

# The Book of Acts / The History of the Apostles

## Lesson 64 – Acts 19-20 – Paul's Third Journey Part 3

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### INTRODUCTION

Paul's third journey, spanning approximately 53-57 AD, represents the final and most extensive phase of his apostolic travels as recorded in the book of Acts. This journey solidifies the Gospel's establishment in key urban centers of Asia Minor and Greece, following the foundational work of his first two journeys. After concluding his second journey and briefly returning to Antioch, Paul embarks on this new phase, revisiting the churches he previously planted and establishing a home base in Ephesus.

This period of ministry is characterized by a powerful demonstration of the Holy Spirit's empowerment, leading to both widespread belief and fierce opposition. In Ephesus, the influence of the Truth was so extensive that it challenged the city's economic and religious foundations, culminating in a major riot. We will also follow Paul on his farewell journey toward Jerusalem, marked by a poignant farewell.

Through these events, the narrative highlights the ongoing expansion of the early Church, the deep bonds between Paul and the communities he served, and the persistent challenges faced by believers in a hostile world.

### ACTS 20:1-16 – PAUL'S TRAVELS

Acts 20 begins very simply by detailing Paul leaving Ephesus and traversing Macedonia and staying in Greece for three months. Paul is maintaining the same pattern that he had previously had in Galatia, traveling back through previously planted churches to give them much exhortation.

The literal translation is “encouraging them with many words.” The word *encourage* in verse 1 is “parakaleō.” This can mean to encourage, comfort, or beg (implore).

Acts 2:40, 11:23, and 14:22 fit this context. The “parakaleō” would be to stay in the faith, be separate and secure while living in this world; difficulties will happen, but we must remain confident in the Lord.

In verse 3, we are informed that there was a plot (presumably to kill Paul) by the Jews while at the port or at sea. So, Paul decides to go back through Macedonia to avoid the trap.

In verse 4, we see that in Greece, Paul was accompanied by seven men: Sopater of Berea (Macedonian), Aristarchus and Secundus (Macedonian), Gaius (Derbe, Galatia), Timothy (Greek and Jew), Tychicus, and Trophimus (Asia, Ephesian). As we have noted before, verse 5 changes from the third person to the second person plural. This is where Luke rejoins Paul. This means that there were seven notable persons with Paul as he traveled through Greece. Then eight were with him as he traveled from Troas (the seven went ahead of Paul) to Miletus.

Verses 7-12 give an account of Paul teaching in Troas for a week, and on the last day, after having a meal, he spends the entire night teaching. A young man, Eutychus, falls asleep and

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falls from the third floor and was immediately dead. Paul, as an instrument of God, revives the boy. Then Paul eats something and continues teaching until daybreak.

Verses 13-16: Paul travels by land to Assos while others go by boat. There, they picked up Paul and sailed from there to Mitylene, then to Chios, then to Samos, and finally to Miletus. Paul was determined to get to Jerusalem, so he did not go to Ephesus; rather, he called for the elders of the church to meet him in Miletus (verse 17).

### ACTS 20:17-38 – PAUL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

Of all the monologues in Acts, this section speaks to those believers and provides details of Paul's wishes for those he ministered to and with.

Verse 17: Paul calls for the *elders* (presbyterous). This refers to the overseers of the local assembly, a term used interchangeably with *overseers* (episkopous) in verse 28, and uses the verb infinitive shepherd (poimainō), which the noun is translated as *pastor* in Ephesians 4:11. This reflects the biblical leadership of local assemblies. This summons underscores Paul's intentionality in mentoring leaders before his departure.

Verses 18-19: "You yourselves *know*" (epistamai) is an appeal to their direct knowledge, emphasizing empirical verification. Historically, Paul's Ephesian ministry spanned about two and a half years, marked by miracles, opposition from Jews, and personal hardships. The term implies bond-service to the Lord, with "humility" denoting an understanding of his role in light of God and Jesus. He did this with *tears*, pain and turmoil while working, and *trials* (peirasmois), literally temptations. But this is not temptation as we understand it; this is about the affliction and persecutions that appeal to Paul's flesh to quit.

Verse 20: "Did not *shrink*" indicates hesitation or withdrawal; this is used with the negative adjective to affirm boldness. "Declaring" (proclaiming) and "teaching" reflect Paul's methods, with *publicly* (dēmosia) referring to synagogue, markets, or other public locations, and "house to house" referring to more private gatherings. Historically, this reflects Paul's comprehensive evangelism in Ephesus, covering all "profitable" essential doctrines without omission.

Verse 21: "Solemnly testifying" is an emphatic form of the word *witness*, with "repentance" (metanoia) as a reconsideration of truth and God, and "faith" being doctrines to be believed concerning Jesus Christ. This mirrors the gospel's universal call, addressing both Jews and Greeks to be reconciled to God.

Verses 22-23: Here, "bound in spirit" reflects Acts 19:21. The text does not say that the Holy Spirit purposed Paul to go to Jerusalem, but rather Paul purposed in his spirit to go to Jerusalem. Although he doesn't know the specifics of what awaits him, he is certain that suffering is ahead, as the Holy Spirit continually confirms. This question will be addressed later.

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Verse 24: He makes it clear that his own well-being is secondary to completing the mission entrusted to him. The imagery of finishing a race or course reflects his commitment, and his focus remains on proclaiming the message of God's grace. We know that Paul does just that (2 Timothy 4:6-8). What is unclear is whether or not going to Jerusalem was part of that plan.

Verses 25-27: Here, he expresses his conviction that his time with the Ephesian believers is ending. Drawing on the imagery of a watchman from Ezekiel 3:18-19 and 33:6 (where watchmen are accountable for warnings), Paul declares that he has faithfully shared the entirety of God's message with them, making himself blameless regarding their spiritual well-being, both those who believed and those who opposed the Gospel. His boldness and thoroughness in teaching are emphasized, completing his heartfelt farewell.

Verse 28: "Be on guard" (*prosechō*) is a present imperative for continual vigilance. The "flock" refers to the Ephesian congregation, appointed by the Spirit (not human election). "Church of God... purchased with His own blood" affirms Christ's effective substitutionary death and the fact that believers are bought with a price.

Verses 29-30: "Savage wolves" is metaphorical for false teachers (as we see in the Gospels), who will "arise." It is in the future indicative, indicating a prophetic utterance and an absolute certainty. The threats are internal ("from among your own selves"), emphasizing doctrinal perversion to gain followers for their own gain.

Speaking perverse things is not vulgarity but making crooked the straight things of the Lord (Acts 13:8-10). The angle of the savage wolves is to twist the truth and make it sound reasonable and godly.

Verse 31: "Be on the alert" (*grēgoreō*) is present imperative, paralleling verse 28 in vigilance. Paul's model of persistent admonition for a long period of time is retold to emphatically instruct them on what they need to do. If Paul needed to repeat and guard, what does this mean for those who are not apostles?

Verse 32: "Commend" (*paratithēmi*) is better understood as establish. Paul has given and is giving them everything they need to perform the work. "Word of His grace" refers to Scripture or the gospel message. It promises edification and hope for the future so that they will be able to stand firm against the coming onslaught.

Verses 33-35: Paul provides a practical understanding of ministry in which he never demanded to get paid, but rather supported himself through, modeling self-sufficiency. "It is more blessed to give than to receive") is not a direct quote but represents the mind of Christ (Mark 10:45; Luke 21:1-4; Philippians 2:5-8), emphasizing generosity, cited as authoritative without contradiction to canonical Gospels.

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Verses 36-38: Actions are sequential ("knelt," "prayed," "wept," "embraced," "kissed," "accompanied"), depicting emotional closure. Kneeling in prayer reflects Jewish custom (Acts 21:5), with kisses as an affectionate farewell. Kiss (kataphileō) indicates a display of love; this can be a kiss, but it can be demonstrated in other forms, like hugs. The grief centers on Paul's prediction of permanent separation, concluding the scene with them escorting Paul to the ship.

### Conclusion

Acts 20 reveals Paul's unwavering commitment to the gospel amid trials and transitions, from his encouraging journeys through Macedonia and Greece, to the miraculous restoration of Eutychus in Troas, and culminating in his poignant farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus. The chapter's core message emphasizes faithful stewardship of Paul and then charges the elders: leaders must guard the flock, proclaim the full counsel of God without compromise, anticipate internal (and external) threats from false teachers, and to model self-sacrificial service rooted in grace (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Ultimately, it calls believers to entrust one another to God's word, which builds up and is an assurance of our inheritance, highlighting that ministry prioritizes service over personal gain, even in the face of separation and suffering.