

Goodbye Ephesus

Acts 18:23–21:16

▶ Before we begin

1. Suppose you are moving away from Sydney permanently. What would be your “last words”?

Paul's third journey began at 18:23 where he departed Antioch for the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia. The main highlight of this journey is the city of Ephesus, which is the greatest city in the province of Asia at the time. It is also where we will spend the most time.

▶ Paul's second visit

Paul has already visited the city before (18:19–21), albeit briefly. We pick up from 19:8, on his second visit.

Read 19:8–41.

2. Ephesus was well known for its magic arts. In what ways do we see Jesus' authority and power over the magicians?
3. What is it about the gospel that made Demetrius the silversmith so upset?
4. How would you describe the scene in 19:28–41? Note the irony in the great goddess Artemis of Ephesus needing an angry mob for protection.
5. In what ways do we see opposition to the gospel based on similar grounds today?

▶ I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God

Paul spend about two years in Ephesus (19:10), then continued his journey through Macedonia. However, on his way back to Jerusalem, knowing that he would not visit Asia again, he called the elders of the Ephesian church to Miletus, so that he could speak to them one last time.

Read 20:17–38.

6. Summarise the contents of Paul's speech in the following sections.
 1. 20:18–21
 2. 20:21–24
 3. 20:25–35
7. What aspects did Paul emphasise in his defence of his ministry? Why do you think he did this?
8. Why do you think Paul is so keen to warn the Ephesian church on the risks that they will face?

9. How can we share in Paul's attitude in not shrinking from declaring the whole counsel of God (20:27)?

10. The risks that Paul noted to the Ephesian elders are still with us today. How can we guard ourselves against these risks?