

*Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.*

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

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First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #248

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### CHAPTER 20

#### **Macedonia: Three Months of Ministry**

1. After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia.
2. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece,
3. 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.
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.
5. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.

The *uproar* was in Ephesus. Paul's powerful preaching and signs and wonders following him (i.e. deliverance from demons and healings from handkerchiefs that had touched Paul's body) had converted many of the Ephesians. Demetrius, a local silversmith, stirred up the people, especially those who made and sold silver idols, telling them that this Paul was hurting their business. The town clerk quieted the mob, not because he cared anything about Paul and the Christian religion, because he was afraid that Rome would come in, if he did not keep the peace, and quash the rebellion and take over, leaving him without a job.

It is important to remember the significance of the Church at Ephesus. Ephesus was home to one of the earliest New Testament Churches. It was here that John the Apostle chose to live with Mary the mother of Jesus. Also, Timothy became the pastor of this church and was martyred by the Ephesians. Jesus in Revelation sends word to the church of Ephesus, which symbolizes the Church at the end of the Apostolic age, the church which has lost its first love.

There is so much that is left out in Paul's missionary journeys. Verse two of this passage, according to Barclay, summarized what

must have been a year of missionary work. On this occasion, for example, he must have visited Illyricum, which he mentions in Romans 15:19.

Paul leaves Ephesus and goes to Greece where he ministers at Corinth for about 3 months. When he was about to sail from Greece to Syria, Paul learns of a Jewish plot to kill him. Often the sailing ships from Greece to Syria were Jewish ships taking pilgrims to Syria where they could go on to the Passover. It would have been easy for the Jews on these ships to push Paul overboard, once they were out to sea, and thus leave no trace of his murder. Therefore, Paul ends up traveling overland. He leaves Greece but sends several men ahead of him to Troas. These men are all the fruit of his own labors. They were representatives of each church, and their mission was to take financial contributions from the churches to the church at Jerusalem.

Notice that in verse 5, the narrative turns from 3<sup>rd</sup> person to 1<sup>st</sup> person. This is a strong indication that Luke has rejoined Paul in his journey.

#### **Troas: Eutychus Falls from Loft**

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.
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.
8. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.
9. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking in to 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.
10. But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."
11. Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.
12. And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

They left Philippi after the days of unleavened bread. The Days of Unleavened Bread began with the day of Passover and lasted one week. During this time the Jews ate unleavened bread in memory of

their deliverance from Egypt. The time of the Passover was the middle of April.

This passage tells us what an early Christian service was like. It talks twice of breaking bread. These services generally had what was called a Love Feast. All the Christians, slave or free, ate what we would call a covered dish meal together. This was followed immediately by the Lord's Supper. This eating together fostered a sense of family among the Christian body. These meetings were often held at night so that the servants and others who had to work all day could attend, after a hard day of work.

Paul preaches until midnight. His preaching was abruptly stopped when Eutychus fell from a third story window to his death below. Paul raised him from the dead. Then they had a meal, and Paul continues to preach until daybreak.

Perhaps Eutychus was one of these young slaves who had worked all day. Most likely the room Paul spoke in was both dark and hot. They had discussion, not just preaching, and, as has already been noted, usually a meal with these gatherings, which again were more like family gatherings than having church. Most likely many left after the incident with Eutychus interrupted the meeting, but Paul stayed on longer.

#### **Miletus: Paul Bids Farewell to Ephesian Elders**

13. Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.
14. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. From Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.
18. 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.

19. "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews.
20. "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.
21. "testifying to Jews and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.
22. "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there.
23. "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.
24. "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.
25. "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.
26. "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.
27. "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.
28. "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.
29. "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
30. "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.
31. "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.
32. "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.
33. "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel.
34. "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities and for those who were with me.
35. "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.'"
36. And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.
37. Then they all wept freely and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,



38. 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.

Assos was twenty miles away from Troas by foot but thirty miles by ship, and the ship had to sail against strong winds. Therefore, Paul would have had time to make it in time to be picked up by the ship. Perhaps he wanted to be alone to prepare himself for what he knew lie ahead. He knew that danger and afflictions await him in Jerusalem, but he is determined to go.

Paul calls for the elders at the church of Ephesus to meet him in Miletus. This was about 28 miles from Ephesus. Here Paul reminds the elders of the way he had conducted his ministry. He had spoken boldly; he had supplied his own needs through working; and he had faced the future fearlessly. Then he reminds them of what their own ministries should be like. They had been chosen by God to be overseers of their flocks. They were to keep the doctrine of the Church pure and to recognize that there would be constant warfare as the world tried to contaminate the faith.

Paul summarizes so many of the points he has taught them. Verse 21 tells us the first principles of the Doctrine of Christ: repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Verse 22 he shows us that we, like Paul, must be willing to lay our lives down for the Gospel. In Verse 25 he preaches the Kingdom of God. In Verse 26 he shows us how we should be watchmen warning within and without the Church (Ezekiel 33:7). In Verse 27 he declares that we are to preach the full gospel, not just part of it. In Verse 28 he reminds us that we have been purchased by the Blood of Jesus. In Verse 29 he warns us that grievous wolves, the enemy without, will come in, in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:1). In Verse 33-34 he gives us a wonderful pattern of being a worker and giver, one who could and did supported himself and did not have to take from the Body of Christ.

This is one of the sweetest passages in the scriptures concerning the love people should have for their pastor or shepherd. Paul had begun this church and had poured his life into these people, teaching and discipling them at the threat of losing his own life. He knew that afflictions were awaiting him in Jerusalem, and he knew that he would never see, in this life, these whom he loved so much. He prayed with them, and then they all wept. They kiss him and accompany him to the ship. This fearless, bold, fiery Apostle had a very tender side and

was filled with the love of Jesus, a love which motivated him to share the Gospel, even in dangerous and hostile territory.

We see in Chapter 20 the slow transition between the Old and the New Covenant, the change from the Jewish Sabbath to observing Sunday, the First Day of the week. This move was in fulfillment of prophetic types and scriptures of the Old Testament. I don't want to do an exhaustive study on this point, but because so many are insisting that we go back to the Jewish roots of our faith, I do want you to know that we have reasons why we set aside Sunday rather than Saturday. Much of this information came from Kevin Connor, one of the best modern day Bible teachers that I know. First of all, Sunday is when Jesus rose from the dead. Also, the Sheaf of the First Fruits was to be waved before the Lord on "the morrow after the Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:9-14). Paul interprets the Sheaf as the Resurrected Christ before God (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:20-23). The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. This was 7 Sabbaths, plus one, the 50<sup>th</sup> day which was Sunday. The early Church broke bread on the First Day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:33) and the early Church laid aside the collections on the First Day of the week (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:2). Hosea prophesied, "I will cause her New Moons, Feasts and her Sabbaths to cease" (Hosea 2:11). Paul says that we are not to let anyone judge us in respect of New Moons, Holy or Feast Days, or meats, or of keeping the Sabbath Days, which are all a Shadow of things to come (Colossians 2:14-16). He also says that one man esteems one Day better than another, and others esteem every Day alike. Every one must be fully persuaded in his own mind (Romans 14:5-7). The TRUE Sabbath Rest is found "in Christ" and "in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 12:28-30; Hebrews 4:9; Isaiah 28:10-12). The First Day of the Week is not the Sabbath. The 7<sup>th</sup> Day was and is the Hebrew Sabbath, a Sign for the Nation of Israel (Exodus 31:16-17; Ezekiel 20:12). The believer, however, is under the New Covenant and the Sign of Rest is the Baptism of the Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-34). So in summary, the early Church met on Sunday to commemorate both the Resurrection of Christ and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit.