

Acts (Part Twenty-One)

Acts 20 Paul's Final Admonitory Instructions to the Ephesian Elders

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 14-Feb-89; Sermon #BS-AC21

We are going to be going through something here before we get back into the book of Acts, something that impacts on Acts the 20th chapter which we are going to be going into today. And that is in regard to the number of statements that it makes in the Bible regarding the first day of the week as a possibility for its being a day of worship. This is something that most of us have proved before we ever came into the church, and in a way that is one reason why I decided to go through this is because for most of us it is something that we went through many years ago and maybe we have not done any reading on it. It is something that we believe, it is something we accept, but it is something that is good to go over every once in a while and be refreshed.

Now, we are all well aware that the Christian world out there celebrates on Sunday and they use some of these scriptures as a basis for the authority for keeping the day. But it is good to begin at a very basic place, and that is that, first of all, the word Sunday never appears in the Bible. That is because it just was not called Sunday then, at least by those people who were writing the Bible. So, the days according to those people were simply called the 1st day, the 2nd day, the 3rd day, and so forth, and then finally Sabbath.

The first day of the week does appear 8 times in the New Testament, so we are going to go through each one of them, say a little bit about each one, and give you at least some sort of an idea of why these verses do not establish a day of worship. So the first one, both in terms of apparently when the book was written and also in terms of where it is placed, is in Matthew 28.

Matthew 28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

It is interesting to note that the first day of the week is established by this verse as being *after* the Sabbath. That is pretty clear. By the Bible's own record, it is something that is, in a sense, silently stated, but it is something that is nonetheless reasonably important. Now it was almost dawn when this occasion took place and Sabbath is still the day before the first day of the week at the time the book of Matthew is written. Now there is, of course, disagreement among those who look into these things, as to when the book of Matthew was written and whether it was the first one written, I do not know for sure. But there are those who say that the book of Matthew was written as few as six years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So even if we take that very low figure, six years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, and by their reasoning this was the time when everything was supposedly nailed to the cross, that is, the law of God. So when this book was inspired by God's Holy Spirit, the first day of the week was still the day after the Sabbath.

The next one is in Mark the 16th chapter and it is very similar in content to what Matthew wrote.

Mark 16:2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

Again, the first day of the week was not the Sabbath, but it was after the Sabbath. And when the book of Mark was written, again, there is some confusion as to when it was written, but most of the people who look into these things say that it was written after the book of Matthew was. How long after, I do not know, but let us say somewhere at least six years after the resurrection of Christ, and still, they are not calling it Sunday and still, the first day of the week is the day after the Sabbath. One might begin to ask the question, that is, if the Sabbath was done away, why they did not they use some other designation? Why continually remind people that the Sabbath is a day or an occasion by which time is marked? Why not move it to something else? Why did they not say that He was raised on the day that celebrates Christ's resurrection or some other designation like that.

The third one is also in Mark 16.

Mark 16:9 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

Now there is nothing here that designates Sunday as the Lord's Day. It does not call it the Lord's Sabbath. There is nothing about being it being hallowed, nothing about being observed. Nothing here says that it is a memorial of the resurrection. There is no command to rest. There is no authority given. It is simply given as a designation of when something occurred and in this case, it occurred on the day after the Sabbath.

The next one is in Luke the 24th chapter. And again this is Luke's version but this one has a couple of other factors that are added in the context.

Luke 24:1 Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing spices which they had prepared.

Well, it is interesting that these ladies were going to use the first day of the week to work on. I think that all of you understand the Jews had, let us say, an attitude, an understanding regarding the Sabbath and burials. Something that was not to take place on that day. You can recall when Christ died, it was on a Passover. It was the day before a Sabbath, and they hurried to get His body off the cross and into the tomb in order that it not be there on the Sabbath day. So they were going to get it in the tomb and there would be no burial on the Sabbath day, no work at preparing the body on the Sabbath day, nothing.

Let us go back one chapter.

Luke 23:54-56 That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

That is very interesting. Now what commandment tells you to rest on the Sabbath? It is the fourth commandment. So what we are talking about in verse 56 is a weekly Sabbath. So then the day that follows, chapter 24, verse 1, shall we say that these women did not know that the Sabbath was abolished? Now again, according to the commentaries, they say that Luke was probably written about 30 years after Christ's resurrection. So here it is, 30 years after everything was nailed to the cross and Sunday, or the first day of the week, is still the day *after* the weekly Sabbath. Now God knew and He inspired it by His Holy Spirit. And so this text right here, beginning in verse 53 of chapter 23 and going through chapter 24, verse 1, establishes Sunday as a common workday.

John 20:1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

The only thing that I want to add here is that John was written probably about 95 AD. After the others had all gotten in there say, John puts the cap on top of everything, and still, the first day of the week, the day after the Sabbath, is not called Sunday, it is not called a day of worship. There is nothing to designate it as being holy. He is still confirming what the other three authors have already said.

John 20:19 Then, the same day [the same day as chapter 20, verse 1] at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Ah, now here maybe we have authority for a religious assembly, Sunday night services. Anybody that has been in any kind of a halfway decent religious organization, even if they do not attend on Sunday evening, the church has services on Sunday evening, and maybe they use this as kind of an authority that they should get together on Sunday evening. So here they are, they are all together and they are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They finally got it through their noggins that He was alive.

No, I am afraid not.

First of all, if you follow the story all the way through, you find that this is the first real opportunity that Jesus has had to get together with His disciples, because after seeing Mary Magdalene, sometime after that He ascended to the Father in heaven, and I am sure that they had a good talk for a while, got everything all cleaned up, and back He comes to the earth. And now He is here. His disciples have all been gathered together. I believe all were there except Thomas, and they were going to hold a service. No, no, not at all. The verse says they were there because of fear of the Jews.

Now we have something else to add to that. Hold your finger there and go back to Luke 24, verse 37. Now here is the same occasion.

Luke 24:36-37 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and He said to them, "Peace to you." But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

You would think that they were celebrating the resurrection? Well, I will tell you, if they were celebrating it, they had a wrong idea about it. They were terrified! They did not believe in the resurrection. What I mean is, they did not believe that He was resurrected. If they really believed He was resurrected, why be frightened?

Luke 24:39 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled?" And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. [Sounds like they really believed, does it not?] Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

Luke 24:41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?"

Turn back to Mark 16.

Mark 16:14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Now that meeting there in John 20:19 was held because they were frightened and they came together to give one another support. There was no idea in their mind about having any kind of a religious service and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and thus beginning to establish authority for having a service on Sunday.

On to Acts 20, verse 7. This is the series of verses that instigated this particular little study on these phrases here.

Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

Now here we finally have a meeting on Sunday, do we not? No, I am afraid not. It was the first day of the week. But notice it says, the last word in that verse, it says that he continued his message until midnight. Now if we went to verse 8, it says that there were many lamps in the upper room, which shows, of course, that it was dark outside, just confirming that Paul was speaking at night. Well, the answer to this is that days in biblical time did not begin as we begin days at midnight. But rather days were begun and ended by sunset.

So the first day of the week began on Saturday evening for you and me by our reckoning. Just picking out an arbitrary time, this was the spring of the year. It was around the Days of Unleavened Bread. We will just say that it was April, maybe early to mid-April that this was. As far as we know, there is no record that they had daylight savings time, so it is very likely that the service began somewhere around 6:30, 7 o'clock Saturday *night*. Or, in the next minute or two, it would be Sunday, Sunday evening, by their reckoning, because the days begin at even. So the evening was before the morning by biblical records, so at the beginning of the first day of the week, it was night. So this service was actually on Saturday night.

Maybe by some strange twist of reasoning, we could say, Well, they were having a service on Sunday and by that we can establish that here is Bible authority for services on a Sunday. No, I am afraid not. You know, the Bible does not prohibit services on Sunday. You have services on Sunday at least one day out of the year. Every year on Pentecost, a holy day falls on a Sunday. But God does not command that we keep Sunday as a regular day of worship. It does not fit into the pattern that He established in the types all through the Bible. The day that we are memorializing is the seventh day of creation. And that is the one that the commandment says that we are to keep, not Sunday. So though it is not wrong for an occasional service to be held on a Sunday, . . .

I can remember when we came into the church we kept the Days of Unleavened Bread—all seven days. And so there was always a service on a Sunday. Almost every Feast of Tabernacles, we have a service on a Sunday. And I am sure that if it was a special occasion, maybe back in the days when Mr. Armstrong was alive and he was stopping through an area or now that Mr. Tkach is in that position, if he had traveled all the way to Africa and his time was limited and maybe he was hopscotching around Africa, a service here and a service there and a service there, you know, flying from place to place, there would be absolutely nothing, I will say unscriptural or unholy, about him holding a service on a Sunday. We do not have to be, let us say, concerned about that very much here because the churches are so close together and transportation is so rapid, but in this kind of a situation or in areas where the brethren are really scattered over a whole continent, it would not be wrong to hold a service on a Sunday.

Now that is what happened here. Paul was leaving the area and it was going to be well, as we find later on, it was going to be the last time that he was ever together with these people, and so he held a service then. You know, I wanted to read this, I brought this Bible with me just so that I could read it to you. This is the *New English Bible* and it is an interpretation. It is not a direct translation. So if you have one, just be a little bit careful about it. But I thought I would read this verse to you out of this interpretation, in modern English.

Acts 20:5-6 (NEB) These went ahead and waited for us at Troas. And we ourselves set sail from Philippi after the Passover season, and in five days reached them at Troas, where we spent a week. And on Saturday night in our assembly for the breaking of bread, Paul, who was to leave the next day, . . .

Did you see that? Saturday night. I think they caught it. That is what it was, it was Saturday night.

Let us not leave here yet. There are a couple more things to add to this that confirms very clearly that this was not a holy day as the Sabbath is.

Acts 20:13-14 Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

What happened was this. Troas was on one corner of a peninsula. If you can imagine a triangle, Troas is up here and Assos is down here, and all around here is water. Now from Troas to Assos it is about 60 miles by water. From here to here, Troas to Assos by land is 20 miles. So what all of Paul's companions did is they got in the boat and this was right after sunset while Paul was beginning preaching. They got in the boat at night, they went around this way, and at some time the next day, they had covered the 60 miles and met Paul here. Now Paul did not leave until the following morning, Sunday morning. It is now daylight, and he walked the 20 miles across this end of the peninsula.

Now look at what they did. If Sunday was a holy day, Paul did very strenuous work. How many times have you walked 20 miles in one day? Maybe some of you did it in the army. But hardly anybody does it willingly and especially if you believe that a day is a holy day, you are not going to do it. Well, obviously Paul did not believe it was a holy day. It was a common workday, Sunday.

You might also look at his companions. I do not know what they were doing in the boat. I do not know whether they were passengers or whether they were actually manning the thing. If they were manning it, then I am sure there was a lot of work sailing that thing, manning the sails, doing some rowing, whatever is necessary to cover 60 miles of territory from one place to another. Even if they were just passengers on the boat, I am not so sure that that is a good idea to be doing something like that on a holy day when they could have just as easily waited until the next day. They did not wait. There was no problem because it simply was not holy time.

So there is no authority here at all for a day of worship. Yes, they had a service, but it was not a regular practice and it was not something done by the command of God.

The next one is in I Corinthians 16.

I Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also [now here comes a collection for the saints]: On the first day of the week. . .

Now I have seen collection envelopes when I was in the Methodist Church, later on when I was in the Presbyterian Church, that they would quote these two verses. Those little envelopes of yellow or white things they give you with a little flap on it, put your money in, your buck, or maybe 50 cents or whatever, seal it up, and then you drop it in the collection plate when it comes around. It has a number on it. I remember in the Methodist Church, it had a little number, 592, that was your family number or something so they know who to receipt the thing to.

Well, is there really authority for taking up an offering on a Sunday morning here? And if it is, does that involve worship on Sunday? No. Look what the verse says. You have to live by every word of God. Now concerning the collection for the saints. Uh oh, a little sand here. Whenever you take an offering up in church, it is to support the church. It is to support the church's activities, it is to support the missions. It supports the evangelistic campaigns. It supports the distribution of literature, Bibles, all kinds of

things like that. It pays the minister's salary. But this is a collection for the *saints*. Now, if you look down in verse 3, it says,

I Corinthians 16:3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gifts to Jerusalem.

This was going to be given, his collection for the saints was going to be carried to Jerusalem. So it was for saints in Jerusalem. Now what we find is that there was a drought in the Mideast. People in Jerusalem were affected and what they needed was food and not money. Now, hold your place there and let us go to Romans 15, verse 25. Remember Paul was writing to the Romans and he says,

Romans 15:25-28 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia [the two large divisions of Greece] to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things [that is, the Jews or the saints in Jerusalem] their duty [the Gentiles' duty in Macedonia and Greek and Achaia, their responsibility] is also to minister [to serve, to help them] in material things [them being the saints in Jerusalem]. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

That is very clear. What was being collected in I Corinthians 16 was not money, it was foodstuffs. It was fruit. And it was taken because of the close feeling of concern and the feeling of responsibility for those of those people in Macedonia and in Greece for the plight of those people who were around Jerusalem and suffering from a drought.

Back to I Corinthians 16 to add a little bit more to this.

I Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections where when I come.

So this fruit is something that is stored up aside, by the individual who is doing the storing. Now when money is collected at a church service, it is not taken back to the saint's home and stored in their home. It is taken to the church's bank account or stored in the church or something. So he says that to see that there will be no gatherings [collections], fruit is gathered and stored. The subject is consistent. An offering taken at church is not a gathering. Nobody uses that kind of terminology.

I Corinthians 16:3-4 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

Now this fruit was going to require several men to take the collection to Jerusalem, and so those instructions then are given to them so that they will understand what they are to do with it. So they collect it, they hang on to it, they store it. When Paul comes, the collections will be picked up, and those in the congregation who have been appointed to carry it will go with Paul. If he goes, they will go with Paul to Jerusalem.

One more very briefly. (That incidentally was number 8.) Now this is just an added one in Revelation 1.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, . . .

And then it goes on. Now some use this as authority because it is the habit of these people to call Sunday the Lord's Day. But the day that the apostle John is referring to here is not speaking of any day of the week, but rather it is speaking of the Day of the Lord. That is that extended period of time of God's intervention in world affairs. Now that is the theme, it is the story that is covered by the entire book of Revelation and covers that period of time that certainly includes the Tribulation and the literal Day of the Lord, that period of about three and a half years prior to the return of Jesus Christ. So Revelation 1:10 is not talking about a single day but an extended period of time called in the Bible the Day of the Lord.

Let us go back to the book of Acts, the 19th chapter, which concerns itself with Paul's activities in Ephesus. I am sure that it was a very exciting and rewarding time for the apostle Paul. He had one of the most successful periods of time covered in the book of Acts. I believe that he stayed there pretty close to around three years, which was a very long time for him, and he did not stay at other places very long, usually because he was ushered out of town as a result of some kind of a disturbance. And again, that occurred here. There was a disturbance, and then it was after this disturbance was over that Paul then purposed to go into Macedonia and that gets into the tail end of chapter 19.

It is pretty evident though that he was not given the bum's rush out of Ephesus. That even though there was a disturbance there, he very clearly left, not so much because of the disturbance, but simply because the pressures of continuing the work, being concerned about what was going on in other places, he felt moved to go somewhere else. And so we find then at the end of the chapter that the confusion that reigned as a result of that occurrence there, where all the people were stirred up about losing money because people were turning away from idols and I guess the tourist industry there was being cut into as a result of less people buying the goods there that the silversmiths had to sell, and so Paul then left.

Acts 20:1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called his disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia.

Paul's plan was to go to Macedonia, which if you can remember is north, almost directly north of the area that he was in, that is, in Ephesus. He was going to go up into Macedonia and from there go to Philippi, from Philippi probably to Thessalonica and Berea once again, and then he was going to go down to Achaia, which was the district or area in which Corinth was located, and then he was going to come back through Asia, which was the west part of Turkey. And then from Asia, he was going to go on into Jerusalem.

Now it was during this period of time that Paul wrote II Corinthians and in II Corinthians he looks forward to the visit in Corinth, he mentions it. I will get to that in just a little bit. And then it was while he was in Corinth that he wrote the book of Romans.

Let us go back to II Corinthians. In chapter 2, we are going to see as we go through that Paul made a change or two in his plans and eventually decided not to go back to Ephesus, but to avoid it. It is very likely that he had a couple of pretty good reasons why he decided not to go back there. And if we get that far, why, we will cover them at least just briefly.

II Corinthians 2:12-13 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.

Now you might just stop to think of this as a group of people who are receiving letters from a good friend. And he is informing them of, let us say, the things that are taking place *as* they take place. You almost have to understand where Ephesus is, you know, down on the southwestern corner there of Turkey, and Troas was on the way to Macedonia. So he went up to Troas heading directly north, and when he got there, it was apparently his desire to do some evangelizing while he was there and he was going to wait for Titus to come from Corinth, to meet him there at Troas, and then the two of them would go on up to Macedonia.

But what occurred is this, as we begin to fill the story in, when he got the Troas, he apparently waited around a few days, and Titus never showed up. Nobody knows exactly what happened, whether there was a misfiring, whether the messages did not get through right or Titus was delayed in some way, but anyway, Paul got antsy, as we would say today. It says here that he had "no rest in his spirit." That is a fancy way of saying that he got antsy. And finally, he could not bear it any longer because he knew that there were some troubles in the congregation. He knew for sure there was a lot of trouble in Corinth, and he had also heard things about there being some unrest in the areas of Macedonia, Philippi, and Thessalonica. Apparently, it was not that the churches were all in an uproar, but rather that there was trouble in the neighborhood, persecution, that kind of thing. So he was so concerned that he decided to go to Macedonia and find out about their welfare there and then get that thing settled.

Acts 20:2 Now when he had gone over that region [that region there is Macedonia] and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece. . .

That means that he left Macedonia and he went down into Achaia which is the southern peninsula of Greece. Apparently what happened was that when he got to Macedonia, Titus met him there and he gave a great deal of encouragement to the apostle Paul regarding the situation in Corinth. That things had settled down. That the congregation was not in such a turmoil. There was not so much division, so Paul was comforted by it, but he still felt that it was necessary for him to get down to Corinth as quickly as he could because things were in pretty good shape up in Philippi and Thessalonica.

You will find that the letters to Philippi and Thessalonica are probably among the most encouraging that Paul ever wrote. The congregations were apparently good, solid ones, especially the congregation in Philippi. They probably did about as much for the apostle Paul in funding his evangelistic campaigns and giving him a sense of security and encouragement as any other congregation that he ever associated with. I mean you can tell there is a real emotional attachment to that congregation. And Thessalonica, you can tell in the letters they had questions about the return of Jesus Christ, but there did not seem to be a large number of problems there either. But Corinth was another matter, but he was encouraged by what Titus told him. And so then he came down to Corinth, and it says,

Acts 20:3 . . . and [he] stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

Now here comes a change in his plans. Turn to Romans 15, verse 17. Now when Paul wrote this, he had not been to Rome. The church had been begun by someone else who had evangelized in that area. But Paul wanted to go there. And in fact, we are going to find at the end of Acts 20 that Paul had no intention of ever returning to the churches that he had started in Turkey and in Greece, and that he was going to shift his operations from the Greek world into the Latin world. And in a way, this letter to the Romans was like paving

the way for Rome hopefully to become kind of a headquarters area for him to branch out from there, go into France and into Spain, into those areas.

We know for sure that he wanted to go into Spain. It is very likely that he wanted to go into other areas, especially other areas of Italy, and maybe, who knows, even in North Africa. Whether he ever got there, I do not know. It does not seem likely that he ever did. But here in Romans 15 he says,

Romans 15:17-20 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation.

You see, what he is telling them is that he had never been there and that he was not going to preach in that area, but he wanted it to be kind of a headquarters. By preach I mean not to a congregation, he would do that. I am talking about evangelizing.

Romans 15:23-26 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you [these parts are the eastern part of the Mediterranean and now he wants to shift his operations to the west], whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey and be helped on my way there by you [that could be emotional support, spiritual support, it could be financial support], if first I might enjoy your company for a while. But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem [and so on].

It is really interesting to see how these letters begin to fit together. And now you can see that he wrote this from Corinth on this trip in which he went from Ephesus to Troas to Macedonia, down to Corinth. Then he was going to

go from Corinth over to Jerusalem, but the Jews had a plot going on, so he made a change in his plans and he instead went north out of Achaia, back to Thessalonica and Philippi and into Macedonia and then over to Troas, and that is where that thing that we just read in chapter 20.

So he stayed 3 months there in Corinth.

Acts 20:3-5 And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.

Now the thought on verse 4 is this: where did he suddenly pick up this tremendous entourage? Formerly it was just Paul and Silas, or Paul and Silas and Timothy, or Paul and Silas and Titus, or Paul and Silas and Luke. Now he has got this entourage like an oriental potentate. Well, these are probably the men who are carrying the fruit and in the meantime, you see, they are going to take advantage of going back to Jerusalem and probably going back there and preaching and reporting on the work that is being done in these areas and confirming what the apostle Paul is doing. Now some of these men we have already met, Gaius of Derbe and Timothy, Tychicus, their names have come up before. These men were from the southern area of what is today Turkey. And so Paul went up into Macedonia and then these men went ahead, sailed across the Aegean and came into Troas.

Acts 20:6-7 But we [Here we are a "we" statement. Luke was with Paul.] sailed away from Philippi [Remember the port city for Philippi was Neapolis.] after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days [it took them five days to sail across that part of the Aegean] joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days. [Now we get to that section again in verse 7.] Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread [break bread here is simply a meal], Paul, ready to depart the next day, . . .

He is in the seventh day of his stay there, so I think you can understand that he arrived on what? On a Sunday or Monday and stayed seven days, and

then on the Sabbath he preached to the people. And then taking advantage of as much time as he possibly could, after Sabbath was over and they had a meal together, then he starts to speak again and then continued his message until midnight. Boy, you think Gerald Waterhouse is long-winded! Or Dean Blackwell. They come from good stock. The apostle Paul before them talked for hours and hours. I think our men in those early days were pikers compared to this. I get the impression of probably at least somewhere near a four-hour sermon. Let us say, he spoke from 8 to midnight. Oh boy, I will tell you, they were hardy people.

Acts 20:8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep.

I dare say, yeah. Incidentally, the Greek indicates young man as being a lad, somewhere between the ages of about 8, 14, 15 years old. Probably there with his mother or dad or both. They told him, Sonny, you just go over there where it's nice and cool and sit in the window. He was overcome by sleep and incidentally, it says Paul continued speaking. The Greek says Paul went on and on. Luke did not mince any words, but these people euphemized it and Paul went on and on.

Acts 20:9 . . . he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

If their stories were as tall as ours, why, he was up there at least 20-30 feet and out the window he went. Of all the ways to fall, you might have thought, well, he had a fifty-fifty chance of falling inside, but he fell outside and down he went. I will tell you, that would have been a sudden and shocking way to end the meeting, to have a death like that occur of a young person. For anyone to die that way is bad enough, but when it is a young person, you know, full of life and looking forward to life, and boy, you know, you just feel so terribly about something like that.

Acts 20:10-12 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him [apparently something very similar to what Elijah and Elisha did with the widows in their day back there in I and II Kings]] said,

"Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." Now when he had come up, broken bread and eaten [now they had a snack], and talked a long while [I do not know how long the break was. Maybe we will give them an hour.], even till daybreak, he departed. [So Paul went on and on again, probably for another 4 or 5 hours. I wonder how many other people fell asleep, on the graveyard shift there from 12 to 8.] And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

Now I am sure that the apostle Paul certainly wanted to hang around until daylight, make sure the young fellow was all right, and be able to take his journey with his mind at peace regarding that. There is no hint from verses 11 and 12 that Paul took that event as a rebuke for talking on too long. It did not stop him at all.

Acts 20:13-15 Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. [So we know the story there.] And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. [Another small port, a little bit further south of Troas and working his way toward Ephesus.] We sailed from there, and then the next day came opposite Chios. [Chios is a small island off the western coast of Turkey.] The following day we arrived at Samos [Samos is another small island off the western coast of Turkey. And apparently what he is marking here is one day at a time, a day's journey, 50, 60 miles by sailing ship.] and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus.

Miletus is about 30 miles south of Ephesus. So Paul has purposely gone around Ephesus. He went to Miletus without stopping at Ephesus. He did not want to stop there for some reason and exactly why nobody knows. There are a couple of guesses. Number one, he was undoubtedly hurrying. His journey was made longer because he originally intended to go from Corinth to Syria to Jerusalem. That would have been direct sailing all the way, but instead he left Achaia because of the trouble, went up into Macedonia, down through Troas, and now he has finally gotten himself after several months' time around to the southwestern corner of Turkey, working his way eastward towards Syria. So he was hurrying.

Another reason might be that it was dangerous. In another place, I believe it is in II Corinthians, he mentions that I fought beasts at Ephesus. Now nobody knows exactly what he means. Did he mean that he did battle with demons? That is a possibility. Was he using beasts in terms of men who were not acting normally? Or was he using it in terms of something like took place in the Roman Colosseum where he was actually up against an animal. I do not know. Nobody knows. He just mentions it like that and it just hangs there with nothing to fill in the detail.

The third reason I personally feel is probably the one that is most likely. And that is that he knew that if he went to Ephesus he would stay there too long and it would be emotional, too hard on him emotionally to go back to a congregation that he had been with for three years, had very strong emotional ties to. We are going to see this a little bit later because he did call the elders of the church of Ephesus to him in Miletus. He stayed there long enough to have them go there, but he did not want to go back to Ephesus and have to say goodbye to the whole congregation again. Because he knew that he was never going to come back and he just did not want to face it. I think that that is the one that is most likely. Because he had a hard enough time saying goodbye to the elders, as we are going to see here in just a bit.

Acts 20:16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

See, there is another time that one of the holy days is used to mark time and again, just by implication, if it was done away, why use it? Why not use a Christian term to mark time? Well, they did. They used the Christian term, the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to the Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

What we are going to see here is Paul's farewell address to these men. Incidentally, there are those who say that this word elders can be translated bishop or overseer or guardians of the church. It is interesting to see the light or the angle or the context that it can be put into. And you can see from the

context of what was a part of his farewell address here that he actually, I think, had the usage of the term guardian or overseer in mind more than simply being somebody who was older. Because he is going to entrust the responsibility for these people, the spiritual responsibility for these people in to these people's hands. Paul was relinquishing it, and he was in a sense saying, "I am no longer their guardian, it's now up to you" sort of thing.

This address is very similar to several of Paul's letters. It is much briefer, of course, but it has the same sense of feeling, the same basic kind of instruction. And he is really taking advantage here of a bit of time. The boat is docking. He has three or four days, and he wants to make as much use of it as he possibly can.

Now if he has three or four days, Miletus is 30 miles from Ephesus. Where those people lived in relation to Ephesus, nobody knows. It takes one day for a messenger to get up there. How long it took to locate each one of them, certainly part of another day or part of the same day, then those people had to arrange their schedules and then get back on to Miletus. So it very likely took three days for the messenger to go up, get everybody into the position, then back down to Miletus, and so Paul has to squeeze everything together here probably in one day. So we have the essence of what he said to these men.

Acts 20:18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, . . .

This is very similar to the second chapter of his letter to the Thessalonians. Let us go there just a bit. I Thessalonians 2. And it is likely that Paul wrote I Thessalonians before this time. In fact, not likely, he did. Paul wrote I Thessalonians probably about 52, somewhere in that neighborhood, 50 to 52 AD and we are much later than that here. We are in the neighborhood of 56 to 58 AD.

I Thessalonians 2:1-7 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much

conflict. For our exhortation did not come from deceit or uncleanness, nor was it guile. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our heart. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

I Thessalonians 2:9-12 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are our witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Now back in Acts 20, he has changed the words around but it is essentially the same thing. Now in verse 18 we have already seen that he is drawing attention to the way that he lived, his example. And it is very likely that he started this way because the accusations that were made against him were very similar. That the problems that he faced in Thessalonica and the problems that he faced in Ephesus were very similar. That the accusations were that Paul was draining people of their money, you know, that kind of thing. Or that he was not giving to them all of the truth, that he was withholding things. And I am sure that the accusations came from those who were outside the church and were doing their best to upset things so that they could maybe get these people back to their congregations.

Acts 20:19 . . . serving the Lord with all humility, . . .

What is he doing here? He is drawing attention to his example. Notice what he claims: humility, which shows the attitude in which he served. He is describing the *way* he served the Lord.

Acts 20:19-20 . . . with many tears [indicating personal concern] and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly from house to house, . . .

He is showing that he taught them with a great deal of patience and with fortitude he persevered. He worked despite all of the temptations and maybe even the desires within him to quit and just throw in the towel and leave off this thing, but he did not. He just kept right on going. He taught them publicly in evangelistic campaigns and privately in Bible studies, in church services, in counseling. And he taught it to them, even though it might be unwelcome to them as well. He gave them God's truth.

Acts 20:21 [Here is the essence of his message.] . . . testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

That encompasses all of the things that have to do with the Kingdom of God. Now repentance, of course, means turning to God. And what it indicates is turning away from something and turning toward something else. Turning away something that has been the source, the authority, or your decision making processes, your standards, that is, turning away from the world and turning toward God and making Him and His way of life and His Word the source from which we reach conclusions, make decisions about what we are going to do with our lives.

So repentance then, turning, is toward God from one thing to another, and then faith, you see, in who Christ is, what He is, what His message was, what His sacrifice means, forgiveness through, and so forth, all those kind of things. And so both of them go hand-in-glove and provide a pattern for salvation. So that is the essence of the message that the apostle Paul preached: repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:22 "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there."

Here, Paul turns away from his introduction to these people, in which he has showed them that he has worked hard, and he has not withheld anything from them, and so he is turning now to the future. Now when he says he is bound, he is saying that there is a compulsion, there is a drive within him, a desire, a spirit, an attitude, that is making him motivated to make sure that he gets to Jerusalem. In chapter 21, verse 4 we find the other side of the coin. It says, "And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem." So on the one hand he feels a compulsion.

There is another one here. In chapter 19, verse 21, "And when these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." So you see, on the one hand, Paul feels a compulsion that he has to get there, and on the other hand, we are going to find out there are numerous warnings that he should not go there. So on the one hand there is necessity, and on the other hand, there is uncertainty. He wants to go, but he keeps being warned, and the prophets apparently kept telling him all along the way as he began to go back there, Don't go. They're suffering down there." But we are going to find that Paul was prepared to die if necessary.

Acts 20:22-24 "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

Now to Paul, that is all that mattered. And that is, that he finish his course, his race, by faithfully performing his responsibility, and that was the faithful preaching of the gospel. So he wanted to finish the race with joy. He wanted to finish the ministry which he received from Christ. He wanted to finish testifying to the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 20:25-26 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no

more. [Paul's work in the eastern part of the Mediterranean was done. That is the way that he perceived it.] Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men."

This does not mean that Paul was being accused of murder. What it does mean is that from this point on, he is not responsible for these people's salvation. He has no responsibility and if they go to the second death, then it is not his fault. Their blood is not going to be on his hands. Do you remember what it says back in Ezekiel 33, that if the watchman does not watch then the people who die, their blood is on his head. But if the watchman proclaims the warning and the people decide not to take advantage of the warning, then the watchman is clear. The blood is on their own head.

That is what he was talking about here. He said, "I have been your watchman. I have been faithful to you. I have warned you what is coming. I have done that well, and now your blood is on your own heads." And so you see what he was doing here, he was transferring the responsibility for the congregation over to these elders, and he was in effect saying that now they are your responsibility. He was saying that to these guardians of the congregation.

Acts 20:27-29 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [guardians, there it is again], to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this [here Paul is going to prophesy], that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."

What he is indicating here is persecution from the outside. Savage wolves coming from the outside to try to rend the flock from the inside. Now a wolf does not come in to become part of the flock. Instead, a wolf ravages the flock and then leaves after he has gotten what he wants. So, persecution from the outside.

Acts 20:30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

So apostasy from within. Now, I could show you places, maybe it would be good to go to a few of them, where Paul's writings, things done a little bit later, show that indeed that is what occurred. One of the best known of course was in not Paul's writings, but in John's writing in the book of Revelation. In chapter 2, we find there that the Ephesian church lost their first love. And it even mentions there that those people did battle with false prophets, false apostles. And they could not stand those people but eventually, apparently, they wearied at the battle and slowly succumbed to it.

But in I Timothy, chapter 1, he is charging Timothy to fight the good fight, to wage a good warfare.

I Timothy 1:19-20 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

In chapter 4 he talks in the first five verses there about people speaking lies in hypocrisy. Go a little bit further in II Timothy chapter 1,

II Timothy 1:15 This you know, that all those in Asia [that is the area we are talking about, in Ephesus, there in Acts 21] have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hemogenes.

I do not think that he means the whole church turned away. But I think that he does mean apparently people who were close friends of his, perhaps elders. They had turned away.

II Timothy 2:17-18 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

You get the idea that Paul's prophecy came to pass, and there were savage wolves from outside. There was false ministers on the inside.

Acts 20:31-32 "Therefore watch [to the ministry, he is telling them to take care of the church and always be on guard, on the alert], and remember that for three years [53 through 56 I believe it was that he was there] I did not cease to warn everyone day night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

That though Paul must leave them, God was with them, and God's Word was there. That is what he is reminding them all. So they now have the responsibility that he had borne. And because we have borne that responsibility and been faithful, then God will share His Kingdom with us.

Acts 20:33 [He goes back to his own personal example again, and he is telling them to follow him.] I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

I was reading in a book by John Wesley. He was the founder of Presbyterianism. And of course the book is a couple hundred years old now by this time. Not my book, just his writing. But he said in that book that he believes that more people have been turned aside from Christianity because of a lust for money than any other single thing. That may be true, I do not know. There is nothing wrong with money. It is a powerful responsibility, a great responsibility. And I know that God wants us to have it. But so many of us who do not feel as though we have enough, lust after it so much that it consumes our time and energies. God will take care of us. He will provide. I know that we have found through the years that He has taken care of us very

well. But even though He has taken care of us very well, it is still hard to keep down the desire for more. I mean, it just keeps popping up. "Well, someday I'm going to win the Reader's Digest sweepstakes and then I'll be on easy street." No, you know, in reality, I could not hack it. I am sure.

Acts 20:34-35 "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who are with me. [I do not know whether Paul supplied the needs for everybody. I think that he means that his companions also worked with their hands.] I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

He is urging them to serve without thought of reward. God will provide. Nobody knows what Paul was quoting because this saying of Jesus just was not recorded. It could be that Paul is paraphrasing rather than making a direct quote. I will give you a verse that comes pretty close. It is,

Luke 6:38 [where Jesus said] "Give, and it will be given you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put to your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

It is more blessed to give. That is a pretty close paraphrase of what Paul said here in in Acts 20:35.

Acts 20:36-38 And when he said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

You see, there is a finality, and they understood that. And they must have all had a premonition that they would never see Paul again. And of course it came about that way. As far as we know, none of these people ever saw him again, so there was a deeply affectionate and sorrowful saying of goodbye with concern.

One more thing that I might add here before we dismiss is: this not only was Paul's last contact with these people. As far as the book of Acts is concerned, it was his last evangelistic campaign. He never had another one. Because he goes back to Jerusalem and the whole rest of the book is occupied with what happened in Jerusalem and then going to Rome, to Caesar and to be imprisoned, and there is no record of him ever going anywhere else, even though he wanted to go to Spain. And if he did, nobody knows. It was his last campaign.

Now of course we know that he spoke in his house. He was under house arrest in Rome there for two years. And if you can call that an evangelistic campaign, it was a strange one, conducted from prison. God has many ways, does He not? But I guess what I mean, it was not a campaign of the kind that he conducted in the other places. And maybe in God's view it was an act of mercy to do it that way, that Paul could not have stood to be beaten up again, subjected to 39 stripes or whatever, and that this was just the best way to get the gospel across, by going directly to Caesar. And he did get into Caesar's household because there were people converted from Caesar's household. It is kind of an interesting benchmark in the book of Acts.