

Paul's Missionary Journeys
Journey Three
Handout Three

As we now move into chapter 20 of Acts, we find Paul and his companions ready to leave Ephesus. In a matter of just a few verses, Luke takes us over to Macedonia, down to Corinth where Paul would stay for three months, and then back to Troas. Since there's so much territory to be covered in today's lesson, we have a more detailed map that may help us better see the locations we'll be reading about, even if only briefly. We must remember though, that while we skim over these towns' names, the people there heard the Gospel, and many became followers of Jesus along the way.



We concluded last session as the crowds were sent home after a disturbance caused by false charges against Paul and the other believers.

Acts 20:1-6 After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. ² When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³ There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴ Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the

Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

Paul was set on going more directly to Jerusalem from Corinth by sailing from the port there, Cenchrea, but verse 3 explains that he changed his plans due to a plot against him by the Jews. The Jews here probably refer to Jewish religious leaders, and others under their influence, in that time. Obviously, there were Jewish converts to Christianity that would have been allies of Paul's, but these Jews were not. The Concordia Self-Study Bible reports, "The Jews were determined to take Paul's life; also, at this time he was carrying the offering for the Christians in Judea, so there would have been a temptation for theft as well. The port at Cenchrea would have provided a convenient place for Paul's enemies to detect him as he entered a ship to embark for Syria."

So, rather than face being attacked in the port city or while on board a ship, Paul takes the risk of a longer, slower journey by land as he retraces his steps and eventually makes his way back to Troas. Luke gives us the names of several traveling companions but notes that those people went ahead of Paul and himself to Troas while they remained in Philippi. Barclay states that "these men must have been delegates from the various churches charged with the duty of taking the contribution of each church to Jerusalem." Regarding their time in Philippi, Barclay continues, "The days of unleavened bread began with the day of the Passover and lasted for one week, during which the Jews ate unleavened bread in memory of their deliverance from Egypt."

In what ways could having the traveling partners accompanying Paul been helpful in his gathering and transporting a financial offering to Jerusalem?

Having joined the rest of the band of travelers in Troas, we pick up the story there.

Acts 20:7-12 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹²And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

From verse 8 we can tell that this report is an eyewitness account of Luke's as he says, "where we were gathered." The first day of the week would have still been considered Sunday at this time, although since the Jewish day began at 6:00pm the previous evening, some suggest this was Saturday evening. However, it seems unlikely Luke who was so precise in his reporting would begin with "on the first day of the week" and then not be clear in what followed. Regardless of the day, Paul's speaking went long and the room was upstairs with "many lamps" which were burning oil to light the space. No doubt the room was crowded and so the temperature climbed. Being the first day of the week, it's likely that many had put in a full day of work before coming together, so they were already tired. Unfortunately for one young man, however his choice of seats combined with the other factors led to his apparent death.

Have you ever jumped off a roof? If so, how high was it and how did you fare?

What strikes you about Luke's inclusion that Eutychus was both in a deep sleep and that he fell three stories?

What's the implied, but understandable reaction of the crowd from Paul's words in verse 10?

After restoring this young man to life, is there anything noteworthy about what Paul does next?

Again, in these next few verses Luke takes us from town to town fairly quickly, but he also gives us a glimpse into Paul's intentions.

Acts 20:13-16 But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. ¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. ¹⁵ And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus. ¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

From Barclay's Daily Study Bible: "Because Luke was with Paul we can follow Paul this time almost day by day and stage by stage. From Troas, Assos was 20 miles by road whereas it was 30 miles by sea; (The Concordia Self-Study Bible records it as being about 40 miles) and the sea journey involved the rounding of Cape Lectum against the strong prevailing north-easterly winds. Paul had ample time to make the journey on foot and to be picked up at Assos. Why did he do so? It may well be that he wanted these days alone to nerve his spirit for the days ahead. He may well have wanted to walk alone with Christ before he faced men."

Since Paul left Corinth, the time was quickly moving on as his desire to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost was still in the forefront of his thinking. While he takes the time to travel by foot to Assos, it seems that it doesn't take longer than if he had sailed with the others around the cape. In verse 16 however we do see that he makes a conscious decision to bypass Ephesus now in order to stay on schedule.

How might this decision have been difficult for Paul to make? What potential delays could have resulted from them making a stop in Ephesus?

Even though Paul didn't stop back in Ephesus, he still had an important message for them. He was aware that he wouldn't be back again, and so he makes arrangements to meet with the leaders from the congregation there.

Acts 20:17-38 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not

account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Of the relationship between Paul and the people of Ephesus, Barclay writes: "But through all this scene there runs one dominant feeling and that is the feeling of an affection and a love as deep as the heart itself. That is the feeling that should be in any Church. When love dies in any Church the work of Christ cannot do other than wither or fade. The Church of Ephesus was dear to the heart of Paul because the air and atmosphere were the air and atmosphere of love."

Have you ever been a part of a church that withered or faded? What caused things to deteriorate?

While Paul speaks confidently that he won't see them again, he may have done so as 1 Timothy 1:3 hints. Even so at this time he didn't anticipate returning.

What are some of the key instructions Paul leaves with these people? (see verses 28-35)

Can you recall a farewell of a beloved pastor or ministry leader from a church that you've been a part of? What lasting instructions or words do you recall from them?

How can a pastor who is moving on from a call leave his/her congregation with instructions that will help carry them forward after he/she leaves?

Next session we'll pick up with more of this journey as they make their way to Jerusalem.