

Fact Sheet for “Bible Context”
Acts 20:17-38, Part 2

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Read Acts 20:17-38

This is the second of three sermons on Acts 20:17-38. The first two are going to be a bit different than normal.

1st – Theological (*today*)

2nd – Bible Context

3rd – The passage itself

1st Missionary Journey (13:1-14:28)

2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)

3rd Missionary Journey (began in 18:23)

Began in AD 53

He had previously come through Ephesus and had stayed there three years (Acts 19:8, 10; 20:31). What would Paul have instructed the Ephesian believers in during that time? The book of Ephesians gives us a solid idea.

It was now AD 57. Paul was traveling to Jerusalem and had called the Ephesian elders to meet him in Miletus. Later, while imprisoned in Rome in AD 60, Paul would write his letter to the Ephesian church.

Chapters 1-3 (doctrine)... Chapters 4-6 (application)

Doctrine

1:3-14; 2:8-10; 12-20; 3:14-19

Application

(The biggest difficulty is us, not interpretation.)

4:1-3, 11-16; 17-24

Put off... Put on

4:25, 26-27, 28, 29-30, 31-32

5:3, 11

Wives (5:22-24)... Husbands (5:25-33)

Children (6:1-3)... Fathers (6:4)

Slaves (6:5-8)... Masters (6:9)

The armor of God

6:11-12

Belt of Truth (6:14)

Breastplate of Righteousness (6:14)

Shoes... the Gospel (6:15)

Shield of Faith (6:16)

Helmet of Salvation (6:17)

Sword of the Spirit (6:17)
Prayer (6:18)

These things, both doctrine and application, are what Paul would have instructed the Ephesian believers in.

Paul would be beheaded just outside the walls of Rome before the decade was over. About 35 years passed. Paul was now in glory. Another generation was in leadership in the Ephesian church. The believers there had a rich heritage. Many of the older saints could remember Paul's instruction in both doctrine and application. But there was now a problem.

The last surviving member of the 12, John, would record Christ's words in the book of Revelation. *Read Revelation 2:1-3*

They had the right doctrine.

Revelation 2:4

⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

John Walvoord, who is also now in glory, wrote, "The church at Ephesus was now in its second generation of Christians, those who had come into the church in the thirty years since Paul had ministered in their midst. Though they continued to labor faithfully as those who had preceded them, the love of God which characterized the first generation was missing. This cooling of heart which had overtaken them in relationship to God was a dangerous forerunner of spiritual apathy which later was to erase all Christian testimony in this important center of Christian influence. Thus it has ever been in the history of the church: first a cooling of spiritual love, then the love of God replaced by a love for the things of the world, with resulting compromise and spiritual corruption. This is followed by departure from the faith and loss of effective spiritual testimony."¹

ESV Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Read Revelation 2:5-6. See Revelation 2:14-15 on the Nicolaitans. Compare Acts 20:29-30.

They had the right application, but they had the wrong heart. Christ then gave a warning (Revelation 2:7).

Where is your heart? Are you comfortable in right doctrine? Do you try to obey God's word? Great! But do you guard your heart? What is your basic motivation for the Christian life (truth, obedience, love)? It does make a difference.

¹ John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Moody Press, p. 56.