

# STUDENTS OF THE SCRIPTURE

## *Supplemental Studies*

### Study Outline

#### “Now I Commend You to God”

#### *Acts 20:32*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. At the founding of this new church, I thought it would be appropriate to look at the words Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders, upon leaving the scene. After instructing them, he left them in God’s hands, just as we all are today, and I thought it would therefore be appropriate and encouraging to see what he said.
- B. To that end, we will be looking into Acts 20 tonight, and specifically verse 32.
- C. Acts 20:17-35 give us Paul’s farewell address to the elders of Ephesus. He was headed to Jerusalem, aware that he would never see their faces again; and to that end, there were some things weighing on his heart for them, things that pressed upon his mind, things that needed to be said before the end. Here is a brief breakdown of the address:
  1. *Acts 20:18b-21* = Paul recounts his ministry among them, and the hardship he endured in the carrying out of that ministry.
  2. *Acts 20:22-25* = Paul then stresses what has been revealed to him regarding future events, both in regard to himself personally, and in regard to his involvement with the church in Ephesus.
  3. *Acts 20:26-27* = He then declares his own innocence. If they fail, if they fall, it will not be because he has neglected to teach them what was necessary. He taught them everything that was profitable. Now it is up to them to follow it carefully, and to be faithful.
  4. *Acts 20:28-31* = Paul then warns them sternly. It is vital for them to **be on guard**, and to **be on the alert**. This is necessary because **savage wolves** and men **from among their own selves** will arise. They will be **speaking perverse things**, and **not sparing the flock**. They will try to **draw away the disciples after them**. The Ephesian elders, therefore, have a high calling. They have been made **overseers** and **shepherds** by the Holy Spirit. They must protect the flock.
- D. And with that final word of exhortation, Paul gives them over into the hands of God Himself. It is that commendation, which we have as verse 32, that I want to look at tonight.

#### II. TEXT: *ACTS 20:32*

- A. **“And now...”** = As Paul is about to pass of the scene, at this specific point in history, he commends the Ephesians into the care of God. This does not mean they were not already in God’s care...but that Paul himself will no longer be able to watch over them personally, to guide them, to minister to them. There is, at this moment, a change taking place in the oversight of the church at Ephesus. The leadership had been apostolic. Now, oversight is being entrusted to the elders instead. A passing of the torch, so to speak.
- B. **“...I commend you...”** = This Greek word, *paratithemi*, means to entrust someone’s care to another, or to set one before another. It is a very picturesque word choice (cf. *Matthew 13:24, 31*: “Jesus **presented** another parable to them; also *Mark 6:31*, during the feeding of the 5,000, the word is used to describe the disciples **setting before** the people the fish). Paul is now *presenting* the Ephesian church to God, *setting them before* Him and His Word. Note the dual emphasis: Paul commends them, 1) to God; and, 2) the word of His grace.
- C. **“...to God...”** = Again, the Ephesians were already in God’s care before this moment. But now, Paul gives them directly into His hands, since Paul himself will no longer be able to mediate or oversee. This means that the elders of Ephesus were responsible *directly to God* for the care and protection of the Ephesian flock from this moment onward (cf. *Hebrews 13:17*).

- D. **“...and to the word of His grace...”** = This is so important! Paul commends or entrusts them not only to God, but to God’s word, the **word of His grace**. They are responsible not only to God as an ethereal, spiritual entity; but specifically to the concrete, tangible, authoritative word of His grace. God’s Word is to be their governor. They are responsible to keep the flock grounded in that word. God’s Word is that which will protect and defend them. And it is by this Word they will be judged (cf. *John 12:47-50*). This is the reason we devote ourselves to teaching, studying and proclaiming His Word!
- E. **“...which is able...”** = (Gr. *dunamai*; cf. “dynamite”) The word means, literally, “which is *powerful*.” It has raw, dynamic power. The gospel, for example, *is* God’s power for salvation (cf. *Romans 1:16*). And Christ upholds all things by his *powerful word* (cf. *Hebrews 1:3*). But here, Paul says it is powerful to accomplish two things:
1. **“...to build you up...”** = The word means to build up or to edify. The Word of God is able to build us up much like construction workers build up a building. If that building is built on a solid foundation, and built using proper material and technique, it can withstand time and turmoil (cf. *Matthew 7:24-27*). The Word of God can fortify us that way, and give us proper form and structure. This is why God gave pastors and teachers, to help us build the word into our hearts and lives, for the express purpose of this kind of building up, so that we can avoid being tossed and turned by every new wave (see *Ephesians 4:11-16*). And as we devote ourselves to the task, it will have this effect if we submit to its truth.
  2. **“...and to give you the inheritance...who are sanctified.”** = The second thing the Word of God’s grace can do for us is to give us an inheritance. It does this by providing means by which we can be adopted into God’s family (we’ll talk about that more in a future study in Ephesians). This happens when we are saved. And it is the message of God’s grace, the *gospel* which *is* God’s power for salvation. This is why we, as a body, must dedicate ourselves to sharing this gospel of God’s saving grace everywhere we go, and in every circumstance in which we find ourselves!

### III. CONCLUSION

- A. As we begin together this new adventure, and accept our calling to minister together as a new local body of believers, let’s remember three things:
1. We are called together with a purpose, and we will give an account to Him who has so called us. We must live our lives individually, and function corporately, with this truth in mind.
  2. We must commit ourselves as a body to the study of God’s Word. This word, and only this Word, has the dynamic power to build us up, and to bring us to maturity.
  3. We must also commit ourselves to the *proclamation* of this truth, knowing that there is nothing else in the world with the dynamic power to save sinners who believe.
- B. If we do these three things, I believe we can be what we are called to be together, and can do what God is calling us to do.

### IV. PRAYER