

## Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 17, Acts 20

Acts Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they

cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: We must love our friends and families, but never put them before our mission in Christ

### Chapter 20 Saying Goodbye

#### Section 1: Acts 20:1-6 Guided by Oppression

**20** When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. <sup>2</sup>He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, <sup>3</sup>where he stayed three months. Because some Jews had plotted against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. <sup>4</sup>He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea,

Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. <sup>5</sup>These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. <sup>6</sup>But we sailed from Philippi after the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.



Paul sets out from Antioch and visits the churches he planted to give them encouragement. It is important that we follow up on those we have brought to Christ to encourage them to continue faithfully in the Way. Paul lingers in Troas.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, pg. 1278

The Jews plot against Paul again. We have seen Paul suffer persecution after persecution from those who are opposed to the Kingdom of God. This is not outside the plan of God. If we suffer for Christ it is because this is exactly what we need—it is for our benefit. God can use our persecution to direct and guide us even as he did Paul. Arthur Custance wrote, “People of the world who seem to be acting as Satan’s emissaries in restraining our zeal and probing our weaknesses and challenging our faith are really acting in this way by God’s permission, for our good. And it is indeed wonderful how, if we genuinely accept their restraints as part of the Lord’s will, these restraints seem to change their character and some of our hostilities disappear.”<sup>2</sup>

## **Section 2: Acts 20:7-12 A Dead One Rises**

<sup>7</sup>On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.<sup>8</sup>There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. <sup>9</sup>Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. <sup>10</sup>Paul went down,

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<sup>2</sup> *Man in Adam and in Christ*, pg. 217

threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” <sup>11</sup>Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. <sup>12</sup>The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

The Christians got together on the first day of the week—Sunday (1 Corinthians 16:2). The Jews met on Saturdays. The church changed the meeting day to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus which happened on a Sunday. The church came together to break bread (eat a meal ending in Communion) and share a cup of wine on the Lord’s Day to remember his body and blood.<sup>3</sup>

Why would Luke mention the many lamps? The room was pretty smoky and the air was thin. It is no wonder that Eutychus dropped off to sleep and fell from the window. He died.

Again we see a parallel between Paul and Peter. Both of them raised the dead (see Acts 9:40).

Paul continued teaching until daylight. We can imagine that Paul explained the miracle they had just witnessed and how the power of God had absolutely no limits. We should all be ready to respond when God moves, no matter if He tells us to raise the dead or to

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<sup>3</sup> *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 276

walk on water. He has no limitations and can do anything He wants to do through us.

### **Section 3: Acts 20:13-38 Parting Encouragement**

<sup>13</sup>We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot.<sup>14</sup> When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. <sup>15</sup>The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Chios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus. <sup>16</sup>Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

<sup>17</sup>From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. <sup>18</sup>When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. <sup>19</sup>I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. <sup>20</sup>You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have

taught you publicly and from house to house. <sup>21</sup>I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

<sup>22</sup>"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup>I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. <sup>24</sup>However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

<sup>25</sup>"Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. <sup>26</sup>Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. <sup>27</sup>For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. <sup>28</sup>Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. <sup>29</sup>I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup>Even from your own number men will

arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup>So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

<sup>32</sup>“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup>I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup>You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. <sup>35</sup>In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

<sup>36</sup>When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. <sup>37</sup>They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. <sup>38</sup>What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

This is the only time in Acts that we hear Paul speaking to Christians and teaching them. It is helpful to us to look at the parts of Paul’s

message. What he shares with the leaders of Ephesus<sup>4</sup> is great advice for any leader in the church.

1. He was an example to the Ephesians
  - a. In relationship to the Lord, with humility (Paul knew his proper place before God)
  - b. In the face of Jewish opposition, with tears (with tears that they would reject such a great salvation purchased for them with Christ’s blood).

It is essential that our Christian leaders be examples of the message they preach. Christianity is not merely a teaching or a set of doctrines; Christianity is a life lived before God.

2. He had taught them at every opportunity
  - a. He shared with Jews and Greeks the message of salvation through Jesus’ death and resurrection (There was no one Paul should have shared Christ with, but didn’t. He shared with everyone at every opportunity. Martin Luther said, “You are not only responsible for the words you say, but also for what you do not say.”<sup>5</sup>).
3. The hardships involved in completing his mission from God are nothing—including losing his own life (Paul came to understand that nothing, really nothing, was more important than bringing people to salvation. He tells the Philippians, “as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as

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<sup>4</sup> *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 406

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/29874.Martin\\_Luther](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/29874.Martin_Luther)

always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.” Philippians 1:20).

4. He commanded the leaders to watch themselves and their flocks—to be God’s shepherds over His sheep. (Before we can lead others to God, leaders themselves have to be right with Him. They have to be leading a life of holiness and worship in the Holy Spirit. Leaders need to take their charge very seriously. They are the shepherds over God’s sheep).
5. He told them that persecutions will come from without and within. (Paul does not shield them from the truth. Everyone who walks in the Kingdom of Christ can expect persecution from the forces of the devil. These will come from the outside—those who attack as non-Christians; and from inside—those Christians who lead other Christians into sin or error).
6. He charged them to be committed to the Word. (The Word of God is our only sure guide to truth and reality. When we stay true to the Word we will not wander into false doctrine and error).
7. He did not sponge off them. (Paul did not use the gospel as a source of gain. He worked for his living and did not become a burden on the people he served. Our ministers and leaders must not look to the church as a place where they can build their own personal reputations or fortunes).

Paul has a deep love for the church of Ephesus. Later he writes them one of the most complimentary and inspirational letters in the New Testament.

## **What have we learned?**

This chapter is about supporting those who Paul has brought into Christ. He travels to the churches and encourages them. When he arrives at Ephesus, he spends every minute teaching them. Eutychus falling out of the window does not even stop Paul from teaching. That is how important teaching is.

When we bring people to Christ, we are their Spiritual parents. We need to raise them in Christ, to see to it that they are developing spiritual disciplines (reading the Word daily, worshipping God, praying, fellowshiping, living for God). Just as it would be wrong to leave a newborn baby to fend for itself, so also it is wrong to allow new believers in Christ to make it on their own. The beginning period of the Christian life is crucial for continued development. This is a time where the world and old connections will try to reassert themselves. It is a time where the new believer is vulnerable. When we bring a person into Christ, we need to see them to spiritual maturity—to the point where they can stand on their own two feet.

We also saw Paul passing along the awesome responsibility of shepherding the flock to the leaders in Ephesus. God will call some of us into positions of leadership over His flock. We need to take this very seriously and be the role models God would have us be and lead His people into the Word and full Christian maturity.

## What the Text Says

### Section 1 Acts 20:1-6

Paul is heading to Jerusalem. He wants to be there before Pentecost. He has no illusions about his fate. He knows he might be arrested and even killed. The antagonism against him has not subsided. The detail that we find in this section shows that Luke was an eye-witness and traveling companion of Paul's. We need to remember that all things are in God's hands—even the opposition to the Kingdom. As Martin Luther taught, the devil is God's devil.

### Section 2 Acts 20:7-12

In Troas Paul teaches the church well into the night in a very smoke-filled room. A young man, Eutychus, who was sitting by the window fell asleep and dropped three stories to his death. Paul lays on the dead body (as Elijah and Elisha did in 1 Kings 17:21 and 2 Kings 4:34f.). God gives Eutychus back his life and Paul continues teaching.

### Section 3 Acts 20:13-38

This is Paul's last instructions to the Elders of the Ephesian church. It is his only teaching to Christians in the Book of Acts. Paul begins by pointing to his example. He lived as a real Christian in their midst. He also did not hold back but shared the gospel at every opportunity. He warns the leaders that there will be persecution from outside the church (from the Jews and those who lose economically because of the Kingdom) and from inside the church (from those who will not live for Christ or who will accept and teach heresies). The only way to combat these is to stay true to the Bible.

## Connecting to the Scripture

Paul mentions that the church in Ephesus had to guard themselves against attacks from within. It was these internal attacks that spurred Paul to write his letters (epistles) to the churches. In each we can read between the lines and see the errors that had crept into the church. But where do these errors come from?

1. Christians who do not give themselves wholly to God. There are some believers who hold on to their non-Christian lives when they become Christians. Their Christianity is in their heads, not in their lives. It would be very difficult to prove that these people are even Christians.
2. Christians who hold on to their non-Christian patterns of thinking and bring these into the church. There have always been church members who have interpreted Christianity through the lens of their prior beliefs. In the early church it was the Gnostic lens. Today it is the lens of materialism (where the Bible is explained in terms of evolution and the non-spiritual), deism (where God begins the world, but does not interact with it), or the New Age Movement (where Christianity is considered one mystical path to the divine). We guard against these by being in the Word.
3. Christians who believe that their freedom in Christ means that they are free from all responsibilities and moral requirements. There are those who think that, because they are forgiven, they can have sex outside of marriage, get drunk, etc. In the early church there were some who felt that their marriage bonds were severed because they were in Christ (Ephesians 5:25f.). We are called to be Holy.

## Questions to Ask During the Study

### Section 1 Read Acts 20:1-6

1. The threat of persecution affects Paul's travel plans. Why does God allow these persecutions?

### Section 2 Read Acts 20:7-12

1. God raises the dead here. What does this tell us about God's ability? Should we ever act or think in a way that limits God?
2. God raises Eutychus (just like He did Lazarus in John 11). How would we know if God wanted us to raise the dead?

### Section 3 Read Acts 20:13-38

1. Why is it important that Paul was a good example to the Ephesians? What does this tell us about our example to others?
2. Paul shared his faith at every opportunity. Are we doing this? Who in your oikos could you share the gospel with this week?
3. How will we get to the place where our own lives are nothing compared to sharing the gospel?
4. Why is it important for Christian leaders to watch their own Christian lives first?
5. What responsibility do we have to those we bring into Christ?
6. What kind of errors or personal problems can tear a church apart?
7. What will keep Christians and the church on the right path?