

STUDY 7 || *ACTS 20 & 2 TIMOTHY*

# GOSPEL FOCUS

For Paul, the gospel mission often called for the personal sadness and sacrifice of saying goodbye. Acts 20 opens and closes with fond farewells.

Have you ever considered allowing the gospel to influence where you went or chose to live? Why or why not?



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## GOSPEL PARTNERSHIPS

### *The "We" Passages*

Back in study 3 we noted that from time to time Luke himself joins Paul in his travels, and includes himself in the action by using the pronoun "we". The "we" passages stopped for a significant time. Paul & Silas then travel to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and then to Corinth. Paul then stayed in Corinth for 18 months (Acts 18:10).

The "we" passages resume in chapter 20, when Paul returns to Philippi. After a four year gap, Luke rejoins him for the trip to Troas. After a week in Troas, Luke then sailed to Assos but Paul went by foot. Paul was then taken on board at Assos. They then sailed to Caesarea via Mitylene, Kios, Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre and Ptolemais.

This small detail is worth noticing both for the insight it gives into Paul's complex teamwork, but also as an indication of the historical 'connectedness' of Acts - in some sections, our author Luke was right on the spot.

### Read Acts 20:1-6

1. What common effect does Paul have in verses 1 and 2. How does he do it?

How are you going at this? What works, and what doesn't?

2. Read the details of Paul's team-mates and their travel itinerary. List his companions and where they've come from...

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|----|------|
| 1. | from |
| 2. | from |
| 3. | from |
| 4. | from |
| 5. | from |
| 6. | from |
| 7. | from |
| 8. | from |

*(From the sidebar, who's the mysterious 'number 8')*

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## SAVING EUTYCHUS

3. It's worth reading the story of Eutychus in **Acts 20:7-12**. (With Gary Millar, Phil Campbell has written a book called "Saving Eutychus" in the hope that today's preachers will do their best to try to keep people awake.) Do you think the account is a warning for preachers, or listeners, or both?

Follow Paul's trip from Troas down to Miletus in **Acts 20:13-17**. Rather than visit Ephesus again, he calls for the elders from Ephesus to meet him on the way through Miletus.



4. As Paul reminds them of his time with them, note the way he describes his focus and message:

- I have not hesitated to preach anything that \_\_\_\_\_ v20
- I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that \_\_\_\_\_ v21
- If only I finish the race & complete the task of \_\_\_\_\_ v24
- I have gone about preaching the \_\_\_\_\_ v25
- I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the \_\_\_\_\_ v27
- Now I commit you to God and the \_\_\_\_\_ v32

Paul’s claim that he proclaimed to the Ephesians “the whole will of God” - traditionally translated as “the whole counsel of God” - has in some circles become a standard for measuring up preachers! The phrase is often taken to mean that Paul claims he taught them every part of the Old Testament scriptures, including the Law; and every implication for Christian life and living (see sidebar).

5. How would you summarise the essence of Paul’s preaching from the references above?

6. **Read from verses 28 to 31.** What warning does Paul give the Ephesian elders? How is this relevant today?

### The Whole Counsel of God

The authors of this study guide are convinced that when Paul uses the phrase “the whole counsel of God,” he’s talking about *the whole Gospel*, with all the hard parts that others might prefer to leave out, including judgment and repentance. Others, like Bojidar Marinov, argue that it’s “the Law.”<sup>1</sup> He says, “By refusing to preach the whole counsel of God to their congregations, [the modern church has] created the problem of a weak church with weak believers... God’s Law must be taught to individuals, families, churches, and nations, because it is only God’s Law that gives them the tools to obey God in the task He has given man. Once the foundation of God’s Sovereignty is established, and the Dominion Mandate is taken as man’s main task on earth, there is only one logical conclusion: God’s Law is the Law, in everything man does, individual or cultural.”

Contrary to this view, we are convinced that the “whole will of God” is *the good news about God’s grace in Jesus, in whom all the fulness of God dwells in bodily form.* (See Colossians 1.) Jesus is God’s final and complete word to us, and proclaiming him is the essence of Christian ministry, As Paul says to the Corinthians, “When I was with you I preached nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” In other words, everything else flows from the simple statement that “The one who died for sin is King.”

<sup>1</sup><https://americanvision.org/5448/teaching-the-whole-counsel-of-god/>

How would you imagine our elders and leaders today could do the same as the Ephesian elders are urged to? (Would you take any notice if they did?)

7. Describe the practicalities of Paul's ministry in verses 32 to 36. What example did he set?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Re-read verses 22-24, along with Paul's farewell to them in verses 36-38. Why all the tears?

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## STRATEGIC MEMO

Paul indeed never made it back to Ephesus. But he left Timothy there to care for the church, and later sent him two letters (1 and 2 Timothy), as well as a letter to the church (Ephesians).

9. From **1 Timothy 1:3-4**, what problems are still evident in Ephesus?

How does this relate to Paul's warnings in Acts 20?

10. In **2 Timothy 3:10-4:5**, what strategy does he urge Timothy to adopt?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. How are these priorities reflected in the life of MPC?

Pray that our teachers, leaders, and elders will be faithful and effective in keeping the gospel at the centre of everything! (What will this look like in practice?)

Pray that God will help our leaders guard his flock - you - and that as a church we will be willing to take warning against false teaching. Often people don't like to be warned!