

# Acts 20:17-38

## Famous Last Words

**Scripture:** Acts 20:17-38

**Memory Verse:** Acts 20:32a *“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up...”*

**Lesson Focus:** Last week we studied Paul’s three-year ministry in Ephesus. This lesson piggybacks right off of that as we will cover Paul’s very touching farewell address to this same church. Our hope and prayer is that God’s word will build these kids up (as our memory verse says) and inspire them to follow Jesus in new and “heroic” ways!

**Activities and Crafts:** Superhero Sheep Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Find the Treasure Discussion for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>.  
Craft for 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Superhero Sheep Craft

**Starter Activity:** Farewell Fun

Consider starting off the lesson by having the kids help you come up with many common, but different ways of saying “goodbye”. To get things started, write “goodbye” on the whiteboard and then offer another one of your own to help them understand the challenge (such as “see ya later alligator”) and write it on the whiteboard. Then open it up to them to add some more.

If the kids have trouble help them out by having a few ready such as:

- |                   |                  |                   |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| - Until next time | - Sayonara       | - Aloha           |
| - Adios           | - Hasta La Vista | - So Long         |
| - Ciao            | - Adieu          | - Ta-ta           |
| - Have a good one | - Farewell       | - God bless you * |

Afterwards have some discussion about why and who we say goodbye to.

Q: Who are some of the people it is hardest to say goodbye to?

A: The people that we love and are closest to. Maybe many of these sillier ways of saying goodbye came about to make it easier for us to do what is hard thing! \*

You might remember that we’ve been following Paul on his third missionary journey traveling from city to city to either plant or strengthen churches in the ancient world. Last week, however, we saw him actually pause and stay with the church in Ephesus for about 3 years! \* I can only imagine how close he has gotten with these believers, but today we’ll see just how much he loved these people as he says goodbye. And as we open our Bibles we’ll see he has a lot more to say than just “see ya later alligator”.

## Bible Study:

The first sixteen verses of this chapter follow Paul as he revisits several churches, but now he is making his way back to Jerusalem in somewhat of a hurry in order to make it back in time for the feast of Pentecost (v. 16). \*

**Acts 20:17:** This town of Miletus is several miles south of Ephesus where he calls for the leaders of the church for his goodbye message to them. \*

**Acts 20:18-19:** Paul begins his farewell address by reminding them of the three years of time he spent with them.

Q: How does Paul describe his time with them? A: It was hard! Many tears \* and trials due to the opposition. Yet he continued humbly serving in the face of all of that!

**Acts 20:20:** Last week we pointed out how Paul, like the energizer bunny, “kept going and going and going”! But what kept him going was not a battery, but the good news of the gospel which he faithfully proclaimed to them.

**Acts 20:21:** And this captures how people are to respond to the gospel: with both faith (or trust) AND repentance! The same is still true today.

Q: What is repentance? A: Turning away from sin and evil.

Q: What is faith? A: People aren’t only to turn away from sin, but to turn toward Jesus, believing Him to be the Lord and King of all and walking in His ways. \*

**Teachers:** Consider doing a quick illustration that we have used before. Put a sign that says “sin” on one side of the room and “God or Jesus” on the opposite side. Have a volunteer come up and stand in the middle facing the “sin” side. Point out how this portrays how the Ephesians were before Paul came and shared the gospel, lost in sin and in big trouble. Then have the volunteer “twirl” away from sin and face the “God” sign and point out how this represents the Ephesians after they believed and got saved! \*

**Acts 20:22-23:** Despite the danger that Paul knew awaited him, he was determined to still go to Jerusalem. \* These verses give us a sneak-peek into what is ahead the rest of the book of Acts.

**Acts 20:24:** Paul’s heroic determination to keep following and serving Jesus even in the face of danger is inspiring! Let’s talk about “heroes” for a minute. We live in an age where people look up to “stars” (celebrities) more than they do true “heroes”.

Q: Who are some famous “stars” right now? A: Travis Kelce, Taylor Swift, etc. \* Many stars/celebrities have several things in common: they are popular, crowd-pleasing, very rich, and promote themselves. They may be fine people, but there is nothing truly heroic about any of these things! \*

The apostle Paul? Reread v. 24! He wasn’t promoting himself, but Jesus (the ultimate superhero). Paul has been sacrificing and giving of his all not only for Jesus, but for others that they may be saved. Stars make money, but heroes make sacrifices!

**Acts 20:25-27:** Imagine how hard this must have been for these folks to hear! After three years of intense ministry together Paul was not anticipating ever seeing them again. This goodbye wasn't "see you later", but "see you in heaven"! \*

**Acts 20:28:** And because Paul was not expecting to return he strongly urges them to be good leaders or "shepherds" of God's flock. \*

Q: What is a shepherd? A: Someone who takes care of sheep!

Q: But who are the "sheep" that these shepherds are taking care of? A: Believers in Ephesus! These believers He purchased with His own blood by His death on the cross!

Q: Finally, guess who the "sheep" are in this room? A: YOU! (**Teachers:** Consider inviting kids up to do their best "bleating") And I, as your teacher, am obliged to "shepherd" you well!

**Acts 20:29-31:** And here's why. The bad guys, like wolves, are always going to be on the attack looking to draw the sheep away into error and sin. Sometimes they may even come from within the church! Therefore, the church needs shepherd leaders who stand watch and protect God's people from false ideas about God and His word. \*

**Acts 20:32:** And the way they will do that is by remaining faithful to God and His word, pure and simple.

Q: Why do you think we open this book (the Bible), and spend the bulk of our time reading it every time we gather at RMC?

A: Because we want you to be 'built-up' on God's word! His word has the power to not only save you, but to change you and make you more like Jesus!

**Acts 20:33-34:** Unlike a "star" or "celebrity" Paul was not looking for people to give him anything, but worked to provide for his own needs.

**Acts 20:35:** And he was just following the example of Jesus, who told us what true heroes do: they give more than they receive (while "stars" receive more than they give).

**Acts 20:36-38:** As Paul finishes his famous last words to the Ephesian church leadership that he deeply loved they pray and send him off with buckets of tears. \*

**Key Point:** Let's wrap up by talking about how Paul's famous last words to these church leaders in Ephesus apply to us today. Paul would certainly want to make sure everyone of you has repented and believed in the gospel (v. 21)! If you never have, talk to your leader today after class so that you can be saved from your sins and become one of His sheep! \*

One question for the rest of you: Would you rather be a "star" or a "hero"? The world needs more heroes, NOT more stars! The church needs more heroes, NOT more stars! Jesus is the hero of heroes! He made the ultimate sacrifice to rescue us from the punishment we deserved! He "gave more than He received" and He calls His sheep to do the same! Look for opportunities this week to do small heroic acts of love! \* Not to be recognized (that is what a "star" would want), but to quietly imitate your Lord and Savior that you love and look up to! \*

