

## Acts 20 – Paul Says final goodbye to Ephesus

THEME: Third missionary journey of Paul concluded.

After Paul's experience in Ephesus, he continues on to Macedonia, to Philippi, back to Troas, and to Miletus. The elders of the church in Ephesus meet him in Miletus and they have a tender reunion and a touching farewell. - McGee

### ***Paul in Macedonia and Greece***

***Act 20:1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia.***

From verse 1 it would appear that the apostle traveled directly from Ephesus to Macedonia. However, from 2 Corinthians we learn that he first went to TROAS. There he found an open door to preach the gospel but was anxious to see Titus and to learn from him how the Corinthians had received his First Epistle. When he did not find Titus in Troas, he crossed over the northeastern corner of the Aegean Sea to MACEDONIA. Undoubtedly, he landed at NEAPOLIS, then traveled inland to PHILIPPI. While in Macedonia, probably at Philippi, he met Titus and was greatly encouraged by the news from Corinth. It was probably at this time that he wrote 2 Corinthians (a.d. 56?). (See 2Co\_1:8-9; 2Co\_2:12-14; 2Co\_7:5-7.) – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 20:2-3 Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.***

After ministering for some time in Macedonia, he journeyed south to GREECE or ACHAIA. Most of the three months there were undoubtedly spent in CORINTH, and it was during this period that he wrote Romans. Some also believe that Galatians was written at this time.

Originally, Paul had planned to travel straight from Corinth across the Aegean to Syria. However, when he learned that the Jews were plotting to destroy him somewhere along that route, he changed his plans and went northward again through MACEDONIA. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 20:4 And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

At this time, we are introduced to some of Paul's traveling companions. It is stated that they accompanied him as far as Asia, but we know that certain of them even went with him to Rome:

Sopater of Berea was possibly the same as Sosipater, a relative of Paul mentioned in Rom\_16:21.

Aristarchus of Thessalonica nearly lost his life in the riot at Ephesus (Act\_19:29). We later read of him as being a fellow prisoner with Paul in Rome (Phm\_1:24; Col\_4:10).

Secundus, also a native of Thessalonica, accompanied Paul as far as Asia, probably Troas or Miletus.

Gaius of Derbe is not to be confused with the Macedonian who was seized by the mob at Ephesus (Act\_19:29). Another Gaius is mentioned as being an inhabitant of Corinth and Paul's host while there (Rom\_16:23). John's Third Epistle is addressed to a man named Gaius, probably living in some city near Ephesus. Gaius was a very common name.

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Timothy not only accompanied Paul to Asia but was with him in Rome during his first imprisonment. Subsequently he traveled with Paul through proconsular Asia. In his Second Letter to Timothy, Paul expressed the desire to see him again, but we do not know whether this wish was ever fulfilled.

Tychicus, a native of Asia Minor, probably journeyed as far as Miletus with the apostle. Later he rejoined Paul in Rome and is mentioned as laboring with him up to and during the time of his second imprisonment.

Trophimus was apparently a Gentile whose home was in Ephesus, in Asia Minor. He went with Paul to Jerusalem and unwittingly was the cause of the apostle's arrest. He is also mentioned in 2Ti\_4:20. – Believers Bible Commentary

***Act 20:5 These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.***

The “us” indicates that Dr. Luke stays with Paul while the others go ahead of them to Troas.

This is quite a group of men, missionaries, who worked with Paul. I take it that these men had been traveling with Paul before. When Paul would have a ministry in a place like Corinth, probably these men would radiate out and have a ministry in the countryside and the small towns. We read in the Epistle to the Colossians about the fact that the Word of God had sounded out in that day to the whole world. That sounds unbelievable, but it was true. It was no oratorical gesture. Of course, “the whole world” means the Roman world because that was the world of that day. The Word of God had spread throughout the Roman world. We get some insight here and recognize that there were other people working with the apostles. Acts traces the work of Peter and Paul as the dominant ones—Peter as the Apostle to the Jews and Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles. What we have here in the Book of Acts is a very limited account of the missionary work that was going on. - McGee

***Act 20:6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.***

It is interesting that the trip that took them five days to make can now be made by tourists in about fifty minutes. How different transportation is today! Transportation is more efficient, but our ministry is certainly not as effective. - McGee

***Eutychus Raised from the Dead***

***Act 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.***

There are several things I want to say about this verse. I want you to note that it was upon the first day of the week that they came together. Where we have a record of the day on which the early church met, it was always the first day of the week. Paul tells the Corinthians that they are to bring their gifts on the first day of the week (see 1Co\_16:2). In our verse in Acts here it says that “when the disciples came together to break bread” it was “upon the first day of the week.” This means that they celebrated the Lord's Supper on Sunday. It was on this day that Paul preached to them. The early church met on the first day of the week. That was the important day because it was the day when Jesus came back from the dead. Under the old creation the seventh day was the important day, the Sabbath Day. That belongs to the old creation. On the Sabbath Day Jesus was dead, inside the tomb. On the first day of the week, He

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came forth. We meet on that day because we are now joined to a living Christ. That is the testimony of the first day of the week.

Now the other thing that interests me about this verse is that Paul was going to leave them the next day; so, he preached all the way to midnight. Now, I do not know any congregation that would listen to me until midnight. I'm of the opinion that there aren't many preachers who would preach until midnight in these days in which we live. However, this is Paul's last visit. It is a tender meeting. He is getting ready to leave and he will not be back. This gives him an excuse to preach that long.

I tell congregations very frankly that I'm a long-winded preacher. I'm known as that. I love to teach the Word of God. I have a system of homiletics that I never learned in the seminary. I picked it up myself—in fact, I got it from a cigarette commercial. This is it: It's not how long you make it but how you make it long. I believe in making it long; my scriptural authority for it is that Paul did it. He spoke until midnight. You can't help but smile at that. - McGee

***Act 20:8-9 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.***

Comparing verses 6 and 7, it appears that the apostle purposely waited in Troas for seven days so he could be there for the breaking of bread on the Lord's Day. It is certainly clear from verse 7 that it was the practice of the early Christians to gather together on the first day of the week in order to observe the Lord's Supper.

That Paul should have spoken until midnight should cause us no shocked surprise. When the spiritual temperature of a church is high, the Spirit of God is free to work without being fettered by the bondage of timepieces. As the night wore on, it became hot and stuffy in the upper room. Perhaps the many lamps contributed to this, as well as the number of people present. A certain young man named Eutychus, sitting in an open window, fell asleep and plummeted to the ground below. It was a fall of three stories, and he was killed by it. – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 20:10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."***

But Paul went down and stretched himself over the body of the young man, as the prophets did of old. He then announced to the people that they should not make any more fuss about the matter since Eutychus was now alive. It might seem from Paul's words that their concern was unnecessary because the young man had not died; his life was still in him. But it is clear from verse 9 that he was actually dead. Acting with the power of an apostle, Paul had miraculously restored him to life. – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 20:11-12 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.***

When Paul returned upstairs, they broke bread (v. 11), i.e., they observed the Lord's Supper, for which they had come together (v. 7). Then they ate a common meal, perhaps the agape or love feast. This

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fellowship meal was held in conjunction with the Lord's Supper in the early days of the church, but abuses crept in (1Co\_11:20-22), and it was gradually discontinued.

After an all-night meeting, never to be forgotten, the apostle bade farewell to the believers in Troas. – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 20:13-15 Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus.***

Now they are traveling again. Dr. Luke and the others of the group sailed to Assos, but Paul traveled on foot. Why do you suppose Paul did that? Well, I'm sure it was so that he could witness along the way. I think as he walked, there were many places along the way where he would stop to witness to people. – McGee

Sailing south along the western coast of Asia Minor, they first came to MITYLENE (pronounced mit-i-le'-ne), the chief city of the island of LESBOS. The following night they apparently anchored off the island of CHIOS (pronounced key'-os). Another day's journey brought them to the island of SAMOS, and they stayed at TROGYLLIUM. Finally, the travelers put in at MILETUS, a port on the southwest coast of Asia Minor, thirty-six miles south of Ephesus. – Believers' Bible Commentary

### ***Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders***

***Act 20:16-17 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. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.***

Paul intentionally bypassed Ephesus, because he feared that a visit there would occupy too much time, and he was hurrying to get to Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost.

Upon landing at Miletus, Paul sent word to the elders in Ephesus, asking them to come for a meeting. Undoubtedly it took considerable time for the message to reach them, and for them to make the journey south. However, they were well rewarded by the magnificent message they heard from the lips of the great apostle. In it we have a valuable portrait of an ideal servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see a man who was fanatically devoted to the Savior. He labored in season, out of season. He was tireless, indomitable, indefatigable. He was marked by true humility. No cost was too great for him to pay. His ministry was the result of deep exercise of soul. He had a holy boldness and fearlessness. Whether he lived or died was not important; but it was important that the will of God should be carried out and that men should hear the gospel. He was unselfish in all that he did. He would rather give than receive. He was undaunted by difficulties. He practiced what he preached. – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 20:18-19 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, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;***

The apostle reminded the elders of Ephesus of his manner of life when he lived among them. From the first day that he set foot in Asia, and all the time he was there, he served the Lord with true humility and

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self-denial. In connection with his ministry, there was a constant strain on his emotional system; there were tears of sorrow and trials. Constantly he suffered persecution as a result of the plotting of the Jews. Yet in spite of all the adverse circumstances, his ministry was bold and fearless.

**We sometimes forget Paul was no different than us. He had tears, sorrows, and trials, yet held he held strong. How are you holding up in the face of persecution, tears, and trials?**

Act 20:20-21 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was a faithful witness for Jesus Christ. He pulled no punches. He could declare that he had given them the Word of God, the total Word of God. I am not the first one to have a through the Bible program—Paul taught it all. He gave to them the full counsel of God. He was faithful even in the face of opposition by the religious rulers of the Jews. – McGee

**This too is our belief that teaching the whole counsel of God is biblical and fruitful as opposed to topical and cherry-picking lessons. What are your thoughts?**

***Act 20:22-24 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, 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.***

Here is a point over which many great teachers of the Bible differ. Some of my good friends in the ministry and many good, authoritative Bible teachers believe that Paul made a mistake in going to Jerusalem. They think that he should not have gone. However, this testimony which Paul gives is very clear. I believe that he was entirely in the will of God in going to Jerusalem. He is saying in effect, "I am going to Jerusalem. I am bound in the spirit because everywhere I have gone, the Spirit of God has shown me that bonds and affliction await me in Jerusalem." Now that is different from Acts 16 when he was forbidden by the Spirit of God to preach in Asia. In fact, God simply put-up roadblocks which directed him to Europe. There is no roadblock, here. Rather, the Spirit of God is revealing to Paul what he will be walking into when he reaches Jerusalem. Paul makes it clear that he realizes he will suffer if he goes to Jerusalem. He says, "I don't count my life dear. I'm willing to lay down my life for Jesus." He wanted to bring the gift to the poor saints in Jerusalem in his own hands. In his swan song Paul wrote, "I have finished my course." I think Paul touched all the bases. Jerusalem was one of those bases. - McGee

Act 20:25-27 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Paul knew that he would not see these folk again in this life. Paul also knew that he had honestly given to them the entire counsel of God.

As I write this, I am a retired preacher. I have made many blunders and have failed in many ways. But as I look back on my ministry, I can say truthfully that when I stood in the pulpit, I declared the Word of God as I saw it. I have the deep satisfaction of knowing that if I went back to any pulpit which I have held, I

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haven't a thing to add to what I have already said. I don't mean I couldn't say it in a better way, but the important thing is that I declared the whole counsel of God. I have always believed that the important issue is to get out the entire Word of God. – McGee

**How about you? Have you thought about how you are going to end? Do you want to be like Paul and leave it all out of the field for the Joy of Christ that lives in you?**

***Act 20:28-30 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 which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.***

This is the business of the officers of the church. They are not to run the church, but they are to see that the church is fed the Word of God.

Friend, I have seen that happen. The Devil wants to get into a church where the Bible has been taught. He would like to wreck a radio ministry that is teaching the Word of God. The Devil is not our friend; he is our enemy. He wants to stop the teaching of God's Word. Paul warned them at Ephesus that this would happen to them. He tells them there will be little termites right in their midst who will really cause trouble for them. – McGee

**Whenever the Word of God is taught powerfully, the spiritual attacks come. In fact, the absence of spiritual warfare in a church likely means it is not teaching or preaching the Word.**

***Act 20:31-32 Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. "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.***

In view of these imminent perils, the elders should be on their guard, and constantly remember how for three years the apostle had warned them night and day with tears.

Paul's great resource now was to commend them to God and to the word of His grace. Notice that he did not commend them to other human leaders, or to supposed successors of the apostles. Rather he entrusted them to God and the Bible. This is an eloquent testimony to the sufficiency of the inspired Scriptures. It is they who are able to build up the believers and to give them an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

***Act 20:33-35 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 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.'*** "

In closing his message, the Apostle Paul once again set before the elders the example of his own life and ministry. He could say in all honesty that he had coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. It was not the hope of financial gain that motivated him in the work of the Lord. He was essentially a poor man, as far as material things were concerned, but he was rich toward God. Holding out his hands before them, he could remind them that those hands had labored in order to provide for the necessities of life, both for himself and for those who were with him. But he went beyond that also. He labored as a tentmaker in

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order that he might have means to help the weak—those physically ill, or weak as far as moral scruples are concerned, or weak in spiritual matters. The elders should remember this, and seek in all things the good of others, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, “... It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Interestingly enough, these words of our Lord are not found in any of the Gospels. They do represent the sum of much of His teaching, but here they are given as an inspired addition to His words in the Gospels. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

***Act 20:36-38 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 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.***

At the conclusion of his message, Paul knelt on the ground and prayed with the elders. For them it was a time of deep sorrow. They showed their affection for the beloved apostle by falling on his neck and kissing him. The thing that particularly grieved them was his statement that they would see his face no more. Heavyheartedly, they accompanied him to the ship for the voyage to Jerusalem. – Believers’ Bible Commentary