

=THE BOOK OF ACTS=
Lesson 20
Paul's Departure from Ephesus - Acts 20

AIM: to teach my pupils the tender story of Paul leaving Ephesus.

POINT OF CONTACT: Ask the pupils to give you the name of some preacher who has been a blessing to them and in what way he has especially been a blessing. Of course, do not include the pastor of our church. See how many preachers have influenced their lives.

INTRODUCTION: This is one of the most tender scenes in all the Bible. Paul has been at Ephesus for over three years. He has made a little trip back up into Macedonia and Greece to counsel with the Christians there and to establish them in the faith. He is on his way back to Jerusalem. He comes near Ephesus; actually, he comes to Miletus. Miletus is a little place less than 50 miles south of Ephesus. There he calls for the elders of the church to come and meet him for a little conference and a little good-bye. Why Paul did not go directly to Ephesus, only the Lord knows. Maybe it was too hard for him to say "good-bye" to everyone. Maybe he was too broken up over the fact that he would not return, and they would see his face no more. Maybe he did not have time to visit with everyone and had to make a hurried departure and, therefore, just chose the key people to come. At any rate, he did call for the elders of Ephesus to come to Miletus, and there we find a tender farewell. Let us notice several things about this touching story.

I. THE TWOFOLD WORKINGS OF PAUL IN EPHESUS.

1. The twofold preparation - "tears, and temptations," as we read in Acts 20:19. Paul is going to summarize his ministry in Ephesus. He is going to remind them of what he has done there and try to encourage them to continue their growth in grace. The first thing he says is that he had tears and temptations. Any Christian who is going to be a success for God first must have a broken heart. No one can minimize the importance of tears and compassion in Christian service. David said he cried every night. Isaiah said that his eyes were like wells of waters. Jeremiah was called, "the weeping prophet." The Scriptures say that Jesus wept.

A successful Christian must also know temptation. The word "temptations" here also means "trials." God must put us through the testing before He can bless us to the fullest. Do not shrink from trials, for God is simply preparing His sheep in a greater way.

2. A twofold method - "publicly, and from house to house," as we see in Acts 20:20. Just preaching in the pulpit was not enough. Paul went from house to house telling folks how to be saved. Read Acts 5:42 in connection with this. These are the twins of service for Jesus Christ: the preaching of the Gospel and house-to-house soul winning.
3. The twofold prospects - "Jews, and also to the Greeks," as is written in Acts 20:21. Actually, what he means here is "those of the Jewish religion" and "the heathen." In other words, Paul preached to religious people and non-religious people. He preached to those who belonged to churches, but who were not born again, as well as those who belonged to no church.
4. A twofold time - "night and day," as we read in Acts 20:31. He worked night and day in getting out the Gospel.

II. PAUL AS A PASTOR. Of course, none in the Bible could equal the Apostle Paul as Pastor other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us notice the characteristics of Paul's ministry and ask God to give them to us in our lives.

1. He was consistent. In Acts 20:18b, notice the words, "from the first day that I came into Asia." In other words, Paul was not up today and down tomorrow. From the first day until the last day, he had been the same. Consistency is a wonderful thing in service for Christ. All of us know people who go a hundred miles an hour for a while, and then they go ten miles an hour for a while. It is best to find the speed where we can serve God and be consistent.
2. He was faithful in all seasons. (Acts 20:18c) He worked hard in the Spring Program and in the summer slump. He worked hard in the Fall Program and in the leveling-off season of the winter. He worked hard when it was hot, when it was cold, when it was snowing and when it was raining. He

- was instant in season and out of season. This is a characteristic that not only a pastor should have, but every one of us should have. Up or down, hot or cold, high or low, in or out—we should do our best for God.
3. He shared the tears and trials of the people. This is, of course, essential for a pastor as well as for every Christian, for, in a real sense, each of us is to be a little pastor to his circle of friends. The Bible says that we are to weep with those that weep, rejoice with those that rejoice, mourn with those that mourn. It compares us with being all one body. When the foot hurts, the rest of the body hurts too. When one of the family is hurt, we are all hurt; and when one rejoices, we are all to rejoice.
 4. He kept back nothing. (Acts 20:20a) These words could mean, “He did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel,” and “He did not rob from them what they should have.” Even if the unregenerate heart would not accept it, he went ahead and preached it all. He kept back nothing. He preached the entire Bible. Each of us should be faithful to the Bible. A pastor should be faithful, but also each Christian should keep back nothing from the Bible in his life. We are to live the whole Bible and do all the Bible says.
 5. He was a personal soul winner. (Acts 20:20b) Notice, he went from house to house. He did not sit in his study all the time, but he joined the people in soul winning. Every Christian should be a soul winner. In the New Testament, all the people witnessed.
 6. He reached all classes of people. (Acts 20:21) First Baptist Church of Hammond should be the kind of church that can welcome the high and the low. Each one of us should do our best to reach everyone we can for Jesus Christ.
 7. He was faithful to the true message. (Acts 20:21b) It is not enough to have zeal, but we must be faithful to the truth, as is found in this verse, “...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the hope for man. Let us be true to the message.
 8. He was led of the Spirit. Acts 20:23. Every pastor should be led of the Spirit, but once again, this should be true of all Christians. We should be very sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
 9. Serving the Lord was the main thing in his life. (Acts 20:24) To be a good pastor, this must be true. Once again, however, we must comment that this is applicable not only to the pastor, but to every Christian. We should make serving Christ the big thing in our lives and the making of a living, the earning of money, etc. all secondary.
 10. His hands were clean from the blood of all men. (Acts 20:26) He said he was “...pure from the blood of all men.” All of us would agree that a pastor should be faithful to the truth and soul winning so that he can wash his hands of all men’s blood. Once again, this is true of the layman also. Is there someone’s blood that would be on your hands if you died today? Let us be faithful to get the truth to every man that we might have no one’s blood on our hands.
 11. He preached the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:27) A pastor should certainly preach all the Bible. Occasionally someone will quote Paul as saying to the Corinthians that he was determined to preach nothing except Christ crucified. This is true, but he had just gotten through saying that they were babies and could not take the rest of it. We are to help Christians grow so that they can take the whole counsel of God. Not only are we to preach the plan of salvation and teach folks how to be saved, we are to teach them how to be good mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, workmen, citizens, church members, etc. Christianity should affect the whole man, not just a part.
 12. He fed the people. (Acts 20:28) This means that he fed them the Word of God. This should be the case of our pulpit, our Sunday school classes, and every phase of our church program. Let us be faithful in the teaching of the Word of God that we might grow strong Christians in our church.
 13. He warned them concerning false teachers. (Acts 20:29-31) He reminded them that “grievous wolves” would come and that people would not teach the truth. This is one of the hardest things for a pastor to do, as he gets more criticism for this than for anything else. He is accused of criticizing other churches, other denominations, etc. However, it remains a fact that we should warn our people concerning false teachers. Let us always warn our boys and girls, our men and women, our young people about sin, temptation, error, etc.
 14. He was not money-minded. In Acts 20:33, notice that he said, “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.” No pastor can be successful who has his eye on the dollar. God will take care of

the pastor. On the other hand, the same thing is true for the layman. No layman who is dollar-conscious can be as fruitful in God's service as he ought to be. The big thing should be the will of God in all of our lives.

15. Paul worked hard. (Acts 20:34) He was willing to work with his hands. Any preacher should work hard. No pastor can be successful unless he does work hard. On the other hand, the layman should also work hard. No church can be built without many people working at their jobs.
16. He was tenderhearted. (Acts 20:37, 38) If anyone wants to see a beautiful picture and yet a sad picture, let him read the story here of Paul's leaving Ephesus. Still in all, every Christian should be tenderhearted.

III. ALL OF US SHOULD BE A LITTLE BIT OF WHAT THE PASTOR SHOULD BE. In other words, there are no dual standards for Christianity. The pastor should do soul winning from house to house; so should the layman. The pastor should warn people; so should the layman. The pastor should be tenderhearted; so should the layman. The average person has the idea, I'm afraid, that in the service for Christ the only person who should be a good Christian, study his Bible, pray, etc. is the Preacher. This certainly is not so, but each of us is to do his best to be the best Christian he possibly can be.

QUESTIONS: Fill in the blanks.

1. Paul said that he served with all humility of mind and with many _____ and _____.
2. Paul preached mainly in two different places. He said he preached _____ and from _____ to _____.
3. He testified both to the _____ and to the _____.
4. The message was one of _____ and _____.
5. He did this in the _____ and _____.
6. A good Christian should be faithful in all _____.
7. Paul said that he kept back _____ that was profitable for them.
8. A good Christian should make serving the Lord the _____ thing in his life.
9. A good Christian should be led of the _____ in all things.
10. The Apostle Paul said he was _____ from the blood of all men.
11. Paul said he preached the whole _____ of God.
12. He warned that "grievous _____" would come in after he left.
13. He said he coveted no man's _____, or _____, or _____.
14. Paul was at Ephesus at least _____ years.

MEMORY VERSE: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts 20:27.