

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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Farewell to the Ephesians

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Travels to Macedonia and back ([20:1-6](#))

The rioting in Ephesus (chapter 19) had convinced Paul to move on, so he went westward across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia (modern Greece).

When he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words: Paul spent his time working with the churches he had already established, as we saw in chapters 16 and 17. Paul had planned to take this long trip by sea directly back to Syria (where his “commissioning” church at Antioch was), but word of plotting by anti-Christian Jews made him consider and take an overland route back through Macedonia, accompanied by many companions.

Sopater of Berea ... Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians ... Gaius of Derbe ... Trophimus of Asia: Paul’s traveling companions named here were probably representatives from other churches who had sent money with Paul to Jerusalem. They were also present as ambassadors from the churches Paul has founded among the Gentiles, and were there to vouch for Paul's good stewardship in regard to the collection destined for Jerusalem. Trust but verify!

We sailed away from Philippi ... joined them at Troas: Paul has now sailed back across the Aegean Sea, eastward towards Asia Minor (modern day Turkey).

A Sermon and a Resurrection ([20:7-12](#))

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread: This is the first clear example we have in scripture of Christians making it a practice to gather together on the first day of the week for fellowship and the

word. It seems here that they gathered in the evening, probably because Sunday was a normal working day for them.

Spoke to them and continued his message until midnight: Paul sensed the need to carry on long because he was ready to depart the next day; he knew he might never see these particular Christians again, so he preached and taught for some six hours! I wonder if our Pastors are up to a challenge.... Nah, never mind!

...Eutychus ... fell down from the third story and was taken up dead: The combination of the late hour, and perhaps the heat and fumes from the oil lamps got to Eutychus. His fall and death certainly would have put a damper on the meeting!

Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him: Paul is not saying they were wrong in thinking him to be dead, but speaking from his faith in (from!) Jesus, sensed that He would raise this boy from the dead. Which He did. And then he kept on preaching until daybreak. How much you wanna bet they REALLY paid attention after that?!

Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders ([20:13-35](#))

Intending himself to go on foot: Paul apparently preferred to walk from Troas to Assos instead of sail with the rest of his group; but he sailed with them from Assos to Miletus ("we took him on board"). It's as if Paul wanted to stay as long as he could -- possibly to be assured of Eutychus's complete restoration to health -- and then took an overland shortcut to join the ship at Assos.

Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus: Paul's intention wasn't to slight the church in Ephesus, of course, but he knew that it would be impossible for him to have a short visit there, and he wanted to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost.

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church: Though Paul knew he couldn't make a brief visit to Ephesus, he still wanted to pour his heart and desire into the leaders of the church at Ephesus. So, from Miletus, he called for the elders of the church to come for a special meeting.

To this point in Acts, we've see Paul the evangelist in action; but in this chapter, we encounter Paul the pastor, and learn what was important to him as a leader and as a shepherd of God's people.

You know... in what manner I always lived among you: Paul calls attention to himself, not as a substitute for Jesus, but an example of one who follows Jesus. Paul wasn't trying to be a "religious celebrity", expecting people to serve and honor him; he just wanted to serve the Lord with all humility, and to serve is fellow Christians as an example of what that looks like. This is Paul "leading from the front."

I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you: Paul could honestly saw to these Ephesian elders that he withheld nothing important from them. He didn't teach only the topics that pleased him; He proclaimed the full message of God.

Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks: Paul didn't limit his message, and he didn't limit his audience either. He wanted to preach all the word of God in its fullness to all people.

"From house to house" implies that the Ephesian church, lacking any central building, was organized logically in house-churches. It's likely that each elder had charge over a particular house-church.

I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there: Paul didn't know what was ahead of him; he even had reason to believe it was bad. But that uncertainty didn't phase him. He already been through so much trouble, he knew that he would give it all over to God again, even when he didn't know what would happen.

So that I may finish my race with joy: Paul thought of himself as a runner who had a race to finish (we see this analogy in other writings), and nothing would keep Paul from finishing the race with joy. Additionally, Paul speaks of "my" race - he knew he had race to run that was uniquely chosen for him by God. We, too have our own races to run. And like Paul, God calls us to finish our race with joy.

I am innocent of the blood of all men: Here Paul declares his heart was utterly at peace with whatever lie ahead. He could leave these Christians to God's care in good conscience, knowing that he had not failed to declare to them the whole counsel of God as he was inspired to.

The whole counsel of God: Paul thought of himself as a watchman, there to bring forth the whole counsel of God's word. This doesn't guarantee the people will be saved, but it will guarantee Paul is without guilt before God. He has done his job!

Paul would later warn the young Timothy that in the last days people would not endure sound doctrine, and would look for teachers who would tell them what they want to hear - teachers who will scratch their "itching ears".

It is tempting for preachers and teachers to use a Bible text as a "launch pad" to say what they want. 'Tis a great challenge to simply let the Bible speak for itself and let it declare its own power. The preacher or teacher who seeks to say what his audience wants to hear hurts both his audience and himself!

We as the church laity also must expect and insist that we are taught the whole counsel of God; not just interesting topics, not just what we want to hear, not just the things that will "grab" people, but what God says to all of our lives.

And yes, I'm still waiting for a sermon series on the Song of Solomon!

Take heed... to all the flock... to shepherd the church of God... therefore watch:

Taking care of God's people basically amounts to two things. First, being a shepherd (pastor) to the flock; secondly, watching over them, protecting them from danger. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and leaders of His church are at their best when they operate from a pastoral heart. The both feed and protect their flock. They keep wolves at bay, whether they come from outside or inside the church.

This is why some pastors refer to themselves as "undershepherds of Christ". It's not a Biblical term, but captures that position of leadership and submission beautifully.

2 Timothy 1:15 and Revelation 2:4 show that Paul's concerns for the church in Ephesus were justified.

Paul's parting words, taken from a quote of Jesus' unrecorded in the gospels, are perfect for all who would minister to God's people: It is more blessed to give than to receive. Preachers and teachers must be more concerned about what they can give, than about what their flock can give them.

Paul's Tearful Good-bye ([20:36-38](#))

...They would see his face no more: They part with prayer, tears, and a sending-off party, believing they would only meet again in eternity. This reminds us that Paul was not merely a cold dispenser of doctrine, but a warm, pastoral man who loved his people greatly and enjoyed great love from them.