

Building Your Faith: Exploring Scripture with the Pastors
Notes for November 14, 2021 - 9:45 and 11:15 A.M.
Acts 20:13-38 - "Paul with the Ephesian Elders"
Dr. Clay Brown - MDPC Adult Discipleship Pastor

OUTLINE

- 1. Greet one another, begin with prayer, and read Acts 20:13-38 [5 minutes].**
- 2. Remind the class of the discussion from Acts 20:1-12 [5 minutes].**
- 3. Discuss the connection between Paul and the Ephesians elders in Acts 20:13-17 [10 minutes].**
 - Paul furiously traveling to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost
 - But stops in Miletus, not far from Ephesus, and asks to meet with the Ephesian elders
 - "Miletus serves as a sort of compromise between Paul's pastoral concern for the Ephesus church and his purpose in traveling quickly to Jerusalem: while he could not spare the time he anticipated that a full visit to Ephesus would entail, he fulfilled the longing and calling of his pastoral heart by arranging a meeting with the Ephesian elders." (*Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, p. 573)
 - *What prior events and future concerns in Ephesus might motivate Paul to spend time with the Ephesian elders, despite his pressing desire to reach Jerusalem?*
 - *When have you been motivated to change your schedule radically in order to see or talk with someone? What higher concerns overrode your scheduling worries? How might your experience help you better understand Paul and the Ephesian elders?*
- 4. Discuss Paul's address to the elders in Acts 20:18-35 [20 minutes].**
 - Paul highlights his candor as he tells "one message for Jews and Greeks alike: the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21, NLT)
 - Discusses his work, then drops a bombshell: he knows he will never see them again
 - Notes his faithfulness to ministry with them; spent three years with them and invested in them
 - Reveals that hard times will come to the church, especially in deviations from the gospel in false teaching (see this time described in his last New Testament writings: 1 and 2 Timothy)
 - Ends by entrusting them to God's care and quoting Jesus with words not found in the Gospels: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:34, NLT)
 - *What is the one message Paul states is at the center of his ministry in Ephesus? Why is this message so important even today? Why is this message so troublesome for many in our time?*
 - *How did Paul model Christian witness and service for the Ephesians? What can they learn from his example? What can we learn?*
 - *Paul is greatly concerned about future false teaching in the Ephesian church, and the congregation's later experience shows his concern is well-founded. Why does false teaching apparently not worry us to such an extent? What does our often blasé response to what Christianity has traditionally called heresy show us about our own faith and practice?*
- 5. Discuss Paul's farewell in Acts 20:36-38 (5 minutes).**
 - Paul finishes speaking with them, and they all kneel in prayer
 - An emotional time of saying goodbye, especially because "he had said that they would never see him again" (20:38, NLT)
 - *Imagine and describe what you think is going through Paul's mind and the Ephesian elders' minds as they say goodbye. How does Christian hope speak to this situation?*
- 6. Close in prayer.**

SCRIPTURE (ESV)

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 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.

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.

