

SBCOD Bible Study Notes

4-29-26

Acts 20

Paul Travels Through Macedonia & Greece – Verses 1-6

¹ When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. ² He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. ⁶ 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.

20:1-3 While in Greece, Paul spent much of his time in Corinth. From there he wrote the letter to the Romans. Although Paul had not yet been to Rome, believers had already started a church there (2:10;18:2). Paul wrote to tell the church that he planned to visit the Roman believers. The letter to the Romans is a theological essay on the meaning of faith and salvation, an explanation of the relation between Jews and Gentiles in Christ, and a list of practical guidelines for the church.

20:4-6 These men who were traveling with Paul represented churches that Paul had started in Asia. Each man was carrying an offering from his home church to be given to the believers in Jerusalem. Having each man deliver the gift gave the gifts a personal touch and strengthened the unity of the believers. This was also an effective way to teach the church about giving, because the men were able to report back to their churches the way God was working through their giving. Paul discussed this gift in one of his letters to the Corinthian church (see 2 Corinthians 8:1-21).

20:6 Jewish believers celebrated the Passover (which was immediately followed by the Festival of Unleavened Bread) according to Moses' instructions (see Exodus 12: 43-51) even if they couldn't be at Jerusalem for the occasion.

Eutychus Raised From the Dead at Troas – Verses 7-12

⁷ 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. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" ¹¹ Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. ¹² The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

20:7-9 The "lamps" were candles in lanterns. The combination of the heat from the candles and the number of people gathered in the upstairs room probably made the room very warm. This no doubt helped Eutychus fall asleep, as well as the fact that Paul spoke for a long time. Eutychus was probably somewhere in the range of 8 to 14 years old (the age of a "young man").

20:10-12 Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him: Paul, again receiving the gift of faith from God, sensed that God would raise this boy from the dead — and God did. “Paul’s comment that the boy’s life was in him refers to his condition after he had ministered to him.

Paul Comes To Miletus And Sends For The Elders Of The Church In Ephesus – Verses 13-17

13 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. **14** When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. **15** 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. **16** 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. **17** From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

20:13 Intending himself to go on foot: Paul apparently preferred to walk from Troas to Assos instead of sail with the rest of his group; but he sailed with them from Assos to Miletus (we took him on board). Paul “stayed till the last possible moment, probably to be assured of Eutychus’s complete restoration to consciousness and health, and then took a shortcut by land to join the ship at Assos.”

20:16 Paul had missed attending the Passover in Jerusalem, so he was especially interested in arriving on time for Pentecost, which was 50 days after Passover. He was carrying with him gifts for the Jerusalem believers from churches in Asia and Greece. The Jerusalem church was experiencing difficult times. Paul may have been anxious to deliver this gift to the believers at Pentecost because it was a day of celebration and thanksgiving to God for his provision.

20:16-17 Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus: Paul’s intention wasn’t to slight the church in Ephesus, but he knew that it would be impossible for him to have a short visit there, and he wanted to hurry so as to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church: Though Paul knew he couldn’t make a brief visit to Ephesus, he still wanted to pour his heart into the leaders of the church at Ephesus. So, from Miletus, he called for the elders of the church to come for a special meeting.

Paul Begins His Farewell To The Elders Of Ephesus – Verses 18-21

18 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. **19** I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. **20** 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. **21** I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

20:18-21 The way of the believer is not an easy road; being a Christian does not solve or remove all problems. Paul served humbly and with “many tears,” but he never quit, never gave up. The message of salvation was so important that he never missed an opportunity to share it. And although he preached his message in different ways to fit different audiences, the message remained the same: Repent (turn away from sin) and turn to God by faith in Christ. The Christian life will have its rough times, tears, and sorrows, as well as joys, but we should always be ready to tell others what good things God has done for us. His blessings far outweigh life’s difficulties.

Paul Speaks Of His Future – Verses 22-25

22 “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. **23** I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. **24** 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. **25** “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.

20:23 The Holy Spirit showed Paul that he would be imprisoned and experience suffering. Even knowing this, Paul did not shrink from fulfilling his mission. His strong character was a good example to the Ephesian elders, some of whom would also suffer for Christ.

20:24 We often feel that life is a failure unless we’re getting a lot out of it: recognition, fun, money, success. But Paul considered life worth nothing unless he used it for God’s work. What he put into life was far more important than what he got out. Which is more important to you— what you get out of life, or what you put into it?

20:24 Single-mindedness is a quality needed by anyone who wishes to do God’s work. The single most important goal of Paul’s life was to tell others about Christ (Philippians 3:7-13). It is no wonder that Paul was the greatest missionary who ever lived. God is looking for more men and women who will focus on that one great task God has given them to do.

Paul’s Solemn Declaration Of His Innocence Before God – Verses 26-27

26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. **27** For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

20:26-27 I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men: As if he were giving witness in a court of law, Paul declared that his heart was clear. He could leave these Christians to God’s care with a good conscience, knowing that he had not shunned to declare to [them] the whole counsel of God. We should have a greater appreciation of the value of a clear conscience. God helping us, we can have one — at least as clear as possible from this point forward.

Paul’s Encouragement To Take Heed To Themselves And To God’s People – Verses 28-31

28 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. **29** I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. **30** Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. **31** So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

20:28 This is Paul’s second therefore in this section. The first therefore looked at his own life (I testify to you that I am innocent of the blood of all men). This second therefore instructs the leaders of the Ephesian Christians. Take heed to yourselves: “Pay attention to your own life. You have a high standard to fulfill. The standard isn’t perfection, but it is nevertheless high. You won’t fulfill that high standard without paying attention to it, if you don’t take heed to yourselves.” These words from Paul were all the more dramatic knowing the tension and the atmosphere of this meeting.

20:31 Paul's relationship with these believers is a beautiful example of Christian fellowship. He had cared for them and loved them, even cried over their needs. They responded with love and care for him and sorrow over his leaving. They had prayed together and comforted one another. Like Paul, you can build strong relationships with other Christians by sharing, caring, sorrowing, rejoicing, and praying with them. You will gather others around you only by giving yourself away to them.

Paul's Conclusion: Remember A Heart Of Sacrifice – Verses 32-35

³² “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. ³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ 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.’”

20:33 Paul was satisfied with whatever he had, wherever he was, as long as he could do God's work. Examine your attitudes toward wealth and comfort. If you focus more on what you don't have than on what you do have, it's time to reexamine your priorities and put God's work back in first place.

20:34 Paul was a tentmaker, and he supported himself with this trade. Paul did not work to become rich but to be free from being dependent on anyone. He supported himself and others who traveled with him (he also mentions this in some of his letters; see Philipians 4:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:9).

Paul's Tearful Good-Bye To The Ephesian Elders – Verses 36-38

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

20:36-38 He knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely: This reminds us that Paul was not a cold dispenser of doctrine, but a warm, pastoral man who loved his people greatly and won great love from them.