

# Readings

## Scripture

<sup>17</sup> Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. <sup>18</sup> And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, <sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; <sup>20</sup> how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. <sup>24</sup> But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. <sup>25</sup> And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, <sup>27</sup> for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. <sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

<sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup> And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, <sup>38</sup> being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Acts 20:17-38 (English Standard Version)

## Reflection

Emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable. It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature...

The overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual health of its leadership. In fact, the key to successful spiritual leadership has much more to do with the leader's internal life than with the leader's expertise, gifts, or experience...

God forced me to take a long, painful look at the truth – the truth about myself, our marriage, our lives, the church. Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32). It was demoralizing to admit, finally, that the intensity of my engagement in spiritual disciplines had not worked spiritual maturity into my life. Why? I had ignored the emotional components of discipleship in my life.

- Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (p. 10, 20, & 24)

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

- Hebrews 13:7-8 (English Standard Version)

# Sermon Outline

Farewell  
Acts 20:17-38

*The Theology of Tears*  
Brad Anderson

*What do you say and do when you know the end is near?* (Acts 20:17, 36-38)

## What did Paul say and do when he knew the end was near?

**He remembered past challenges...** (Acts 20:18-27)

- Serving the Lord with humility, tears, and trials...
- Teaching the faith publicly and from house to house...
- Planning for more of the same...

**He envisioned the certainty of future challenges...** (Acts 20:28-35)

- Pay close attention to yourselves and to the flock...
- Be alert in tearful prayers as you teach...
- Commit people to God and to the gospel of grace...

## Reflection Questions

 (taken in part from the *Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- Who has served as a spiritual role model for you? What about that person has rubbed off on you?
- Considering Acts 2:1, why might Paul want to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost?
- How could you use Paul's summary of the gospel in verse 21 to explain Christianity to someone?
- From 18-20 what actions and attitudes characterize his ministry? In light of verses 29-30, why does he emphasize how he lived among them?
- From your reading of Acts so far, what types of hardships has Paul already encountered? Comparing 20:24 with Philippians 3:7-8, how would you explain to one of Paul's persecutors what motivates him to keep on?
- How does 1 Timothy 4:11-16 (written to Timothy in Ephesus) expand what Paul means in verse 28? Given their divine appointment as elders, how does that serve to highlight the seriousness of their responsibility? What two dangers does he warn them about in verses 29-30?
- How is the message of grace in verse 32 a protection for them from these dangers? From 1 Timothy 5:6-10 and 1 Peter 5:3, apparently some people viewed the office of elder as a way of gaining power and wealth. How does Paul fight against that idea here?
- Looking over verses 18-38, how would you describe the relationship between Paul and this church?
- If someone watched over you the past year, what would they assume a Christian lifestyle is like?
- How do Paul's daily tears relate to his admonition and spiritual alertness in verse 31?
- Do you think the church in our culture is challenged more by outside or inside dangers? Why? How would verses 28 and 32 help us as we face those dangers?