirst
19. Cold	20. Nakedness	

If Paul could look into the future he would know about the things that were going to occur while he was there, including this one that we will be studying more about next week in **Acts 21:10-15**: And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. 15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

Paul's resolve would not be broken no matter what anyone said or what was in store for him. That is what he says in our next verse:

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.

He says that he does not count his life dear unto himself. He took no thought of his own personal loss or affliction as long as he could finish his course with joy. He was willing to sacrifice his own personal safety and his own well-being for the sake of the Gospel. His greatest desire in life was to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God.

Shouldn't that be the desire of every single Christian? To finish our race with joy and sharing the Gospel? Wouldn't we all love to hear: **Matthew 25:23b: ...Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**

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 is giving his final farewell. He doesn't expect to ever see these men again. He they **shall see his face no more**. He knows many trials are before him and if he does survive Jerusalem then he plans to go to Rome to preach the Gospel and not come back to Ephesus.

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.

Here Paul is declaring that he preached to all men and he preached the full counsel of God. He didn't hold anything back from anyone and he cannot be accused of not trying to reach everyone with the Gospel.

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.

Now Paul is urging the elders of the Church to make certain to feed the church with the full counsel of God as well. Teach them the doctrine and the truth. Get them grounded in it so they know it and no one can fool them with any false doctrine. This is important because Jesus gave his very life and blood for the Church and there is no greater message or need for the human race than to know the truth of the Gospel.

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

One thing Paul is sure about is there will be false teachers that creep into the Church trying to damage the truth of the Gospel. These grievous wolves will come in to try and destroy the Church. The Lord Jesus warned about these types of folks: **Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.**

The Apostle John warned about them as well: **1 John 4:1: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.**

Paul was wanting to make sure the Church at Ephesus was on top of it's game and to be looking for these kind of things to happen and deal with them before damage is done.

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

Then he warns them that the attacks would also come from within the Church itself. There would be those that will spread lies about the leadership to try and stir things up. They want to draw people to themselves so they spread perverse lies about the pastor and elders. He said "perverse things." This means they are distorting the truth, perverting it.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

It seems that the whole 3-years Paul was with them in Ephesus he continually warned them about such things. He said he warned them "night and day with tears." His love for the Church and the people was so great that he cried over their well-being. He advises them to watch out for these things and remember what he told them.

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.

So Paul is handing over the reins of the Church to these elders. He has labored and done his best to teach doctrine and to protect the Church while he was there but now it is their time to take over.

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.

Here Paul is reminding them that he did not take any money or payment from them while he was there. He worked a job himself to support himself in the ministry. Paul wanted to make sure that after he was gone nothing could be said about his character or that he could be accused of being a hireling because all he did was love the Church and didn't take anything from it all.

35 I have shewed 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.

Paul then encourages them to keep helping the poor. Reminding them the love and graciousness of the Lord Jesus to those who are less fortunate. He said for them to remember what the Lord Jesus said when he said "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Right away the nay sayers will say: "but Jesus never said that." Okay, I'll grant you those words are not recorded in the Bible that the Lord Jesus said that but that doesn't mean that he didn't. You've got to remember that the Apostle Paul spent 3-years in the Arabian dessert being taught by the Lord. Also, let's not forget what the Apostle John said in the last verse of his Gospel: **John 21:25: And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.**

So there are a lot of things that Jesus said and did that we are not privileged to know about but men like Paul knew about them.

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,

What a tearful goodbye this was. These Church elders are greatly saddened at the thought they would never see Paul again. So much so that they are weeping and hugging and kissing him before he boards his ship.

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 thing that was upsetting them the most was when he told them that they would never see his face again. If they had cell phones like we do today they would have all stood by the boat and took selfies with Paul before he left so they would have something to remember him by.

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And we will end here tonight and pick back up in Chapter 21 next Wednesday Lord willing. With only 8 more chapters to go we will be finished with this study in about 16 or 17 more weeks.