

# The Epistle to the Ephesians

## 1. Introduction



Library at Ephesus

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a powerful letter written by Paul to the church at Ephesus. In this letter Paul wants the “Saints” to know their position in Christ. Christians are wealthy and powerful beyond anything offered in this world; many of us just don’t know it. Believers in Christ, the saints, struggle when our identity comes from the world, rather than through Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

Paul writes this letter to the Ephesians saints so they can know who they are. Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to understand the source of their struggle. He wanted them to wage war in the spiritual realms, to access the power and position we have in Jesus Christ.

We as Christians struggle because we really don’t understand the complete picture. The world plays to our flesh, pulling us by our natural desires, making the things of God

seem inconvenient. Paul’s goal in this Epistle is to reveal to Christians the reality of the spiritual world we live, how we can have victory and how we can advance the Kingdom of God. We have victory through Jesus Christ, Satan is at war with the saints, his goal is to keep us away from our position and power so we are not effective in the war. Paul’s want us to know how we can be effective.

### Authorship

The authorship is identified as Paul with the text (Eph. 1:1,3:1) two times.

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, Ephesians 1:1

<sup>1</sup> For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— Ephesians 3:1

The early church has also attested to Paul being author of the book. Irenaeus was the first to quote it as a Pauline epistle, but both early apologists and heretics such as Marcion attributed the letter to Paul. Criticism began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in England and Germany. These critics questioned Paul’s authorship based larger on vocabulary and style. These arguments are largely subjective, based on the views of the critic, since both the text and history clearly argue in favor of Paul. For the book to not be written by Paul would mean it’s a forgery, discrediting the contents.

Paul founded the church at Ephesus and would have every reason to remain connected with the body of believers there, to ensure its growth and faithfulness while he was away.

### Destination

There has been debate about who the Epistle to the Ephesians was addressed. Some have argued the letter was an encyclical letter sent to several churches. The two main arguments for this are:

1. The city of Ephesus is does not appear in three Alexandrian Greek manuscripts in the introduction Eph. 1.1.
2. It is strange for Paul to not mention specific people who he worked and ministered with for 2 to 3 years (Acts 20:31).

These questions can be answered. First, the title "To the Ephesians" appears in all manuscripts of the epistle. Paul made it common practice in all his letters to specify their destinations. Secondly, the reason names are not mentioned could be several. Paul was in prison for his faith; he could have sensed a coming persecution and not wanted to endanger believers in the city. Also, Paul knows many believers in the city and did not want any to feel left out in a personal mention in the letter.

This letter would have been delivered by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21-22), he also delivered the letter to the Colossians. The letter being written to Ephesus would have circulated regardless by the very nature of the city. Ephesus was the capital of Roman Asia, and the letter would have been copied and sent to the other churches without specific instructions. Paul encouraged believers in the other cities to read letters sent to the other cities.

16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. Colossians 4:16



**Mamertine Prison in Rome**

### **Place and Date**

Paul was clearly a prisoner when he wrote this letter according to the text ( Eph 3:1,4:1,6:20). The question is whether Paul was a prisoner in Rome or Caesarea. After his third missionary journey Paul was taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea and held there to be tried (Acts 24:27) in A.D. 57-59. While there, he appealed to Caesar because of his Roman citizenship (Acts 28:30) and was sent to Rome to face trial A.D. 60-62.

In addition to Ephesians the Books of Philippians, Colossians and Philemon are also thought to be written during his imprisonment, therefore they are known as the "Prison Epistles" (Phil 1:7; Col. 4:10; Phile 9). There is no indication

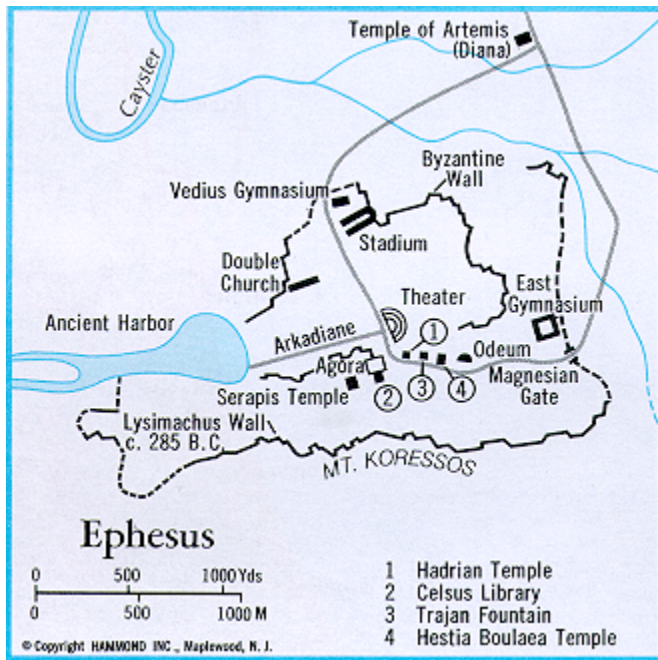
from the letter that Paul would be released from prison, therefore we could assume he wrote it the start of his arrest about A.D. 60, when he was kept under guard in rented quarters. The other letters indicate he would be released (Phil. 1:19-26) and Philemon vs. 22.

He was later released from prison and wrote 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy and Titus, was rearrested and wrote 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy and was martyred in Rome.

### **Purpose**

There is no specific sins or corrections raised in the letter to the Ephesians, the letter is for doctrine and revelation to the Ephesian believers. Paul had very definite concerns for the church; he raised these concerns on his final meeting with the elders of the church at Miletus (A.D. 57). He specifically warned "savage wolves" would come in among them "not sparing the flock". He also warned men will rise up from "among yourselves..... speaking perverse things to draw disciples after themselves" Paul then warns them to "watch and remember....I did not cease to warn everyone" (Acts 20:30-31).

From Revelation 2:4, we see the Ephesian Church was able to keep alert for false teachers, not allowing the Nicolaitans to gain a foothold in the body (Rev. 2:6).

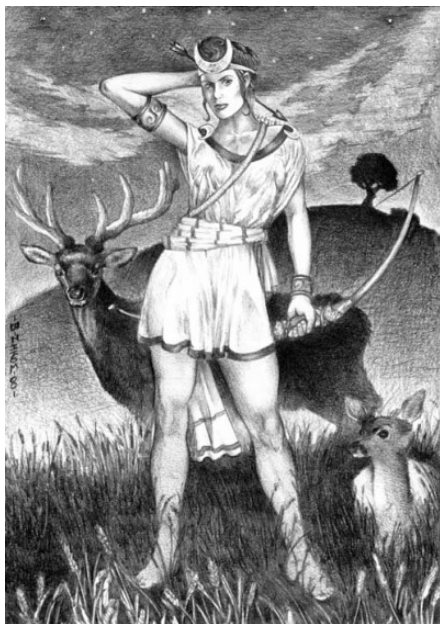


## History of the Ephesus<sup>1</sup>

ef'-e-sus (Ephesos, "desirable"):

A city of the Roman province of Asia, near the mouth of the Cayster river, 3 miles from the western coast of Asia Minor, and opposite the island of Samos. With an artificial harbor accessible to the largest ships, and rivaling the harbor at Miletus, standing at the entrance of the valley which reaches far into the interior of Asia Minor, and connected by highways with the chief cities of the province, Ephesus was the most easily accessible city in Asia, both by land and sea. Its location, therefore, favored its religious, political and commercial development, and presented a most advantageous field for the missionary labors of Paul. The city stood upon the

sloping sides and at the base of two hills, Prion and Coressus, commanding a beautiful view; its climate was exceptionally fine, and the soil of the valley was unusually fertile.



Tradition says that in early times near the place where the mother goddess of the earth was born, the Amazons built a city and a temple in which they might worship. This little city of the Amazons, bearing at different times the names of Samorna, Trachea, Ortygia and Ptelea, flourished until in the early Greek days it aroused the cupidity of Androclus, a prince of Athens. He captured it and made it a Greek city. Still another tradition says that Androclus was its founder. However, under Greek rule the Greek civilization gradually supplanted that of the Orientals, the Greek language was spoken in place of the Asiatic; and the Asiatic goddess of the temple assumed more or less the character of the Greek Artemis. Ephesus, therefore, and all that pertained to it, was a mixture of oriental and Greek. Though the early history of the city is obscure, it seems that at different times it was in the hands of the Carians, the Leleges and Ionians; in the early historical period it was one of a league of twelve Ionian cities. In 560 BC it came into the possession of the Lydians; 3 years later, in 557, it was taken by the Persians; and during the following years the Greeks and Persians were constantly disputing for its possession. Finally, Alexander the Great

took it; and at his death it fell to Lysimachus, who gave it the name of Arsinoe, from his second wife. Upon the death of Attalus II (Philadelphus), king of Pergamos, it was bequeathed to the Roman Empire; and in 190, when the Roman province of Asia was formed, it became a part of it. Ephesus and Pergamos, the capital of Asia, were the two great rival cities of the province. Though Pergamos was the center of the Roman religion and of the government, Ephesus was the more accessible, the commercial center

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/E/ephesus.html>

and the home of the native goddess Diana; and because of its wealth and situation it gradually became the chief city of the province. It is to the temple of Diana, however, that its great wealth and prominence are largely due. Like the city, it dates from the time of the Amazons, yet what the early temple was like we now have no means of knowing, and of its history we know little except that it was seven times destroyed by fire and rebuilt, each time on a scale larger and grander than before. The wealthy king Croesus supplied it with many of its stone columns, and the pilgrims from all the oriental world brought it of their wealth. In time the temple possessed valuable lands; it controlled the fisheries; its priests were the bankers of its enormous revenues. Because of its strength the people stored there their money for safe-keeping; and it became to the ancient world practically all that the Bank of England is to the modern world.



In 356 BC, on the very night when Alexander the Great was born, it was burned; and when he grew to manhood he offered to rebuild it at his own expense if his name might be inscribed upon its portals. This the priests of Ephesus were unwilling to permit, and they politely rejected his offer by saying that it was not fitting for one god to build a temple to another. The wealthy Ephesians themselves undertook its reconstruction, and 220 years passed before its final completion. Not only was the temple of Diana a place of worship, and a treasure-house, but it was also a museum in which the best statuary and most

beautiful paintings were preserved. Among the paintings was one by the famous Apelles, a native of Ephesus, representing Alexander the Great hurling a thunderbolt. It was also a sanctuary for the criminal, a kind of city of refuge, for none might be arrested for any crime whatever when within a bowshot of its walls. There sprang up, therefore, about the temple a village in which the thieves and murderers and other criminals made their homes. Not only did the temple bring vast numbers of pilgrims to the city, as does the Kaaba at Mecca at the present time, but it employed hosts of people apart from the priests and priestesses; among them were the large number of artisans who manufactured images of the goddess Diana, or shrines to sell to the visiting strangers.

Such was Ephesus when Paul on his 2nd missionary journey in Ac (18:19-21) first visited the city, and when, on his 3rd journey (19:8-10; 20:31), he remained there for two years preaching in the synagogue (19:8,10), in the school of Tyrannus (19:9) and in private houses (20:20). Though Paul was probably not the first to bring Christianity to Ephesus, for Jews had long lived there (2:9; 6:9), he was the first to make progress against the worship of Diana. As the fame of his teachings was carried by the pilgrims to their distant homes, his influence extended to every part of Asia Minor. In time the pilgrims, with decreasing faith in Diana, came in fewer numbers; the sales of the shrines of the goddess fell off; Diana of the Ephesians was no longer great; a Christian church was rounded there and flourished, and one of its first leaders was the apostle John. Finally in 262 AD, when the temple of Diana was again burned, its influence had so far departed that it was never again rebuilt. Diana was dead. Ephesus became a Christian city, and in 341 AD a council of the Christian church was held there. The city itself soon lost its importance and decreased in population. The sculptured stones of its great buildings, which were no longer in use and were falling to ruins, were carried away to Italy, and especially to Constantinople for

the great church of Saint Sophia. In 1308 the Turks took possession of the little that remained of the city, and deported or murdered its inhabitants. The Cayster river, overflowing its banks, gradually covered with its muddy deposit the spot where the temple of Diana had once stood, and at last its very site was forgotten.

The small village of Ayasaluk, 36 miles from Smyrna on the Aidin R. R., does not mark the site of the ancient city of Ephesus, yet it stands nearest to its ruins. The name Ayasaluk is the corruption of three Greek words meaning "the Holy Word of God." Passing beyond the village one comes to the ruins of the old aqueduct, the fallen city walls, the so-called church of John or the baths, the Turkish fort which is sometimes called Paul's prison, the huge theater which was the scene of the riot of Paul's time, but which now, with its marble torn away, presents but a hole in the side of the hill Prion. In 1863 Mr. J. T. Wood, for the British Museum, obtained permission from the Turkish government to search for the site of the lost temple of Diana. During the eleven years of his excavations at Ephesus, \$80,000 were spent, and few cities of antiquity have been more thoroughly explored. The city wall of Lysimachus was found to be 36,000 ft. in length, enclosing an area of 1,027 acres. It was 10 1/2 ft. thick, and strengthened by towers at intervals of 100 ft. The six gates which pierced the wall are now marked by mounds of rubbish. The sites and dimensions of the various public buildings, the streets, the harbor, and the foundations of many of the private houses were ascertained, and numerous inscriptions and sculptures and coins were discovered. Search, however, did not reveal the site of the temple until January 1, 1870, after six years of faithful work. Almost by accident it was then found in the valley outside the city walls, several feet below the present surface. Its foundation, which alone remained, enabled Mr. Wood to reconstruct the entire temple plan. The temple was built upon a foundation which was reached by a flight of ten steps. The building itself was 425 ft. long and 220 ft. wide; each of its 127 pillars which supported the roof of its colonnade was 60 ft. high; like the temples of Greece, its interior was open to the sky. For a further description of the temple, see Mr. Wood's excellent book, Discoveries at Ephesus.

E. J. Banks



## Background to the letter of Ephesians

Paul first reached Ephesus on his way back to Antioch from his second missionary journey.

18 So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; <sup>b</sup> but I will return again to you, God willing."

And he sailed from Ephesus. 22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. **Acts 18:18-22**

Paul left Priscilla and Aquila there while he journeyed to Antioch. Priscilla and Aquila began to do the groundbreaking work of discipleship work in Ephesus. Apollos was one of their first converts, he was a disciple of John who did not yet know Jesus the Messiah (Acts 18:24-28). Apollos was an early apologist who used Bible Prophecy to demonstrate the person of Christ to those in Ephesus.

24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught



accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. **Acts 18:24-28**

On Paul's third missionary journey, Paul stayed and in Ephesus for 3-years building up the body of Christ, to wage spiritual warfare within the Roman Empire. After his 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey Paul is arrested and put in jail. While in jail, Paul writes

this epistle to Ephesus encouraging them to continue the fight. Therefore to understand Ephesians it is important to know what happened when Paul ministered in the city for 3-years. Acts chapter 19 details these events.

### 1. Paul Disciples 12 followers of John the Baptist

Prior to the ministry of Christ, John the Baptist prepared the way for the ministry of Christ. The disciples of John had spread throughout Asia, many times in communities that were cut off from communication to the events in Jerusalem. Paul was on the forefront, bringing the gospel to the frontiers of Roman world which had not heard the Gospel. In Ephesus, he brought 12 of John's disciples to a full understanding of the Messiah.

1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all. **Acts 19:1-7**

## 2. Paul builds the church for 2-3 years at the school of Tyrannus

In Ephesus, Paul also reached Jews in the synagogues, from the scriptures he demonstrated God's plan concerning His Kingdom and the Messiah. When opposition grew, he took those who were interested in growing in their faith and began to disciple them in the school of Tyrannus<sup>2</sup>. This was a hall, Paul rented from 11: AM to 4:00 PM everyday to disciple the early church. Paul did this for 2 to 3 years.

8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. **Acts 19:8-10**

## 3. Spiritual Warfare



The body of believers began to grow in the city through Paul's teaching. God also validated Paul, allowing supernatural events to take place, such as healings and deliverance. Demonic forces were defeated and people delivered. The Jewish community of Ephesus, especially those who claimed to have spiritual power were amazed at Paul's work. The "Seven sons of Sceva", a Jewish priest, tried to imitate Paul work, but they beaten by demon

possessed man, this magnified Paul's ministry. More and more people began to reject the books and occult scrolls claiming access to the "Spirit world". Then one day, and in one accord their burned their books, which were valued at 50,000 Drachma or pieces of silver.

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We <sup>a</sup> exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered <sup>b</sup> them, and prevailed against them, <sup>c</sup> so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. **Acts 19:11-19**

## 4. Satanic opposition to the growing church

As the church began to grow in Ephesus, Satanic opposition also began to rise. Diana (Artemis) worship was a major business to the city. People would come to Ephesus to worship at her temple, they would go back to their homes with her image, to keep worshipping her. These images were made from silver and

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<sup>2</sup>

other metals and those who made them were part of a guild, controlling the industry. Their business was affected by Paul's ministry. One of the top silversmith's was a man named Demetrius. As more and more people began to reject Diana worship, the drop in business became very obvious.

Demetrius the silversmith rallied the city of Ephesus regarding the decline in "goddess" worship. Paul's traveling companions Gaius and Aristarchus were taken into the stadium at Ephesus which could seat over 24,000 people. The city was in the midst of warfare over the person of Jesus Christ.



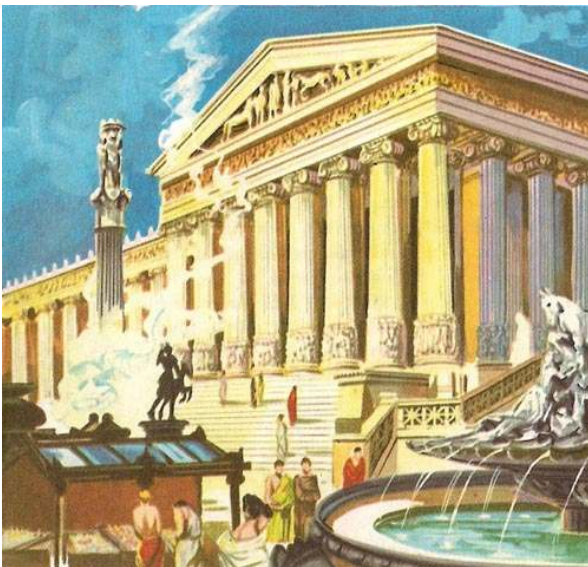
20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. 21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to

Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. 23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, <sup>d</sup> brought no small profit to the craftsmen. 25 He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. 26 Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. 27 So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, <sup>e</sup> whom all Asia and the world worship." 28 Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" 29 So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. 30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. 31 Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. 32 Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not



know why they had come together. 33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. **Acts 19:20-33**

Paul a Roman citizen was rescued from the crowd in the theatre by the city clerk or official. He reasoned with them, telling them to bring Paul to court if they have an issue with him. They obliged and Paul was let go from the mob.



34 But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" 35 And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? 36 Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your <sup>f</sup> goddess. 38 Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one

another. 39 But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. 40 For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering." 41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly. **Acts 19:34-41**



5. *Paul's final Word to the Ephesians on his way back to Jerusalem*

After the assault by Demetrius and the people of Ephesus, Paul left the city and headed toward Macedonia on the Greek mainland. He stayed there and preached for three months, but opposition soon grew and Paul planned to return to Jerusalem. His goal was to be back in Jerusalem by the feast of Pentecost. Because of the problems at Ephesus, Paul sailed past the city to Miletus, the next port. In Miletus he called the Ephesian church leaders. This was Paul's final farewell before his death, he wanted to them to carry on the work and know "savage wolves" will come in after he leaves.



16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. 17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, <sup>b</sup> so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God <sup>c</sup> which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. 32 So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 Yes, <sup>d</sup> you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " 36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

**Acts 20:16-36**