

Bible Commentaries

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Acts 20 ▾

Verse 1

The first six verses give a summary of many months of Paul's travels; a special account of Paul and company taking the Lord's supper at Troas is given ([Acts 20:7-12](#)); Paul continued his trip to Jerusalem ([Acts 20:13-16](#)); he called for a meeting with the Ephesian elders, bidding them farewell ([Acts 20:17-35](#)); and a special account of the tearful farewell is given ([Acts 20:36-38](#)).

Like all of the sacred writings, Acts omits many of the things men are naturally curious about; but the Holy Spirit never catered to human curiosity. Several events of great importance took place in Paul's three-year campaign in Ephesus which are not mentioned by Luke at all. Inferences from 1 Corinthians suggest that Paul even made a short trip to Corinth while at Ephesus; another event of particular importance was the collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem which Paul gathered from the young churches; and it was partially for the purpose of delivering that bounty that his trip to Jerusalem (under way in this chapter) was planned. He also mentioned fighting "with wild beasts" at Ephesus ([1 Corinthians 15:32](#)), which must be a reference to some event not given by Luke. Also, very little is said of Aquila and Priscilla regarding their work with Paul at Ephesus; but it is quite likely that Ephesus was the scene of their unselfish aid of Paul by "laying down their own necks" for him ([Romans 16:4](#)).

And after the uproar ceased, Paul having sent for the disciples and exhorted them, took leave of them, and departed to go into Macedonia. (Acts 20:1)

Sent for the disciples ... indicates that Paul had probably been protected in some place of safety; but immediately after the uproar was over, and having already planned to go to Macedonia ([Acts 19:21](#)), decided to begin that journey at once. The passions of the mob would not soon be fully abated; and, rather than cause his friends any further anxiety, he left for Macedonia. The Macedonian detour, however, was part of the more extended trip to Jerusalem. Ramsey noted that:

Paul's third missionary journey ends, like his second, with a visit to Jerusalem; but whereas the earlier visit is dismissed in a few words ([Acts 18:21,22](#)), this later visit is described at great length and in much detail.^[1]

ENDNOTE:

[1] Sir William M. Ramsay, Pictures of the Apostolic Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1959), p. 235.

Verse 2

And when he had gone through those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece.

Greece ... is the name of the district that included Athens and Corinth. The First Corinthian letter had been dispatched to Corinth during his final months at Ephesus; and during Paul's three months in Corinth (included in this reference to Greece), he wrote the magnificent book of Romans, sending it from Cenchræa by Phoebe. The date often assigned for Romans is early 58 A.D., the date accepted by this writer in my Commentary on Romans; however it was noted in my Commentary on Romans (p. 13) that Barrett and others accept 55 or 56 A.D. as more probably correct; and research for this work on Acts has led the writer to a conviction that the earlier date is correct. Blaiklock's placement of the Ephesian riot in 54 A.D. (see under **Acts 19:38**), as well as the Delphi fragment regarding Gallio's proconsulship (see under **Acts 18:12**), are key facts tending to establish 55 or 56 A.D. as the more likely date when Romans was written. Also, J.R. Dummelow advocated exactly those dates.^[2]

Prior to these three months in Corinth, however, and while he was in Macedonia, Paul had written the Second Corinthian letter. Many scholars also place the writing of Galatians about this time; but the conviction of this writer is that it was written near the time of the Jerusalem council, soon after the first missionary journey.

ENDNOTE:

[2] J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 846.

Verse 3

And when he had spent three months there, and a plot was laid against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia.

Plot laid against him ... Dummelow thought this "was a plot to kill Paul on board the Jewish pilgrim ship in which he had taken his passage."^[3] As Paul was carrying a large sum of money to Jerusalem to be distributed among the poor Christians there, it would have been much easier than ordinarily to recruit men to slay him.

ENDNOTE:

[3] Ibid.

Verse 4

And there accompanied him as far as Asia, Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

It is noteworthy that Paul took no chance of handling the money he had collected without taking the utmost precautions, not only for the safety of the funds, but also to avoid any charge of laxity on his part. He was not about to carry that large sum to Jerusalem without attendants and witnesses of the whole transaction. One may observe that Macedonian congregations were represented by Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus; the Galatian congregations were represented by Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra; the ones in Asia were represented by Tychicus and Trophimus; and it may be inferred from **2 Corinthians 8:6ff** that the Corinthian contribution was entrusted to Titus and two other brethren sent by Paul to Corinth to receive it.

Regarding the reason why Titus was not named here, or anywhere else in Acts, it is thought strange that one whose name appears in Paul's letters as a trusted and faithful helper, even one of the New Testament books being addressed to him, - that one of his standing should not be mentioned in Acts. We agree with Bruce that:

It would be difficult to find a more convincing answer than that suggested by Ramsay, namely, that Titus was Luke's brother.^[4] It may be that when the "we" narrative is resumed in **Acts 20:5**, Titus as well as Luke himself is tacitly included.^[5]

[4] Sir William M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, pp. 38:390.

[5] F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, Publishers, 1954), p. 406.

Verse 5

But these had gone before, and were waiting for us at Troas.

The group had probably been throughout the area collecting funds for the charity in Jerusalem; and this led to their being temporarily separated. Paul's last stop before setting sail was Philippi, where he was joined by Luke.

Verse 6

And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them in Troas in five days; where we tarried seven days.

We ... Here begins again the famous "we" passages of Acts, indicating that the physician Luke, author of this narrative, had rejoined Paul. Luke was to continue with Paul almost constantly throughout the whole time covered by Acts, with the exception of time that Luke used to research material for his Gospel while Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea and also the time he probably used during Paul's Roman imprisonment for the writing of the book of Acts.

To Troas in five days ... This same journey had required only one days' sail (**Acts 16:11**) in the opposite direction upon the occasion of another crossing; hence the conclusion that the ship encountered unfavorable winds.

Where we tarried seven days ... Presumably, this delay from Tuesday until the following Monday was to enable the missionary group with Paul to observe the Lord's supper with the church in Troas, an inference from the fact that no reason was given for the delay, coupled with the account of the Lord's day meeting in Troas immediately after mentioning the delay.

The days of unleavened bread ... refers to Passover week, and some have supposed that Paul observed the period patriotically; it is far more likely, however, that Luke in these words merely indicated the time of the year.

TROAS

This seaport, situated at the western extremity of Asia, upon or near the site of ancient Troy, was rebuilt by the successors of Alexander the Great who renamed the place Alexandria Troas. The importance of the place in New Testament history derives from its being: (1) the place where Paul met Luke (**Acts 16:8-11**), (2) the gateway from Asia to Europe where a "door opened" for Paul (**2 Corinthians 2:12**), (3) the scene of the remarkably important Lord's day services (**Acts 20:7-12**), and if Blaiklock's deduction is correct, (4) the scene of Paul's final arrest (**2 Timothy 4:13**). "Why did Paul leave his garment at Troas? Summary and inhuman arrest, apparently, denied him the comfort of adequate clothing."^[6]

ENDNOTE:

^[6] E. M. Blaiklock, *Cities of the New Testament* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1965), p. 38.

Verse 7

And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight.

First day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread ... This emphatically states the purpose of Christian assemblies on Sundays throughout history, that purpose being for the observance of the Lord's supper. As Lange said, "Luke's language here plainly indicates that this day (Sunday) was precisely one on which assemblies for religious services were customarily held."^[7] Harrison complained that "We are not told when or how the practice of Sunday worship arose in the church";^[8] but one does not need to seek any later than the day of the resurrection of our Lord for the beginning of it. On successive Sundays, Jesus appeared to the apostles on the day he arose from the grave (**John 20:19**), Thomas being absent; and again on the following Sunday (Thomas present) (**John 20:26**) he appeared to them again. There can be little doubt that Sunday services of Christians began with those two appearances of our Lord in their assemblies on successive Sundays.

Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan, written in the shadow of the apostolic age (112 A.D.), declared of the Christians that:

It was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and sing ... After this was done, their custom was to depart and meet again to take food, but ordinary and harmless food.^[9]

It is easy in Pliny's report to observe a reference to the Lord's supper; and the significance of "on a fixed day" is therefore of the very greatest magnitude. The Christians, from earliest times, had the

habit of meeting for the Lord's supper on "a fixed day," and **Acts 20:7** identifies that day as "the first day of the week," Sunday.

To break bread ... as Dummelow noted, means "to celebrate the Lord's supper."^[10] In fact, it would be impossible to understand this as a reference to anything else.

Paul discoursed unto them ... Even the address of so distinguished an apostle as Paul took second billing on that occasion, the primary purpose having been to observe the Lord's supper; that is why no ordinary meal can be understood of this "breaking bread."

Continued his speech until midnight ... Perhaps it should be noted as Lange said, that "The example of Paul affords no excuse for sermons that are of immoderate length!"^[11]

[7] John Peter Lange, Commentary on Acts (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House), p. 368.

[8] Everett F. Harrison, Wycliffe Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 459.

[9] Henry Melvill Gwatkin, Selections from Early Writers (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company), p. 29.

[10] J. R. Dummelow, op. cit., p. 846.

[11] John Peter Lange, op. cit., p. 370.

Verse 8

And there were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered together.

Many have speculated as to why Luke mentioned a thing of this kind, some connecting it with the overheating and improper ventilation of the room, which Luke the physician cited as the cause of the "fall out" of Eutychus; but, as we see it, "It is the casual mention by an eyewitness of a fact which struck him." *Acts 2p. 144.*[>][12]

Verse 9

And there sat in the window a certain young man named Eutychus, borne down with deep sleep; and as Paul discoursed yet longer, being borne down by his sleep he fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead.

It should be remembered that this was a three-story fall. As Bruce said:

No wonder he was taken up dead, as Luke says, implying apparently that, as a physician, he had satisfied himself on the point ... Paul's words, "for his life is in him" should not be pressed to mean that he was actually not dead.^[13]

We are grateful to Bruce for such a comment. The rationalizing of New Testament miracles is a devilish device; and believers in Christ should have no part in such wickedness.

Note the following:

Luke, the learned physician, pronounced him dead.

As a physician he had withdrawn from the case.

Paul said, "His life is in him," just as Jesus said, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," and "Our friend Lazarus is asleep."

Paul fell on him in a manner suggesting the action taken by Elijah and Elisha when raising the dead in the Old Testament (**1 Kings 17:21**; **2 Kings 4:34f**).SIZE>

It is impossible to believe that if Eutychus was not actually dead, that his loved ones, friends, and other members of the congregation would not have appealed to the physician Luke. As a matter of fact, they did; for nobody in similar circumstances would appeal to a preacher **FIRST**. It was only when Luke pronounced him dead that Paul entered the picture.

Acts 2p. 144.">[12] A. C. Hervey, The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, Publishers, 1950), Vol. 18, **Acts 2p. 144**.

[13] F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p. 408.

Verse 10

And Paul went down and fell on him, and embracing him said, Make ye no ado, for his life is in him. And when he was gone up and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even until break of day, so he departed. And they brought the lad alive, and were not a little comforted.

Broken the bread and eaten ... The punctuation of this is in error in most versions, because the "breaking of the bread" in this place has no reference at all to the Lord's supper but to the satisfaction of their hunger, as plainly implied by the verb "eaten." It was now long past midnight, and the Lord's supper had been observed on the Sunday when they came together for that purpose. It is a grave misunderstanding to suppose that, whereas they had come together that Sunday to break the bread of the Lord's supper, they instead listened to Paul preach until midnight. Such a view is forbidden by the manner in which Luke here emphatically indicated that Paul's preaching was not the purpose of the Sunday gathering, but a benefit that came subsequently to the observance of the Lord's supper. Hervey went so far as to say that the word "eaten" as used in **Acts 20:11** "is never used of the sacramental eating of bread."^[14] Milligan agreed that the reference here is "to a common meal."^[15]

Due to the fact, however, that by an improper punctuation of this place, as in English Revised Version, the words may be made to refer to two events, both a common meal and the observance of the Lord's supper, leading to the supposition of some that the Lord's supper was not observed until after midnight "on the first day of the week," it is well to keep in mind that even if that was the case (which seems to us most unlikely) it would in no manner indicate taking the Lord's supper on Monday. When the proceedings of any convention, legislative body, or congress extend past midnight on any date, the official records invariably reckon the late doings as part of the preceding day's affairs, even if clocks have to be stopped! McGarvey's device of supposing the Jewish method of observing time was used, making this meeting to have convened after sundown on Saturday (which would be the first day of the week by Jewish reckoning), thus avoiding the "midnight" problem, appears to this writer to be in error.^[16]

Till break of day ... Such was the love and affection of the brethren for the beloved Paul that they spent the whole night listening and talking to him.

And they brought the lad alive ... It was quite easy for people who had just witnessed a resurrection to stay up all night; and Luke's words, "They were not a little comforted," are a divine understatement for the sake of emphasis.

[14] A. C. Hervey, op. cit., p. 144.

[15] Robert Milligan, Analysis of the New Testament (Cincinnati, Ohio: Bosworth, Chase and Hall), p. 386.

[16] J. W. McGarvey, Commentary on Acts (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Company), 2p. 182.

Verse 13

But we, going before to the ship, set sail for Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, intending himself to go by land.

TRIP TO JERUSALEM RESUMED

This is an amazing incident. "Troas and Assos are on opposite sides of a peninsula which terminates in Cape Lectum";^[17] and the distance between those cities is only twenty miles by land, but more than twice that by sea; hence it was not difficult for Paul to walk overland and again board the ship when it arrived at Assos. But why? This is especially pertinent in view of his having been up the entire night before. McGarvey's explanation is that Paul was saddened by the farewells he was encountering along the way and by the knowledge imparted to him by prophets like Agabus to the effect that bonds and imprisonment awaited him. Therefore, "He longed for a season of meditation and prayer which could be found only in solitude."^[18]

[17] Ibid., p. 183.

[18] Ibid.

Verse 14

And when he met us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. And sailing from thence, we came the following day over against Chios; and the next day we touched at Samos; ... and the day after we came to Miletus. For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

The journey to Jerusalem by Paul and his company was made in a trading ship stopping at numerous places along the coast of the northeast Mediterranean and southwest coast of Asia Minor. The record here is obviously from the log which Luke evidently kept of the voyage. Paul did not wish to visit Ephesus, due to lack of time, and the certainty that he would be detained if he went there; but when he learned how long the ship would be at Miletus, which was only about thirty miles from Ephesus, he sent a messenger and invited the Ephesian elders to meet him there.

Apparently, Luke's giving the details of this voyage from Troas to Miletus was intended as background for that meeting.

The day of Pentecost ... Paul's desire to be at Jerusalem then was due to the gathering in Jerusalem on such an occasion of so many from so many different places.

Verse 17

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church.

Elders of the church ... These are the same men addressed as "bishops" in **Acts 20:28**. See discussion of this office under **Acts 14:23**. There was a plurality of elders in every church.

Verse 18

And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time.

PAUL'S ADDRESS TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

Paul's appeal was made more meaningful to them by his reminder of the hardships and sufferings he endured among them, and of the fact of his laboring with his hands to support himself and others. True, he had received contributions on one or perhaps more occasions from Macedonia, but these had not been sufficient for all of his needs.

Verse 19

Serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews.

Paul's hardships and trials were of epic proportions, as the bare catalogue of them (**2 Corinthians 11:23-33**) proves. Even the journey upon which he was then embarked had been drastically revised due to a plot against his life (**Acts 20:3**).

Tears ... This mention of Paul's weeping was repeated later (**Acts 20:31**); and from this it may be concluded that there were many occasions when the great apostle poured out his grief, disappointment, and frustrated love of his countrymen in tears.

Verse 20

How I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house.

From house to house ... This phase of the Christian ministry is despised by some, even some churches, who rank their "personal worker" rather low on their ecclesiastical totem poles; but the truth is that the greatest of the apostles utilized the power of house-to-house and person-to-person evangelism; and all of the ministers of Christ in every generation who have despised or neglected this method have impoverished both themselves and their charges.

PERSONAL WORK

There is no substitute for personal work; just what other kind is there, anyway? Only by face-to-face, person-to-person contact with souls who would be won for the Master can there be the development of the ties of brotherhood and affection which so clearly distinguished the relationship between Paul and his converts. If ministers would build up their churches, let them visit, not merely the affluent, the powerful, and the socially prominent, but extensively and without discrimination. A minister's "little clique" is as nauseating a disgrace as may be found anywhere. So-called "experts" who advocate methods of church building which do not include personal visitation on the part of ministers, elders, and all who are active in the church, are advocating "theories" only; for there are no examples of churches anywhere that were ever built up without personal visitation.

Verse 21

Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance ... and faith ... are not mentioned here in the chronological sequence of their occurrence in sinners' hearts. Faith always comes from hearing God's word before repentance can appear in any heart.

Our Lord Jesus Christ ... This use of the compound name "Jesus Christ" is extensive in the Pauline epistles and in Acts, thus putting to shame the radical critics who would late-date the New Testament books by the allegation that "Jesus Christ" was a title that came into use near the end of the first century. We believe Luke accurately reported the use of this title here, in the year 55 A.D.; and further, that the title itself was given in the great high-priestly prayer of Jesus on the night he was betrayed (**John 17:3**), and that the Lord's giving of it that night accounts for its universal use among Christians of the generation who had seen the Lord.

Verse 22

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

The Holy Spirit testifieth unto me ... How did the Holy Spirit testify unto Paul? We might not have known unless Luke, a little later (**Acts 21:10,11**), had revealed the manner of it. It was not by means of dreams, premonitions, or any subjective impressions borne inward upon Paul's consciousness; but it was by words clearly spoken by a prophet of the Lord. When people today speak of the Holy Spirit's testifying to them, they are all too frequently speaking of some subjective impression; but Paul never relied upon anything like that. There are just two ways revealed in the New Testament which are recognized as the Spirit's "testifying" to men, (1) the manner of a prophet speaking God's

word, and (2) the testimony of the authentic Scriptures (**Hebrews 10:15-18**). For further discussion of this subject, see my Commentary on Romans, **Romans 8:17**.

Verse 24

But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

The unselfish devotion of Paul to the Christian gospel was too intense and fervent to be diminished by considerations of his personal safety. Not merely "living," but "accomplishing his course and ministry" was the dominant purpose of the dauntless apostle.

Gospel of the grace of God ... See under next verse.

Verse 25

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more.

In this and the preceding verse, two things of surpassing importance are revealed:

(1) "Testifying the gospel of the grace of God" (**Acts 20:24**) and establishing churches everywhere - this is exactly the same thing as "preaching the kingdom" of God (**Acts 20:25**).

Again in the New Testament, the fact is confirmed that the church of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of heaven are one and the same.

(2) "Ye shall see my face no more ..." Paul did not say how he knew this, refraining from attributing the knowledge to any direct word from the Holy Spirit. Dummelow said:

Paul was not speaking as a prophet, but was merely giving utterance to an overpowering presentiment that the time of his death was near. As a matter of fact his life was preserved many years; and he subsequently revisited Miletus (**2 Timothy 4:20**), Ephesus (**1 Timothy 1:3; 3:14**), and other places in Asia.^[19]

Milligan concurred in this view, saying, "It seems probable that in this Paul was mistaken; and that he afterward did return (**Philippians 1:25; 2:24; Philemon 1:1:22**, and **Hebrews 13:23**)."^[20] It may be disputed that the references cited by Dummelow and Milligan actually "prove" that Paul was again in Ephesus, although it seems quite certain that he was in Miletus again (**2 Timothy 4:20**). Boles affirmed that "We do not know that Paul ever saw Ephesus again,"^[21] and supposed that Paul had primary reference to those "elders" whom he was addressing, thus indicating that he believed Paul's premonition was correct. Bruce avoided the question by declaring that "Whether in fact the Ephesians ever did see him again is not of primary relevance to the exegesis of these words."^[22]

Whatever element of doubt there remains in the question, however, does not negate the view preferred by this writer which regards Paul's premonition as being contradicted by subsequent events. What we have then is a startling example that the premonitions of such a prophet and apostle as Paul himself were unreliable, contrasting with the certainty of the true testimony of the Holy Spirit through prophets and the Holy Scriptures. In the light of this, Christians should never rely upon premonitions and subjective impressions for guidance in the daily affairs of life. Yet,

there are known to this writer certain persons who have a meeting early in the morning, waiting for "leadings of the Holy Spirit" which are thought to come to them in just such premonitions and impressions as Paul had here. We do not believe that any authentic guidance comes in this manner; although, of course, morning prayers are a good beginning for any day.

[19] J. R. Dummelow, op. cit., p. 846.

[20] Robert Milligan, op. cit., p. 387.

[21] H. Leo Boles, Commentary on Acts (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1953), p. 325.

[22] F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p. 415.

Verse 26

Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

This was true, as next stated, because he had proclaimed without omission or partiality all of God's word to those whom he taught.

Verse 27

For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God.

It is not merely "God's word" which saves, but "all of God's word." To live, men must heed "every word" (**Matthew 4:4**). They are "foolish ones" who believe not "all that the prophets have spoken" (**Luke 24:25**). A mere smattering of religious truth is insufficient; it is only by heeding the "whole counsel of God" that either an individual or a church may be considered in the line of duty.

Verse 28

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.

The Holy Spirit hath made you bishops ... For the use of the title "bishop" as applied to elders, and the seven titles given this office in the New Testament, see under **Acts 14:23**, above. How had the Holy Spirit made those men bishops? The Spirit had given the qualifications for men to meet in order to qualify for the office and had commanded that they should be appointed.

Church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood ... No verse in the New Testament, nor any other statement that could be imagined, could possibly exceed the power of this in declaring the eternal importance and necessity of the church Christ established. Here the heretical notion of salvation "by faith alone" is shattered and countermanded forever. By any definition, salvation by "faith alone" means salvation without the church of Jesus Christ; and in such a view the crucifixion of our Lord is reduced to the status of a senseless murder. If men are saved, in any sense by the blood of Jesus, they must be saved through the church of which that blood is here declared to be the purchase price.

If one person can be saved without the church, then all men may be so saved; and such a proposition is emphatically contradicted and denied by Paul's words here.

The Lord ... as translated here is from the Greek word "God," and should be so rendered. This is one of ten New Testament references to Jesus as "God," and no matter how offensive this may be to human ears, the plain truth is that the sacred text here is unassailable. No critic may intelligently deny that what is written here is: "The church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." See my Commentary on Hebrews, **Hebrews 1:81** for list of New Testament Scriptures and comment on Christ "as God." In addition to those, it may also be recalled that the apostle John referred to Christ as "the only begotten God" (**John 1:18**). Both the Johannine reference and the passage here, however, have been mistranslated deliberately by the scholars. The purpose of such unusual declarations in the New Testament is evidently that of affirming unequivocally the godhead and deity of Jesus Christ.

Verse 29

I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Some scholars see in this a prophetic reference to the heretics and heresies which arose in Paul's lifetime; but there is probably much more intended. This is one of several extensive passages in the New Testament foretelling the great apostasy which would come about through the development of the historical church, "From among your own selves ..." indicates that the central apostasy would concern the government of the church; and as Protestants have often affirmed, "The Pope himself is only an elder gone wrong!"

Other New Testament passages bearing upon the apostasy are **Matthew 7:15-23; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-8; 4:1-5; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:1-7; Revelation 17:3-6; 18:1-5.**

Verse 31

Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears.

Alas, Paul's warning was not properly heeded.

From the Epistles of St. John, written from Ephesus, we learn that the Ephesian heresies were of the Gnostic and Docetic types. St. John's chief opponent at Ephesus was Cerinthus, who taught a Jewish form of Gnosticism.^[23]

By the time of the writing of Revelation, the Ephesians had "fallen" from their first love, and were in a spiritual condition leading to the eventual removal of their candlestick.

ENDNOTE:

[23] J. R. Dummelow, op. cit., p. 847.

Verse 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 to you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

The word of his grace ... appears here as the great means of building one up in the holy faith. The philosophies, speculations, and theories of men provide no power at all in this sector. Only the word of God, received, studied, obeyed, loved, preached, and honored by men can effect any true spirituality or in any manner build up the followers of Jesus.

To give you the inheritance ... When all is said and done, the great gift of eternal redemption is a gift of the Father in heaven. Meeting the tests of faith, obeying the gospel, walking in the steps of Abraham's faith, etc., - however well men may obey, the great gift is yet a gift.

Among them that are sanctified ... This is one of many names applied to the community of the saved (see under **Acts 11:26**, above).

Verse 34

I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Paul worked as a tent-maker to earn funds for himself and his co-workers on the mission field; and the imagination quite easily sees the gesture which accompanied the words, "these hands."

I gave you an example ... Nothing corrupts religion any more rapidly than the provision of rich emoluments for its teachers, the emoluments having a tendency to attract self-seekers who care not for the truth, but only for the emoluments and perquisites. Paul set an example of faith that shall live forever. This is not to deny faithful ministers of the word their right of maintenance, which Paul himself diligently defended, but to point out the undeniable danger.

More blessed to give than to receive ... How opposite to the convictions of men are these words! In a society where the end and all of living is "getting," these words have a heavenly ring. Is it not strange that no other New Testament writer ever mentioned such a word as this spoken by the Lord, and that it remained for one who himself had given so much to remember and record it for the ages to come?

Verse 36

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all.

THE TEARFUL FAREWELL

The New Testament does not bind any special "attitude" of prayer upon the Lord's followers; but, in this, as in the matter of his sacrifices, Paul is doubtless an example for all. "Kneeling ..." is the most

natural of all prayerful attitudes. Jesus observed it (**Luke 22:41**), and the martyr Stephen, while they were stoning him to death, kneeled in prayer (**Acts 7:60**).

Verse 37

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way to the ship.

As Dummelow put it, "This is a striking example of the intense affection which the apostle's converts felt for him."^[24] Regarding the question of whether or not Paul ever came back to Ephesus, it was surely the truth that, for some of them at least, this was the last time on earth they would ever see him. In a sense it is true of every audience, that never again on earth shall exactly that same concourse be brought together again; and every minister of the gospel has keenly felt this as tearful goodbyes were said at the conclusion of some glorious meeting.

And they brought him on his way to the ship ... This custom of going with a departing guest as far as possible or convenient was repeatedly observed by Paul's converts; and we shall meet with it again and again. An element of sorrow remains as one contemplates this fond farewell on the seashore at Miletus. The greatest of all human preachers was on the way to prison, and eventually to death; and those whom he loved watered the occasion with their tears. Paul's true love of them all was the most priceless earthly possession that any of them would ever have, and they seemed to sense an irreparable loss in his leaving them to continue his glorious service of Jesus Christ our Lord.

ENDNOTE:

[24] Ibid.

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Bibliographical Information

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