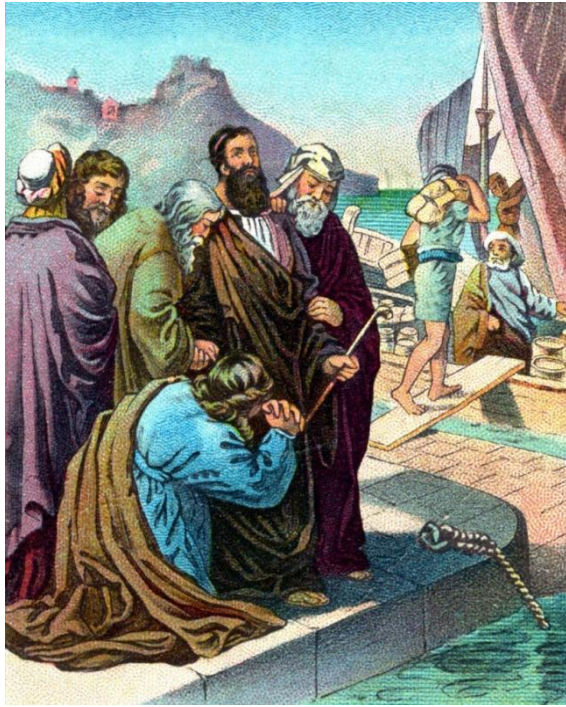


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS LESSON 2



PAUL'S TESTIMONY TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

Scripture Text: Acts 20:17-38

Paul sailed along the coast of Asia Minor and touched at various points. He was on his way to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, hurrying to reach there on time.

Paul put all he had into evangelizing the Ephesians. He told them that he had held nothing back that would be profitable to them. He did so because he first had put all of himself into the hands of Jesus. To carry out Christ's purposes meant more to Paul than life and all that it held for him. He had no desire apart from God's will. Therefore, he put himself fully to bringing the Ephesians to Christ, and God gave good success.

In our day the need for the Gospel is increasingly great. The devil's kingdom is gaining, and so few are spreading the Gospel. Every saint is needed in this great work. Let us go all-out to win the souls around us.

MEMORY VERSE: *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

—Acts 20:27

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—Galatians 5:13-26 The fruit of the Spirit.

Tue.—Ephesians 4:7-16 The gifts of the Spirit.

Wed.—2 Corinthians 9:6-15 God loves a cheerful giver.

Thu.—Psalm 78:17-31 God provided angels' food for Israel.

Fri.—Titus 1:5-16 Help in dealing with false teachers.

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:18-26 God sets members in.

Paul's Clean Conscience

Acts 20:17-21 Paul, not having the time to go to Ephesus, called the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus. He reminded them of his manner of life while with them. A clean conscience and a faithful past allowed him to lay out his record before them. He knew He had served the Lord with humility **at all seasons**—unselfishly through all situations. Yes, He served in spite of persecution. **I kept back nothing that was profitable**—Paul gave them all the Truth and instruction he knew. **Taught you publicly, and from house to house**—continually, at every opportunity. It was all-out effort. He taught (1) **Repentance toward God**, and (2) **faith toward . . . Jesus Christ**—the repentance that brings forgiveness of the past and the faith that brings life to the soul now and hope for the future.

Paul's Deepest Desire

Acts 20:22-27 **I go bound in the spirit.** He was not bound by any man. He was not bound in body yet, but knowing he would be. The Holy Spirit witnessed to, or revealed, Paul's coming arrest. This shows the power of the Spirit to reveal the future to His people. **But none of these things move me**, Paul said. Coming troubles did not frighten Paul nor change his course nor slacken his pace. It mattered little to him whether he lived or died.

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(Read **Philippians 1:21**.) What mattered was that he **might finish his course with joy**—might do the ministry, or service, or task that Jesus gave him to do. That service was **to testify the gospel of the grace of God**—to tell the good news of how God, through Jesus, can put His life within a human heart by His saving grace in salvation. The bad news was that **ye all . . . shall see my face no more**. The good news was that **I am pure from the blood of all men**. What is your deepest desire?

Warning of Apostasy

Acts 20:28-31 Paul was talking to the church elders. For their duties, see **1 Timothy 3:1-6; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:5-9**. They were to **take heed**, first to themselves to live holy lives, then **to all the flock—to feed the church of God**—not physical but spiritual food. Two reasons for being diligent in feeding were (1) **the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers**—a most important trust—and (2) God **hath purchased** the church **with his own blood**. Each member in it has been redeemed by His blood. (Christ's blood is God's blood, since Christ is God.) A treasure so precious to God must be most precious to us. An added reason making it imperative to feed the flock well was that false teachers were coming, teachers so heartless and doing such ruinous work as to be called **grievous wolves**. Some **of your own selves**— some even from within the church would fall away into false doctrines and lead many astray. Paul warned of an apostasy. They were to **watch, and remember** Paul's constant and heartfelt warnings because of those teaching false doctrine.

The elders were made overseers of the church to feed it. God, not man, sets elders in place. The word *pastor* means one who feeds and cares for. The duty of a pastor or elder is not to entertain, to exercise unethical authority over, or to use them in any way to his own advantage. It is to feed them.

A church feeding on good spiritual food will grow in grace. They will bear spiritual fruit. They will be strong to meet temptation, persecution, or false doctrine. They will be able to work for God, each in his place, spreading the Gospel and winning souls. The good food is the Word of God (**1 Peter 2:2**) being preached by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's Freedom From Covetousness

Acts 20:32-35 Paul had done all he could for the Ephesian church; he could do no more. He commended them to God Who could do all. **And to the word of his grace**—the Word they had been taught of the work God freely does in hearts. They did not yet have the written Bible; they were writing it. The Word if followed would build them up and put them among the sanctified. Paul went on to express his freedom from covetousness. **I have coveted no man's silver . . .** Paul was not preaching for money. He reminded them that his own hands worked to support his and needs of others. His example taught the church that **it is more blessed to give than to receive**. Paul's giving of the Gospel and of himself brought him greater blessings than to receive money. For a man of God to receive money from the people out of a heart of love is a much greater blessing than his having to ask for it. We should desire to give rather than to receive. The bond between saints is love.

A Sorrowful Parting

Acts 20:36-38 **He knelt down, and prayed with them all**. In prayer is the greatest satisfaction for deep emotion. Oh, how their hearts must have been touched by the prayer of this great man of God in this time of so great emotion! **All wept sore . . . kissed him, sorrowing most . . . that they should see his face no more**. They loved each other. This is a relationship not known to those who preach for money or work as a business arrangement. The elders went with Paul to the ship to be with him as long as possible.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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