

On Paul's final return to Jerusalem he stopped to see believers in Troas and met up with the rest of the representatives from the churches. He stayed for a week. On Sunday (could have been Saturday evening) the church gathered in the evening for a communion meal and Paul's last message to them. *⁷ 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.* Acts 20:7

People sometimes ask why Christians worship on Sunday when the Sabbath is Saturday. The answer is that the early church gathered on that day. It was the day the Lord arose from the grave. It was the day the Spirit was poured out. Sunday was the new Sabbath of the new covenant, though any day would serve (Romans 14:5).

Paul was pouring his heart out as he believed he would never see these believers again. He was delivering his soul to them. The church was packed into the third story of a typical Roman building. The first floor would have been a shop with the upper two floors for living space. We could say it was an apartment church. I've taught in a warm climate after a meal, and as I was speaking I could see young men fighting to stay awake. That is similar to what was happening in this passage. *⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹ And 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.* Acts 20:8-9 Poor Eutychus, a boy most likely in his early teens, had probably worked all day. He did his best to stay awake by sitting in the window where the breeze and fresh air might help him keep his eyes open, but his tiredness overcame him. He fell from the window and died. Now some commentators say the wind was knocked out of him or he was knocked unconscious. Remember, Luke is a physician. He knows when a person is dead. Eutychus died, most likely from head or neck trauma.

¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." Acts 20:10 Paul did what several Old Testament prophets had done. Elijah and Elisha were described as bending over the dead and were God's instruments to bring them to life (1 Kings 17:21-22ⁱⁱ; 2 Kings 4:34ⁱⁱⁱ also see Acts 9:36-41). Then Paul calmed the anxious church by telling them the boy was alive. Let that be a warning to you... No, Paul didn't say one word of condemnation (Romans 8:1^{iv}). The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41^v). God had mercy on the young man. But I bet Eutychus didn't sit in any more windows. I tell people to just stand up. If you are overcome with tiredness, just stand on a side aisle or move to the back and stand, that is, if you really want to hear the message. It is no shame to recognize your body is tired. On the contrary, it is to peoples' credit if they stand to resist the weakness of the body. It shows you want to hear what God has for us in his Word in spite of your physical condition.

¹¹ And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹² And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted. Acts 20:11-12 They had their communion meal,

which was more like a full meal than the way we celebrate communion, and then they went on talking all night. If you had a chance to talk with the Apostle Paul I bet you would stay up all night too. They were encouraged that Eutychus was revived by the Lord. To see a miracle like that would encourage and comfort any of us.

13 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. Acts 10:13 I never really noticed this verse before when reading through Acts. This is one time in Paul's ministry when he intentionally got alone for a time. He took the overland route to Assos while the ship sailed a longer route. We will see in the next passage that Paul knew that persecution was waiting for him in Jerusalem. The pattern of his ministry was about to change. He no doubt wanted that time on the road to pray for strength and courage for what lay ahead (Romans 15:30-31^{vi}). The great majority of his ministry was with other men who served with him. Since he was first sent out by the Holy Spirit, only a short time in Athens was he alone (Acts 17:15^{vii}; also see Galatians 1:17-18^{viii}). We need one another, but we also need those times when we are alone with the Lord. A clear word from the Lord can steel our hearts for what we are about to face, or lead us down a different path. It makes all the difference when we hear His voice in our hearts. We saw in our previous message in Acts that it was similar to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane preparing for the cross (Matthew 26:36^{ix}).

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. 17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. Acts 20:14-17 Luke is with Paul and so he could give us a detailed account of each stop. (See the map.) To save time so as to arrive in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost, Paul asked the Ephesian elders to come meet him at Miletus. It was a two to three-day journey by land.

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;" Acts 20:18-19 Our manner of life is probably our most influential message. Paul called on their memory of how he lived among them. Paul is not boasting. He is sharing his heart, desperately trying to insure the future of the church in Ephesus. They had seen his example day in and day out. They saw him work in the mornings, teach all afternoon, and visit the house churches in the evenings. They knew his zeal for the Lord and the gospel were unmatched. They also knew that his life was threatened time and time again. Yet, he kept on proclaiming the truth that had been revealed to him.

When our time comes, can we say, "You know how I lived among you"? Would people say they saw our love for the Lord and for them? Would they say we were uncompromising with the world, forgiving with those who differed with us, loving and gracious toward all? That is the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23^x). I know we don't measure up to Jesus, let alone Paul, but are we growing in the grace of

the Lord so that our testimony is increasingly a witness of the life of Christ in us (2 Corinthians 3:18^{xi})?

Paul continues with his testimony: *²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house,* Acts 20:20 To “shrink from declaring” means to withdraw. I find that the challenge is often whether I want time to do what I want or if I will surrender to the Spirit to serve others and in love give my time to their needs. It is a matter of dying to self and letting the love of Christ flow through us (Galatians 2:20^{xii}). Paul knew how to share what was spiritually profitable and that was mostly done through teaching the Word. As we saw in previous passages, he taught in a public meeting place, the Hall of Tyrannus. He also taught in the house churches where the various groups of believers would gather, as church buildings would not become meeting places until a few centuries later.

His teaching consisted of *²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.* Acts 20:21 This was his theme and should be the theme of the church today. Everyone from every culture is a sinner who is destined for God’s just wrath. Therefore, we all need to recognize our guilt and ask God to forgive us and be merciful with us. We should all recognize that God has provided Jesus as our substitute, who bore the wrath we deserved, and by faith believe that He is willing to exchange our sins for His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21^{xiii}). That is the gospel, the good news, that we proclaim. It’s a two-thousand-year-old message that is as good now as it was then. It is the ultimate good news for every person.

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. Acts 20:22-23 With all the warnings Paul received along the way to Jerusalem, I used to wonder if he was somehow being disobedient to the revelations. This verse tells us clearly that he was constrained by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. The literal translation was that he was bound as if by chains, forced to go (see the use in 22:29^{xiv}; Mark 5:3^{xv}). The warnings served to prepare his heart for what was coming, which he knew included imprisonment and afflictions. And yet he still had the vision to go to Rome and Spain (Romans 15:24^{xvi}). Apparently, someone in each city with a prophetic gift warned Paul of what was going to happen in Jerusalem. After all he had been through, that could have been frightening, but Paul had also seen miraculous deliverance time and time again. He had already written his letter to the Romans that declared “all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes” (Romans 8:28^{xvii}).

Bad news can be unsettling, but the child of God knows he or she is in God’s hands. Whatever He allows will be for our ultimate good, no matter how difficult it may be. We may not understand until we are on the other side, but we can know that our heavenly Father is faithful and all-powerful. His steadfast love and faithfulness will never fail (Psalm 40:11^{xviii})! That is what gives us courage to face the future in difficult times.

Listen to Paul’s conviction and dedication in the next verse. *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. Acts 20:24 Hear it again and again. Our life is too precious to us. Isn't that our main problem? We want it all for ourselves, but it is bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:20^{xix}). He has good works planned in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10^{xx}). Those works are a blessing because His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30^{xxi}). The joy of fellowship with God and His children is more than worth every sacrifice we might be called to give, as Paul points out in the upcoming verses.

²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Acts 20:25 It was his farewell speech. He was saying good-bye. He loved these people to the point of giving his life for them. That is what we do when we give people our time to proclaim the kingdom. Our time is a part of our life. He didn't do it out of duty. He did it out of love for the Lord and them. I imagine there was not a dry eye in the place. (If we understand the timing of the pastoral letters correctly, Paul may have seen them again (1 Timothy 1:3^{xxii}).)

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. Acts 20:26-27 Paul is reminding them of the Ezekiel passage that declares that if we warn people to turn from their wicked ways, we are innocent if they do not turn (Ezekiel 33:3-5^{xxiii}). He uses the term "shrink back" again, but this time in relation to the whole counsel of God. He didn't skip over the difficult issues or calling out a sin that may offend them. He was bold and loving to tell the whole message of Scripture. And that is how we must be.

Next was a word of warning. *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.* Acts 20:28 The elders are the overseers and pastors of the church. The three words are interchangeable. First the elders must watch their own lives so as not to compromise their integrity and always be an example (Titus 1:6-7^{xxiv}). God holds us accountable to a greater extent than most for we are called to teach truth and be an example (James 3:1^{xxv}). It is a most serious responsibility and one which we will have to give an account to God for how we have handled it (Ezekiel 34:10^{xxvi}).

²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; Acts 20:29 Was Paul speaking from experience or was this a prophetic word? Ezekiel and Jeremiah prophesied about false shepherds who only use the sheep for personal gain (Ezekiel 22:27^{xxvii}; Zephaniah 3:3^{xxviii}).

³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Acts 20:30 Unfortunately, even within the church there will be those tares who seek power and personal gain. When you get a phone call or meet with someone who is trying to get you to side with them so they can have their way, rather than asking you to seek the Lord and discern His will, you can know this same problem is at work today. It can even happen with those who are appointed as elders. Power corrupts unless we humbly seek the Lord's leading and honor others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3^{xxix}).

31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. Acts 20:31 Because there is that tendency of fallen man, watch out! Remember how Paul humbly served, how his heart was broken for them. How he sought their benefit and not his own. He invested his most valuable possession, his time. He did so out of love for the Lord and for them. He used what time God gave him for God's glory, laying up his treasure in heaven (Ephesians 5:16^{xxx}; Matthew 6:19-20^{xxx}). What an example!

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. Acts 20:32 Paul could worry about the future wolves that would come, or he could warn them and trust God. He put them in God's hands and trusted the word of God's grace to build them up so they would not stray, but would go on being sanctified until called home.

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.'" Acts 20:33-35 Paul worked to support himself in Ephesus. In some places he received support from other churches, but in Ephesus he did not want them to think he was teaching for personal gain (1 Corinthians 9:12^{xxxii}). He does exhort the church to support their elders, even to generously support those who labor in the Word (1 Timothy 5:17^{xxxiii}). He added that they should help the weak, which is the poor who could not support themselves. The quote from Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," is not in the Gospels, so Paul must have heard it from the Apostles. It is one we should let live in our hearts.

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. Acts 20:36-38 What a prayer time that must have been. It was followed by parting hugs and kisses with many tears. That is the kind of love we should have for one another, the elders for the flock, and the flock for the elders, and all of us for one another. Their hearts were knit together in love. They were living Jesus' command to love one another (John 15:12^{xxxiv}, 17^{xxxv}).

What I'd like you take away from this passage is the importance of praying for your elders. They will answer to God for how they oversee the flock. Paul has set a high bar of dedication and love, but only because of the life of Christ in him. The other thing which we will see again next week is the love and dedication the early church had toward one another. Our culture downplays this essential ingredient. God is love. If we are in Christ, we are to live His command of loving one another as He has loved us (John 15:12^{xxxvi}). The solution to selfishness is to allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with the love Jesus has for people. The fullness of the Spirit includes unselfish love.

Questions

- 1 What do we learn of Paul's heart and message at Troas?
- 2 Why might Paul have gone alone to Assos?
- 3 How did Paul describe his service in Asia?
- 4 Of what did Paul testify to Jews and Greeks?
- 5 What was Paul's determination about what lay ahead?
- 6 Why was he going in spite of warnings?
- 7 What was his instruction and warning to the elders?
- 8 Why do we work and redeem the time we have?
- 9 What was his quote from Jesus? How did He learn it?
- 10 What does their sadness show us?

ⁱ **Romans 14:5 (ESV)**

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

ⁱⁱ **1 Kings 17:21-22 (ESV)**

²¹ Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again."

²² And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.

ⁱⁱⁱ **2 Kings 4:34 (ESV)**

³⁴ Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm.

^{iv} **Romans 8:1 (ESV)**

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

^v **Matthew 26:41 (ESV)**

⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

^{vi} **Romans 15:30-31 (ESV)**

³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,

³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

^{vii} **Acts 17:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

^{viii} **Galatians 1:17-18 (ESV)**

¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

^{ix} **Matthew 26:36 (ESV)**

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."

^x **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)**

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

^{xi} **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

^{xii} **Galatians 2:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

^{xiii} **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)**

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

xiv **Acts 22:29 (ESV)**

29 So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

xv **Mark 5:3 (ESV)**

3 He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain,

xvi **Romans 15:24 (ESV)**

24 I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

xvii **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

xviii **Psalms 40:11 (ESV)**

11 As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!

xix **1 Corinthians 6:20 (ESV)**

20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

xx **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

xxi **Matthew 11:30 (ESV)**

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

xxii **1 Timothy 1:3 (ESV)**

3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,

xxiii **Ezekiel 33:3-5 (ESV)**

3 and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people,

4 then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

5 He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life.

xxiv **Titus 1:6-7 (ESV)**

6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,

xxv **James 3:1 (ESV)**

1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

xxvi **Ezekiel 34:10 (ESV)**

10 Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

xxvii **Ezekiel 22:27 (ESV)**

27 Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain.

xxviii **Zephaniah 3:3 (ESV)**

3 Her officials within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning.

xxix **Philippians 2:3 (ESV)**

3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

xxx **Ephesians 5:16 (ESV)**

16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

xxxi **Matthew 6:19-20 (ESV)**

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

^{xxxii} **1 Corinthians 9:12 (ESV)**

¹² If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

^{xxxiii} **1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

^{xxxiv} **John 15:12 (ESV)**

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

^{xxxv} **John 15:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

^{xxxvi} **John 15:12 (ESV)**

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.