

Acts of the Apostles

Week 26: Acts 20:12-21:16

Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Leaders (20:12-17)

- Luke reports that he and the rest of Paul's team sailed for Assos where they had made arrangements to rendezvous with Paul who had traveled there by foot for some unknown reason (v 13).
- Paul refused to stop in Ephesus either to avoid potential troubles there or maybe to prevent an extended stay since he was set on getting to Jerusalem by Pentecost (v 16).
- Instead, he sends for the elders of Ephesus to meet him in Miletus (v 17).

Paul Recounts his Ministry in Ephesus (20:17-21)

- Paul began by recounting his ministry in Ephesus, a ministry in which these men witnessed and participated.
- Paul's message highlighted what he saw as the essentials of his ministry.
 - o Paul "served the Lord with great humility and with tears" (v 19).
 - The language could be translated as Paul served as a slave of the Lord.
 - The one who once wanted to bind Christians was now bound to the Christian Lord.
 - o Paul faced near constant opposition from some of the Jews (v 19b).
 - o Paul preached both publicly and house to house (v 20).
 - o Paul's message was consistent and clear to both Jew and Greek, "Turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (v 21).

Compelled by the Spirit to Go to Jerusalem (20:22-27)

- Paul explained that he was compelled by the Holy Spirit to Go to Jerusalem no matter the consequences (20:22)
- On the one hand, Paul noted that danger awaits him in every city, implying why should Jerusalem be any different.
- On the other hand, Paul acknowledges that none of the leaders will ever see him again (v 25).
- Paul courageously explained that he did not consider his life worth protecting. Instead, his aim was to finish the race and complete the task Jesus had given him – a task of testifying to the good news of God's grace (v 24).
- Paul had done that fully in Ephesus, so he announced that he was innocent of their blood, a reference to Ezekiel 3:18.

Paul's Charge to the Ephesians (20:26-32)

- Paul challenges the leaders to keep watch over themselves and the people in their care (v 28).
- The Holy Spirit has called them to be overseers and entrusted them with the care of those God "bought with his own blood."

- The language here is strong. Though it was Jesus who shed his blood for us, Paul here describes God shedding his blood for us.
- The leaders must keep watch because there will be “savage wolves” who will come in, distort the truth, and do harm to the flock (vv 29-30).
- Paul commits these leaders to God and to the ministry of the word of grace which can build them up and give them an inheritance among the sanctified (v 32).
- The aim of their ministry is to shepherd God’s flock as they all are sanctified by the Spirit.

A Final Word (20:32-35)

- Paul reminded the leaders that he had not been financially dependent upon them while he was there, instead supporting himself through his own labor or relying on the gifts of other congregations (v 33-34)
- Paul’s life is an example for the leaders.
 - They are to avoid becoming enchained to a patron/client relationship with their congregation.
 - They are to remember that ministers are to model generosity to others.
 - Paul quotes a saying of Jesus not found elsewhere (v 35).

A Tearful Goodbye (20:36-38)

- When Paul finished speaking, they all prayed together.
- They wept and embraced, grieving that this would be the last time they saw Paul (v 38).

On to Jerusalem (21:1-16)

- Luke explained that they had to tear themselves away from the Ephesian leaders in order to continue their journey (v 1).
- Journeying on to Tyre in Syria, the believers (through the Spirit) urge Paul not to go on to Jerusalem (v 4).
- The drama intensifies with all the believers accompanying Paul to the ship as they continue their journey (vv 5-6).
- Paul and his companions stop and visit churches in Ptolemais and Caesarea.
 - These are churches that began when the first persecution started in Jerusalem (see 8:4; 11:19), and now Paul comes to strengthen churches he had a backhanded part in starting.
 - Paul visits Philip the deacon who had seven daughters who prophesy, a fulfillment of Peter and Joel’s prophecies (see 2:17).
- Agabus, a prophet (see 11:27-28), warns Paul that he will be arrested in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles (v 11).
- The church weeps and urges Paul not to keep going.
- Paul dismisses their concern and makes clear that he is ready to be arrested or even die for the name of Jesus (v 13).

Sources

Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

David E. Garland, *Acts*, Teaching the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids MI: BakerBooks, 2017).

I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 1980).