

ACTS

Chapter 20

Paul in Macedonia and Greece

After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. 3 There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews[a] as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, 6 but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

20:1 *disciples.* Paul's fellow Christians in Ephesus. (TLSB)

encouraging them – Paul did not leave on the day of the uproar. He had been planning for some time to leave (19:21), but first he arranged for a gathering of believers at which he spoke words of encouragement and farewell. (PBC)

said farewell and departed. Paul wanted to: (1) leave Ephesus, (2) preach in Troas on his way to Macedonia, (3) meet Titus at Troas with a report from Corinth (see 2Co 2:12–13) and (4) continue collecting the offering for Judea (see 1Co 16:1–4; 2 Co 8:1–9:15; Ro 15:25–28). (CSB)

20:2 *He had gone traveled through those regions.* May cover a considerable period. He may have gone to Illyricum (see Ro 15:19) at this time. (CSB)

encouragement. He bore witness to Christ and so strengthened them. (TLSB)

20:3 *three months.* Probably a reference to the stay in Corinth, the capital of Achaia. These would be the winter months when ships did not sail regularly. Paul probably wrote Romans at this time (see Introduction to Romans: Occasion). (CSB)

Quite naturally he had to see if conditions had improved in Corinth. Factionalism there, problems with speaking in tongues, scandals, and lawsuits had compelled the apostle to write his First and Second Letters to the Corinthians, and so he stayed there for three months during the winter of A.D. 56. (LL)

a plot was made against him. The Jews were determined to take Paul's life; also, at this time he was carrying the offering for the Christians in Judea, so there would have been a temptation for theft as well. The port at Cenchrea would have provided a convenient place for Paul's enemies to detect him as he entered a ship to embark for Syria. (CSB)

Luke does not record any details of this conspiracy against Paul; other plots are mentioned elsewhere (9:23–24; 23:12). (TLSB)

20:4 These men seem to be the delegates appointed to accompany Paul and the money given for the needy in Judea. Three were from Macedonia, two from Galatia and two from Asia. Luke may have joined them at Philippi. (CSB)

Probably representatives of the Gentile churches who were to bring their gifts to the poor saints in Jerusalem. (TL SB)

Sopater. May be the same as Sosipater (Ro 16:21). (CSB)

Secundus. Not mentioned elsewhere. His name means “second,” as Tertius (see Ro 16:22) means “third” and Quartus (see Ro 16:23) means “fourth.” (CSB)

Gaius from Derbe. A Gaius from Macedonia was associated with Aristarchus (see 9:29), but the grouping of the names in pairs (after the reference to Sopater) indicates that this Gaius was associated with Roman Galatia and is different from the Macedonian Gaius. (CSB)

Timothy. May have represented more than one particular church. He was from Lystra but had been responsible for working in other churches (1Co 16:10–11; Php 2:19–23). He had been sent to Macedonia before Paul left Ephesus (19:22). (CSB)

Tychicus. A constant help to Paul, especially in association with the churches of Asia (Eph 6:21–22; Col 4:7–9; 2Ti 4:12; Tit 3:12). (CSB)

Trophimus. Appears again in 21:29 (see 2Ti 4:20). He was an Ephesian, and it is implied that he was a Gentile. (CSB)

20:5 us. Luke likely rejoins Paul and his group after being left in Philippi (cf 16:40). (TL SB)

Troas. Was to be the rendezvous for Paul and those who went on ahead by sea from Neapolis, the seaport of Philippi (16:11). Paul and his immediate companions stayed in Philippi before sailing a week later. (CSB)

20:6 from Philippi. From the seaport, Neapolis, about ten miles away. (CSB)

days of Unleavened Bread. Began with Passover and lasted a week. Paul spent the period in Philippi. Formerly he had hoped to reach Jerusalem sooner (see 19:21), but now he hoped to arrive there for Pentecost (see 20:16). (CSB)

Seven days following the Passover. This was also the anniversary of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. (TL SB)

Passover was also the anniversary of the Lord’s resurrection, and the Jewish Christians who observed Passover were certainly conscious of that. (PBC)

in five days. The voyage from Neapolis to Troas took five days. It had taken about two days the other direction (16:11). (CSB)

seven days. Although Paul was in a hurry to arrive at Jerusalem by Pentecost, he remained seven days at Troas. This might have been because of a ship schedule, but more likely the delay was in order to meet with the believers on the first day of the week to break bread. (CSB)

20:1–6 Paul and his companions begin the trip back to Jerusalem, encouraging fellow Christians along the way. Our faith is often not what it should be. However, Jesus encourages us in the faith through His Word. “A bruised reed He will not break, and a faintly burning wick He will not

quench” (Is 42:3). • Lord Jesus, in Your mercy You always encourage us to remain in You. Through that same mercy, remind us to encourage our fellow Christians, especially in difficult days. Amen. (TLSB)

Eutychus Raised from the Dead

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. 9 And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.” 11 And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. 12 And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted. 13 But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. 15 And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and [b] the day after that we went to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

20:7 *first day of the week* – Sunday, the day of Christ’s resurrection, became the regular day of worship for Christians (cf Lk 24:1; Mt 28:1). This would ultimately distinguish Christians from Jews, who worshiped on Saturday. (TLSB)

Prolonged his speech – Because of his few days with this group of fellow believers, Paul felt to make a long address (cf 28:23). (TLSB)

20:9 *Eutychus* – Means “fortunate.” (TLSB)

third story – Refers to the upper room of v. 8. Luke adds this detail as part of his eyewitness account. (TLSB)

20:10 *his life is in him* – Paul is not contradicting the fact of Eutychus’s death but expressing the assurance that the young man would be brought back to life (cf 1 Ki 17:17-24; 2 Ki 4:32-36). (TLSB)

20:11 Paul and possibly some of the others take nourishment during this long night prior to Paul’s departure the next morning. (TLSB)

20:13 *Assos*. On the opposite side of the peninsula from Troas—about 20 miles away by land. The coastline, however, was about 40 miles. Thus Paul was not far behind the ship that sailed around the peninsula. (CSB)

From Troas, a ship would need to go around a small peninsula. (TLSB)

himself to go by land. The walk would give Paul more time away from sea travel and perhaps further opportunity to speak with disciples from Troas (cf v 7). (TLSB)

20:14 *Mitylene*. After the first day of sailing, they put into this harbor on the southeast shore of the island of Lesbos. (CSB)

20:15 *Kios*. The second night they spent off the shore of this larger island, which lay along the west coast of Asia Minor. (CSB)

Samos. Crossing the mouth of the bay that leads to Ephesus, they came on the third day to Samos, one of the most important islands in the Aegean. (CSB)

Miletus. Thirty miles south of Ephesus, the destination of the ship Paul was on. He would have had to change ships to put into Ephesus, which would have lost time (see v. 16). If he had come to Ephesus, he would have had to visit a number of families, which would have taken more time. If trouble should arise, as the riot of a year ago (19:23–41), even more time would be lost. It could not be risked. (CSB)

20:16 A stop at Ephesus would most likely have delayed his journey. However, Paul meets with Ephesian elders in Miletus. (TLSB)

on the day of Pentecost. Fifty days from Passover. Five days plus seven days (v. 6) plus four days (vv. 13–15) had already gone by, leaving only about two-thirds of the time for the remainder of the trip. (CSB)

20:7–16 The end of Paul’s time in Troas is noteworthy for the resurrection of Eutychus. At times, we may become alarmed when a fellow Christian dies because we harbor doubts about God’s power to make that person alive again. Jesus assures us: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die” (Jn 11:25–26). • Dear Jesus, thank You for Your resurrection from the dead, which guarantees our resurrection. Through Your Holy Spirit, grant us faith always to remember that physical death is not the end of true life with You. Amen. (TLSB)

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. **18** And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, **19** serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; **20** how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, **21** testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. **22** And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, **23** except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. **24** But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. **25** And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. **26** Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, **27** for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. **28** Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. **29** I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; **30** and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. **31** Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. **32** And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. **33** I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. **34** You yourselves know

that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself 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 And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, 38 being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

20:17 *elders of the church.* The importance of the leadership of elders has been evident throughout Paul’s ministry. He had delivered the famine gift from the church at Antioch to the elders of the Jerusalem church (11:30). He had appointed elders on his first missionary journey (see 14:23) and had addressed the holders of this office later in Philippi (Php 1:1, “overseers”). He requested the Ephesian elders to meet with him on this solemn occasion (see v. 28). Some years later he wrote down instruction about the elders’ qualifications (1Ti 3; Tit 1). (CSB)

The pastors of the Church at Ephesus, whom Paul had appointed by the authority of the Holy Spirit (cf v 28. (TLSB)

The church at Ephesus was made up of a number of local churches or congregations. The elders were the leaders of those churches, men chosen for their mature judgment and spiritual knowledge. They were “overseers” and “shepherds”. That can only mean that they carried out the pastoral ministry in those churches. (PBC)

20:18-35 The only address recorded in Acts that Paul makes to a Christian audience. Paul recalls the work he did among the Ephesians (vv 18–21) and then speaks of the imprisonment and afflictions awaiting him in the future (vv 22–24). Since the Ephesian Christians will encounter similar trials (vv 29–30), Paul encourages the elders to watch out for the sheep under their care, faithfully exercising their office (v 28), as Paul had been faithful in the exercise of his office (vv 26–27, 31, 33–35). The power and strength to carry out their duties comes only from God and His Word (v 32). (TLSB)

20:18-19 *tapeinophrosunēs . . . dakruōn . . . peirasmōn.* Paul’s recollection of his time among the Ephesians brings forth the memories of his “humility,” “tears,” and “trials.” We need not deny the emotions that spring forth from years of ministry. As the unchanging truth comes to people in such varied circumstances, it is not without struggle and heartache that lives are changed (or not) by the Gospel. Paul’s first point is the humility that would make most important the message and not the messenger. However, it is also hard to separate the joy of receiving the message from the faithful servant God may choose to bring it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

20:19 *with all humility* – Reflects the true servant attitude with which Paul carried out his apostolic ministry (cf 2Co 10:1; 11:7). (TLSB)

with tears. See v. 31. Paul’s ministry at Ephesus was conducted with emotional fervency and a sense of urgency. (CSB)

Due to Paul’s love and compassion for the Ephesians. (TLSB)

Perhaps he sometimes worked himself to exhaustion in trying to prepare them for their work as overseers of the flock. In their work they must never forget his warnings. (PBC)

trials – Acts records no specific trials of Paul at Ephesus, but the apostle alludes to them in 1Co 15:30–32 (and possibly in 2Co 1:8–10). (TLSB)

pilots – Luke records no specifics, but since such plots had occurred in other places, it is not surprising that they would happen in Ephesus as well. (TLSB)

20:20-21 Three pairs of ideas comprised Paul’s ministry among the Ephesians. First, Paul highlights that his teaching was to both large *and* small groups (*dēmosiai kai kat’ oikous*); for the modern pastor, the call is Sunday preaching and teaching and also to visit his people in their houses. Second, the Word was proclaimed to diverse groups—Jews *and* Greeks—not just one or the other. Third, the ministry was a call to repentance *and* faith (*metanoian kai pistin*)—the initial connection to God and that which follows and sustains (Law and Gospel). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

20:21 *repentance* – “*To repent* means nothing other than to truly acknowledge sins, to be heartily sorry for them, and to stop doing them” (FC SD V 8). (TLSB)

faith in our Lord Jesus Christ – After turning away from sin, one turns to the Savior, trusting in Him for forgiveness and eternal life (cf 16:31). (TLSB)

20:22-24 Paul affirms that when we are attentive to the Spirit’s leading, uncertainty is certain. Faith goes forward “constrained,” *dedemenos*, by the Spirit. We don’t seek out crosses or trial (or new ministry situations!) but are led into them by God. As Paul considered going to Jerusalem, it certainly would have called to mind Jesus setting his face toward Jerusalem to complete his saving work (recorded in Luke’s first book to Theophilus, Lk 9:51)—not that Paul would elevate his work to the level of Jesus’, but that here he also saw the culmination of his ministry. It is good to note how profound and difficult it is to discern the Spirit’s leading in individual or specific situations; there is not often “writing in the sky.” Suffice it to say that the Spirit doesn’t always lead us to the easiest (or necessarily the hardest) situations in life or ministry, but where we, like Paul, can “finish [our] course . . . to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (v 24). Faithful years of ministry are a blessing to both shepherd and flock. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

20:22 *constrained by the Spirit*. Paul did not go to Jerusalem against the direction of the Spirit, as some have suggested, but because of the guidance of the Spirit. People pleaded with him not to go (21:4, 12), not because the Spirit prohibited his going but because the Spirit revealed the capture that awaited him there (21:11–12). (CSB)

Luke often emphasizes how the Holy Spirit directs Paul (cf 13:2, 4, 9; 16:6–7). (TLSB)

20:24 *finish my course* – Paul uses race terminology to describe his ministry (cf 1Co 9:24–27). (TLSB)

ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus – Christ Himself made Paul an apostle (cf 1Co 1:1; Gal 1:12). (TLSB)

20:25-27 Paul’s sense of never seeing the Ephesians again appears to have turned out to be wrong (1 Tim 1:3 seems to support Paul being in Ephesus after this) and thus would not have been a part of the Spirit’s revelation to him (v 23). This reinforces how unsure we are of what the future will bring. Paul is quick to declare that he did all he could. Those who didn’t hear the Word bore their own guilt. What he thought was his final accounting to the Church in Ephesus was that he had

preached to them the “whole counsel of God.” By God’s grace, it seems he did have another opportunity to be with them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

20:25 *none of you . . . will ever see my face again.* Not a message from God but what Paul anticipated. He had been mistaken before in his plans: He had intended to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, but he had to leave earlier (see v. 1; 1Co 16:8–9). His prophetic power was not used to foresee his own future, just as his healing power was not used to heal his own disease (see 2Co 12:7–9). As it turned out, it seems that Paul did revisit Ephesus (see 1Ti 1:3). (CSB)

Paul is offering his own opinion here; he did return to Ephesus later. (TLSB)

20:26 *innocent of the blood of all* – He was saying that no one would go to eternal death because Paul had failed to preach the truth to him. (PBC)

Paul knows that in the future, some of the pastors will fall away from the faith. Cf vv 29–30. (TLSB)

20:27 *whole council of God* – Paul proclaimed the entire OT Scriptures, as all pastors, preachers, and teachers of God’s Word should. (TLSB)

29:28-31 Paul’s admonition is for the overseers, *episkopous*, to watch not only for the flock but also for themselves. Paul sees the process of men becoming church leaders as God-directed: “The Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” While some manuscripts say “the Church of the Lord,” *kuriou*, the likely reading is the “Church of God,” which speaks of God shedding his own blood, affirming even more Jesus’ oneness with the Father. Shepherding and protecting from wolves is a bloody business that brings death! It is Jesus’ blood first and foremost and also the blood from times when the wolves would tear apart sheep. The call to alertness and what is at stake is a job for watchmen who don’t slack off, as Paul did not stop “night or day” to admonish with tears. His tears now are of the anticipated reality of what he had feared previously for those who reject or are led astray from the Gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

20:28 *flock* – Common biblical term for God’s people (cf Jer 23:1–4; Jn 10:11–16). (TLSB)

overseers. Be shepherds. The “elders” (v. 17) were called “overseers” and told to pastor (“shepherd”) the flock—demonstrating that the same men could be called “elders,” “overseers” or “pastors.” *his own blood.* Lit. “the blood of his own one,” a term of endearment (such as “his own dear one,” referring to his own Son). (CSB)

Same as “elders” (v 17); both are common NT terms for the pastoral office (1Tm 3:1; Ti 1:5, 7). (TLSB)

obtained with his own blood – The Church consists of those who believe in Jesus as Savior; they were ransomed with the very blood of the Son of God. “God’s Son truly suffered for us. However, He did so according to the attributes of the human nature, which He received into the unity of His divine person and made His own. He did this so that He might be able to suffer and be our High Priest for our reconciliation with God” (FC Ep VIII 14). Chemnitz: “*Ekklēsia* [is used] of citizens when a citywide gathering is held of those who, bound together by certain laws, are citizens of one commonwealth.... Therefore in order to distinguish the New Testament church from other gatherings, in Scripture the term ‘church of God’ is used” (*LTh* 2:693). (TLSB)

20:29 *fierce wolves* – Used also by Jesus to describe false teachers and their destructive nature. “Just as the Church has the promise that it will always have the Holy Spirit, so it also has warnings that there will be wicked teachers and wolves [Acts 20:29]. Yet, the Church in the proper sense has the Holy Spirit. Although wolves and wicked teachers run rampant in the Church, they are not properly Christ’s kingdom” (Ap VII and VIII 22). (TLSB)

20:30 Paul graphically contrasts his message of the whole counsel of God (v 27) with what the false teachers will proclaim: malformed messages that will mislead the faithful. (TLSB)

20:31 *three years*. Time Paul spent in Ephesus. (TLSB)

20:32-35 Paul’s conclusion is an apt one for pastors to follow; we always commend our hearers “to God and to the word of his grace.” The juxtaposition of grace, that which is freely given and received, and how it comes, is noteworthy. It is through hard work of ministry by which the Gospel is faithfully proclaimed. But when all is said and done, it is not the sweat and blood and tears of us that we highlight, but the blood, sweat, and tears—the saving work—of Jesus that must be called to attention. Finally, if Paul’s reference “It is more blessed to give than to receive” is a literal saying of Jesus, it is not one recorded in the Gospels. The sentiment, however, fits very well with Jesus’ teaching and brings to mind many blessings experienced in the work of ministry. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

20:32 *commend you to God* – Who could keep the elders faithful in their work and protect the church from the savage wolves? Only God. How would God do that? Through the word of grace, the Scriptures. (PBC)

Paul entrusts the welfare of the Ephesians to God Himself. (TLSB)

build you up – God’s Word is powerful (Rm 1:16). Through it, He makes Christians strong in their faith. (TLSB)

the inheritance – Final goal for Christians is the gift of eternal life in heaven. (TLSB)

are sanctified.† Justified through faith. (CSB)

Paul refers to Christians, those who have been “made holy” through faith in Jesus. ChemNITZ: “In order that there may always be a church, so also there will always be true teachers, but these promises are not tied to certain persons, to a certain succession, or a certain seat” (*LTh* 2:711). (TLSB)

20:34 *ministered to my necessities*. Paul had worked in Thessalonica (1Th 2:9) and Corinth (Ac 18:3). (CSB)

Paul did not want to be a burden to those he served with the Gospel (1Th 2:3–10; 2Th 3:7–9). (TLSB)

20:35 *help the weak* – The “weak” here probably means those who are weak in understanding, people who would not realize that they ought to be helping support those who preach the gospel. (PBC)

People who cannot support themselves because of sickness. All others are to support themselves (1Th 4:10–12; 2Th 3:10–12). (TLSB)

remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said. A formula regularly used in the early church to introduce a quotation from Jesus (1 Clement 46:7). This is a rare instance of a saying of Jesus not found in the canonical Gospels. (CSB)

Though not recorded in any of the four Gospels of the NT, the saying is nevertheless genuine. This demonstrates that Jesus' sayings, and stories about Jesus, continued to circulate among believers and were regarded as authoritative, useful admonitions. (TLSB)

more blessed to give than to receive – The Gospel Paul preached centers on giving: God gives forgiveness and eternal life through His Son, Jesus; God's heirs give to others based on what God has given them (Mt 25:35–40). (TLSB)

20:36 *knelt ... prayed.* Usual posture for prayer was standing. Kneeling to pray was a posture assumed at emotional times (cf 21:5; Lk 22:41). (TLSB)

20:37 The Ephesian elders express the depth of their love for Paul with great emotion (cf Gn 33:4). (TLSB)

20:17–38 Paul's farewell address to the Church leaders of Ephesus emphasizes the significance of the work of the ministry. We are often inclined more toward receiving than giving. Jesus has given—and still gives—temporal and eternal blessings, so we likewise are to give of ourselves to others. Yet, we can never outgive our generous Savior. • “Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.... Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, all for Thee.” Amen. (LSB 783:1, 6) (TLSB)