

A Study in Acts

Chapter Twenty – Third Journey of Paul Continued

ACTS 20:29-38:

In our previous lesson, Paul staying in Ephesus “**For a time**” –**Acts 19:22**; would become aware of problems in the **Body of Christ** at **Corinth** (messengers from the household of Chloe – **1 Corinthians 1:11**, and a letter composed by the brethren and sent to him – **7:1**), he would write the first letter to them and send it by Titus (**2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:6-7**).

We covered the events that would have caused Paul to change his plans prematurely (he wanted to stay here in Ephesus until Pentecost (**1 Corinthians 16:8**); which he believed was enough time for Titus to return with a report while he was still in Ephesus. However, as the events in Ephesus unfold and the chaos of riot ensued, Paul would be forced to leave Ephesus far sooner than he had hoped. In this lesson, we will see the route Paul takes in hope of reuniting with Titus.

Having met up with Titus, he wrote **2 Corinthians** and sent it on ahead while going into Illyricum. He then came to Corinth and spent three months. While in Corinth, he wrote the book of **Romans**. Finding out about a plot at the hands of the Jews, as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia first.

Having gone through Macedonia, Paula and Luke sailed from Philippi to Troas. Here he remained to worship, teach, and demonstrate God’s approval of his words. He then will move through some of the Eastern Aegean Sea Islands and stop next at Miletus.

Text #1

Acts 20:29-32 *“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*

³² *“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

Warning and Commendation.

Warning.

After a clear and precise job description and mandate to perform it with the knowledge that the thing they were to guard was so precious to God, He purchased it with His own blood; Paul will now clarify the danger if they do not.

Departure – Paul is not referring to his departure from them at the end of this warning and commendation, but the use of this word is describing the removal of his influence through the Spirit over the Bodies of Christ.

Paul has already written to the church in Thessalonica concerning the coming of apostasy and shared about that which was restraining its full-blown advance even as he wrote to them (see **2 Thessalonians 2:1-7**).

Savage Wolves – The use of wolves as an illustrative property is common in both the Old and New Testament; however, here Paul adds a descriptor (translated as ‘savage’ or ‘grievous’). The concept of the descriptor illustrates a beast acting outside its given nature, and describes a carnivore that kills just to kill, to kill more than it can eat.

The Apostle Paul, James, and Peter use similar illustrations.

2 Corinthians 11:16-21 – The Corinthians are here being warned of the danger of putting up with false teachers (**Vs. 20**).

Galatians 5:15 – Paul shares the danger of infighting while using similar language.

James 4:1-2 – Once again, infighting is the focus and James refers to it as murder and covetousness.

1 Peter 5:8 – Peter illustrates our adversary in the form of a lion that announces its presence to its prey (contrary to nature) and devours all he can.

These predators and merciless destroyers are going to come right into the middle of the flock where the most damage can be done. If the shepherds are not prepared to defend them, if there is weakness and doubt, there will be carnage.

Also, from Among Yourselves – Probably one of the most difficult things for these elders to hear and for us that read this for our service in Christ, is the frightening thought that those entrusted with the protection of the sheep become the very ones that destroy.

Now think about how important the words of Paul to Timothy become (Timothy is the evangelist in Ephesus many years after this is written).

1 Timothy 1:3 “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,”

Then consider that there were elders in Ephesus, yet Paul would give Timothy the qualifications for elders.

Watch – Based on the previous warnings, Paul hits them with a ‘*Therefore*’, or because of this. He commands a high alert in their guardianship of the flock and as a reminder, he shares his own constant warnings for three years (which tells us the entire stay time in Ephesus).

Commendation.

So Now – Paul does not just drop the bomb of bad news, but as the Lord always loves and provides, the power to overcome such treacherous calamity comes from the Lord. They don’t have to wait for it, it is provided for them if they simply trust it.

The Word of His Grace – We have seen this term used before in **Chapter 14:3**. There, they were testifying to the word of His grace by signs and wonders, so that the Iconian’s would know

that the words were truly from God. Here, Paul is sharing that the same word of His grace, is not only the will of God, but the whole armor of God (**Ephesians 6:10-18**). Here showing its preserving power against predation and all enemies of their inheritance.

Build You Up – Here is another illustrative property that the word of His grace provides. The Greek word for this statement is “*Oikodomeo*”, and it is a verb for the action it creates. It is describing the construction of a building. The context demands that it is not a simple structure, but one that can guard and protect the shepherds and sheep from powerful predators, a mighty fortress. One we should want around us this very day.

Text #2.

Acts 20:33-38 *“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. ³⁵ I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”*

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, ³⁸ sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.”

Paul’s Personal Behavior – Paul comes back to his own conduct while he can be witnessed by these brethren demonstrating the very practices, he hopes they show by their own conduct. He demands that they be servants by choice and never covetous in their practices. Note Peter’s words to the elders among the dispersion:

1 Peter 5:1-4 *“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”*

Brotherly Love – Despite stating that some among them would betray their charge, there is great love for Paul. You cannot read these last verses without a deep sense of the appreciation they have for the love he has provided to them in Christ (through the word of His grace), and the demonstrated concern for them in the way he lived among them. He served them purely, just as he is asking them to do for the brethren.