

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 62

I. Exposition of Chapter Twenty (Continued).

A. Verses 13-16 – Paul’s trip to Miletus.

1. **Verse 13** – For some unknown reason, Paul told the rest of his team to take a ship to Assos while he traveled there by foot. The trip was about 40 miles by ship and about 20 miles by foot. Some suggest that he didn’t go with the rest by ship in order to be able to stay a bit longer in Troas for the purpose of ministry.¹ It’s also very possible that Paul felt a need to be alone, just to pray and commune with the Lord. Jesus certainly did this (cf. **Matthew 14:23; Luke 5:16**).
2. **Verses 14-16** – Paul boards the ship and they traveled to some islands (Chios and Samos) until eventually arriving at Miletus. Miletus was approximately 30 miles south of Ephesus. In the nineteenth chapter we saw the last time Paul was at Ephesus, there was a riot due to Paul’s preaching. In **verse 16**, Luke writes: **“For Paul decided to sail past Ephesus so he would not have to spend time in Asia...”** He may have avoided Ephesus due to the chaos that had arisen there the last time and, due to wanting to get to Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost, he didn’t want any delays.

B. Verses 17-38 – The Ephesian elders Exhorted.

1. **Verse 17** – **“From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.”** – Paul called for the leaders of the church in Ephesus to come to Miletus. It seems they didn’t hesitate to come due to having respect and honor toward Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ.
 - a. What is an **“elder”**? – In this context, it is the term used to describe those in the New Testament who had been officially appointed (ordained) as leaders of the local church. **Acts 14:23; 20:17,18; I Timothy 5:17-19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1.**
2. **Verses 18-19** – Paul begins to remind them of when he first came to them. He states that he came **“...serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews...”** (verse 19). The word **“humility”** means; **“without arrogance”**² and **“to have a correct estimate of oneself.”**³ Regarding these verses, Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

“He began, therefore, by reminding them how all the time he was with them he served the Lord ‘with great humility.’ Paul often called himself the Lord’s slave (Rom. 1:1; 12:11; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1). He served also ‘with tears’ because of his love for people he wanted to see saved, and with testings brought on ‘by the plots of the [unbelieving] Jews.’”⁴
3. **Verses 20-21** – Paul didn’t hold back anything that was helpful for the strengthening and maturing of the believers in Ephesus. He taught both publicly and in homes for about three years (cf. **20:31**). He also testified to the Jews and Greeks (everyone) two main things:
 - a. Repentance toward God – **“Repentance”** means; **“to change one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness”**⁵
 - b. Faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ – **“Faith”** means; **“to believe to the extent of complete trust and reliance”**⁶
 - c. Repent and believe are the two Requirements for Salvation. Grant Osborne writes:

“No one would ever be able to accuse him of watering down the reality of sin and salvation in order to curry favor from the listeners (unlike all too many today!). There is no ‘I’m okay, you’re okay’ theology from Paul. The declaration is very clear: ‘They must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.’ In other words, warnings of death and eternal damnation as well as the realization that there is no salvation by good works but only via repentance from sin and faith in Jesus’ atoning death are all present.”⁷
4. **Verses 22-23** – **“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**

¹Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 407.

²Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 747.

³Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*. (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

⁴Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 338.

⁵Louw and Nida, 509.

⁶Ibid, 375.

⁷Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 365.

tribulations await me.” – A few writers believe that Paul was missing the will of God by going on to Jerusalem. They don’t seem to believe that the Lord would ever lead anyone into a situation where there is danger and trials. This doesn’t line up with the rest of Scripture. Jesus never promised that we wouldn’t have trials (cf. **John 16:33**).

a. **“...I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem...”** – The word **“bound”** means; **“to compel someone to act in a particular manner”**⁸ The **Amplified Bible** renders this:

“And now, you see, I am going to Jerusalem, bound by the [Holy] Spirit and obligated and compelled by the [convictions of my own] spirit, not knowing what will befall me there.” – Acts 20:22.

b. **“...the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.”** – It’s important to note here that the Holy Spirit didn’t say “don’t go”, He simply was warning Paul and preparing Paul for some of the things that will transpire there. He has faced similar things already in Philippi (16:19–40), Corinth (18:12–17), and Ephesus (19:28–41).

5. Verse 24 – **“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.”**

a. **“...none of these things move me...”** – This means that his determination was fixed and he wouldn’t be swayed to not go to Jerusalem.

b. **“...nor do I count my life dear to myself...”** – Paul considered fulfilling the will of God more important than his very life. He had surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and he no longer belonged to himself. Remember he wrote:

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” – I Corinthians 6:19-20

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” – Philippians 1:22-23.

c. **“...so that I may finish my race with joy and the ministry which I received...”** – Here we see Paul using the metaphor of a race. The word **“race”** here means; **“A running, a race, or a place of running, a stadium. In the NT, used metaphorically meaning course, career, or one’s life, ministry.”**⁹ (cf. **I Corinthians 9:24-27; II Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1-2.**) Notice Paul also said that he would finish his race with **“joy”**. Paul went through many problems and witnessed a secular and pagan world with many atrocities, yet he had an eternal perspective. With that perspective he could still walk in the joy of the Lord. (cf. **Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17**).

d. **“...to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”** – The good news of God’s grace provided by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and in His resurrection from the dead. The Complete Word Study Dictionary defines **“grace”** as:

“Grace, particularly that which causes joy, pleasure, gratification, favor, acceptance, for a kindness granted or desired, a benefit, thanks, gratitude. A favor done without expectation of return; the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver; unearned and unmerited favor.”¹⁰

6. Verse 25 – **“And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.”**

a. In verse 24 he states that he **“testified to the gospel of grace”** and here he states that he had **“...gone preaching the kingdom of God...”** – These are one in the same. The word **“kingdom”** means; **“the king’s domain”** or **“the king’s rule”**. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and become born again, we enter the kingdom of God (cf. **John 3:3-5**). We have been delivered from **“...the power of darkness and are conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”** (Colossians 1:13).

b. **“...will see my face no more.”** – Paul apparently didn’t think that he would see them again.

⁸Louw and Nida, 475.

⁹Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

¹⁰Ibid.

It's possible that he thought he might die in Jerusalem or possibly in Rome where he was planning on going.