

Saying Good-bye

Key Verse: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
—Acts 20:28

Selected Scripture:
Acts 20:17-38

IN TODAY’S LESSON, WE find Paul stopping briefly at Troas on his third missionary journey to join his disciples who were to accompany him to Jerusalem in time for the coming celebration of the Feast of Pentecost. The night before they were to depart, Paul preached a long farewell sermon far into the night to those gathered in an upper chamber. Eutychus, a young man seated in a high loft, sunk into a deep sleep and accidentally fell from a third story window. He was taken

for dead, but was raised to life again by the apostle. Afterward they broke bread and talked together until the break of day.—Acts 20:7-12

After several more hurried stops they reached Miletus, the seaport that lay near Ephesus. Since Paul was closely acquainted with the brethren at Ephesus he knew some would no doubt urge him to stay an extended time with them, and possibly delay his scheduled arrival at Jerusalem for Pentecost. For this reason, from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. When they were come to him, he said unto them, “Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with

you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.”—vss. 17-19

Paul here pointed to the fact that by his faithfulness in teaching both Jews and also Greeks, “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 21), he didn’t know what would befall him except that in every town he visited, the Holy Spirit warned him that “bonds and afflictions” abided him.—vs. 23

“I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (vss. 26-28, read in *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*: “acquired by the blood of his own Son.”)

Paul’s mind was thinking of his responsibility as a steward of God to teach nothing but the words of God, as spoken by the prophet in Ezekiel 33:7-9, *New International Version*. “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.”

Paul’s good-bye to the brethren at Ephesus was truly an emotionally difficult experience for all gathered there. After Paul finished speaking, “he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.”—Acts 20:36-38 ■