

## ~ Lesson 71 ACTS ~

## A Heart of Purpose

## Acts 20:3-16

We are back in the book of Acts after spending five weeks in the book of Romans and one week on 2 Corinthians. And we find ourselves back in Acts 20 as Paul is on the last leg of his 3<sup>rd</sup> journey making his way to Jerusalem. Today we are going to be looking at Acts 20:3-16 and the heart of Paul, a heart of purpose as he is in the final stretch of his 3<sup>rd</sup> journey.

By way of review, lets back up and read the first three verses of chapter 20, **Acts 20:1-3**. Chapter 20 begins with Paul leaving Ephesus after being there for 3 years, sometime around May 57ad. He then traveled to Troas to find brother Titus, but even though there was an open door for the Gospel in Troas, Paul had no rest in his spirit because he couldn't find Titus, 2 Cor 2:12-13. So from there, Paul travels to Macedonia and finds Timothy and Erastus and eventually Titus comes and gives a good report about the Corinthian church, 2 Cor 7:6-7. As a result, Paul spends the next few months in that region and writes what we know as 2 Corinthians. After writing this letter, Paul sends Titus ahead of him to deliver the letter and gather the contribution for the saints in Jerusalem, 2 Cor 8:1-9:8. Then around the end of 57ad, Paul travels to Corinth and spends three months in this city, December through February, and during this time, Paul writes the book of Romans. And we saw at the end of Romans, Paul expressed his deep desire to visit them in Rome, but that he first must travel to Jerusalem and deliver the collection for the saints, Romans 15:22-26, 30-32.

All this happened during the course of the first three verses of chapter 20 and now we pick up the story again in verse 3...

**20:3) and stayed three months (in Corinth). And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.**

Paul had spent three years in Ephesus and had to leave in a hurry because of the uproar from the silversmiths, so it seems that Paul wanted one more meeting with them before heading to Jerusalem. Luke says he was about to set sail to Syria when he found out about a plot against his life from the unbelieving Jews. Why was he traveling to Syria? Paul was in Corinth and there was a major trade route that went from Cenchrea to Ephesus and then on to Syria, namely Tire. Paul took this same trade route at the end of his 2<sup>nd</sup> journey, **Acts 18:18**. On his 3<sup>rd</sup> journey, Paul is wanting to catch another merchant ship following this same trade route that will take him east to Tyre, **Acts 21:2-3**. But the night before they are to set sail, they learn of a plot from the Jews. These Jews in Corinth hated Paul. You remember their attempt to persecute Paul the first time he was in Corinth, Acts 18:12-13. But God gave Paul the favor to stay in Corinth for 18 months through a favorable judgement by Gallio the proconsul of Achaia. That was back in 52ad, about 6 years earlier, but they hadn't forgotten Paul and their hatred for him was even more intense. This plot was probably a plot against Paul's life, and just as in other times, God reveals this plot and Paul changes course. Instead of getting on a merchant ship heading to Ephesus and then Syria, he decides **to return through Macedonia**.

**20:4-5) <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.**

Luke mentions seven names of fellow-workers with Paul. And notice that they are all going ahead of Paul with plans to rendezvous in Troas. My conjecture for this is that Paul is sending out the brethren to collect the contribution for the saints in Jerusalem. We know that he purposefully was not putting himself responsible for collecting the money. He wisely chose representatives appointed by the churches to collect this money, **1 Cor 16:1-4**. The churches of Achaia chose Titus, 1 Cor 8; and we can assume that these other men were the ones appointed by each church to bear this gift. Sopater of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica; Gaius of Derbe, which is in Galatia, along with Timothy who was also from

Galatia, namely Lystra; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. We also know Luke was in Philippi. So I believe these are the appointed men to bear this gift and rendezvous with the company in Troas to then travel to Jerusalem together.

These seven men have been disbursed throughout the churches to collect the contribution for the saints, and in the meantime, Paul travels to Philippi and is reunited with a close friend, brother Luke. We know this by the pronoun change in Luke's writing. Luke begins including himself in the narrative. Notice verses 5 and 6...

**20:5-6)** <sup>5</sup> These men, going ahead, waited for **us** at Troas. <sup>6</sup> 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.

Remember, Luke first joined Paul in Troas on his 2<sup>nd</sup> journey, **Acts 16:10**. Traveled over to Philippi and then stayed in Philippi as Paul journeyed further to Thessalonica, Acts 17:1. This was about 6 years ago in 52ad, but now Luke has joined the company again as Paul travels through Macedonia, namely Philippi, and from this point on Luke will stay with Paul until his death in 66ad, "Only Luke is with me." 2 Timothy 4:11.

By now it is the Passover week, **the Days of Unleavened Bread**, and Paul and Luke travel to Troas to meet the rest of the company. According to Conybeare, in 58ad, the Passover, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, fell on March 27<sup>th</sup>. Paul was in Corinth from December through February, and then traveled to Macedonia in March and spent Passover with brother Luke. And now Paul is in a hurry to get to Jerusalem before Pentecost, Acts 20:16, which is 50 days after the last day of the Passover week, the Feast of Firstfruits.

Paul and Luke travel from Philippi to Troas, taking 5 days to get there. This time the wind must have been against them because on his 2<sup>nd</sup> journey, the trip going the opposite direction from Troas to Philippi was only 2 days, Acts 16:11-12. Here the trip takes 5 days and then Paul is so excited to be with his fellow-workers in Troas, they are in this city for seven more days. It also may have taken that long to find a merchant ship that was heading that direction to Syria. This is what I love about this section of chapter 20. It shows these guys to be human with the same concerns, problems, roadblocks, and struggles that we all have as humans. But their perseverance through these challenges in life are so faith building, knowing that they are just regular people like you and me who have to trust God in everything they do.

On their last day in Troas, which happens to be on a Sunday, the brethren gather together to break bread and Paul begins to speak to them, **Acts 20:7-8**.

Knowing that their ship is ready to depart the next day, and Paul is on the final stretch of his 3<sup>rd</sup> journey, Paul is fired up! A few months ago he wrote the book of Romans; Jews in Corinth were plotting to kill him; he changes plans and is reunited with Luke; and all the brethren are gathered back together with this great contribution for the saints in Jerusalem. Paul can't hardly contain himself and he preaches until midnight! Notice that it is Sunday, the first day of the week when they are meeting. Acts 20:7- **Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...** This was the natural day in which the early church met, Sunday. And its why we as Christians 2,000 years later are still meeting on Sunday. This is the Lord's Day, Revelation 1:10. It commemorates our Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week, John 20:19. And Paul makes it very clear in his writings that Sunday was the agreed upon day that the church would meet, 1 Cor 16:2. But there is no New Testament obligation to worship on Sunday. Paul says in Romans that it doesn't matter what day you decide to worship on. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind, Romans 15:5, Col 2:16-17.

So Paul is so excited that he preaches until midnight and a young man falls into a deep sleep and falls out of a three story window to his death, Acts 20:9-12. Some scholars say Eutychus didn't actually die. But the Greek on several occasions in this text makes it obvious that he was dead, and he came back to life. This is why there was such a commotion among the brethren. Eutychus falls out of the window and dies and everyone rushes down including Paul. When Paul gets down to him, he falls on the boy. This is much

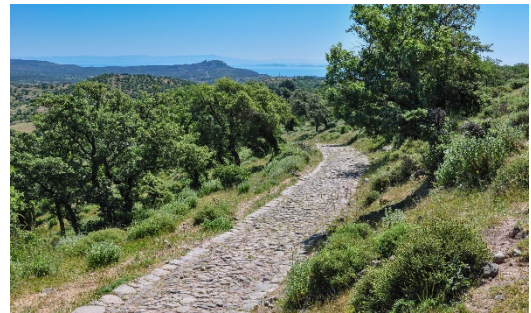
like Elijah and Elisha, 1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34. And Paul tells them, Μὴ θορυβεῖσθε, literally, “Stop the commotion.” Matthew and Mark use the same word to describe the noisy crowd wailing over Jairus’ daughter, Matt 9:23; Mk 5:39. There was obviously much commotion among the brethren, but God brought this boy back to life and Paul says, “**for his life is in him.**”

There was great rejoicing over this miracle, and they spend the rest of the night **talking a long while, even until daybreak.** This is different than Paul preaching to them. Earlier in the night Luke says twice that Paul, διαλέγομαι, thoroughly explained in a logical manner, Acts 20:7, 9. Luke uses this word when Paul is preaching, but here in verse 11 this word “talked” is ὁμιλέω, to say the same thing. Everyone was up the rest of the night talking about this miracle and praising God.

The next day, after being up all night, they came to the port at Troas to get on the merchant ship that was leaving that morning to Assos, but Paul decides to make the journey alone by foot and meet them there.

**20:13) Then we went ahead to the ship (without Paul) and sailed to Assos, from there (in Assos) intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.**

Paul has a lot on his mind. He has begun his final leg to Jerusalem knowing that chains and tribulations await him, and he decides he wants some quiet time alone with God. So he makes arrangements to meet the brethren in Assos. The journey from Troas to Assos was about 27 miles on foot on a Roman road. This would have taken him about 8-10 hours. Time to be alone with God in prayer. Paul is constantly telling us in his letters that he prays without ceasing. This shows his commitment to prayer and his relationship with God. Instead of taking the boat ride and taking a nap, he decides to spend this time in prayer with God much like Jesus continually went to a secluded place to pray, John 6:15; Matt 14:23; Mk 1:35; Lk 6:12.



*Road from Troas to Assos*

The nine brethren, the seven mentioned in verse 4, plus Luke and I am assuming Titus is with them as well, they all get on a merchant ship while Paul takes the road by foot and they reconnect that evening in Assos.

**20:14) And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.**

This is probably Monday evening when they meet in Assos and it seems the brethren are already on the ship when Paul arrives and Paul immediately boards the ship and they travel that night to Mitylene. Over the next few days, they travel through the Aegean Sea making their way to Miletus.

**20:15) We sailed from there (Mitylene), and the next day (Tuesday) came opposite Chios. The following day (Wednesday) we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day (Thursday AM) we came to Miletus.**

We have to understand that Paul and his company are not in control of this ship. This is a merchant ship with an agenda and Paul is at the mercy of the captain’s itinerary. So Paul was staying in communication with the captain of this merchant ship and it seems they would have the entire day or maybe more at Miletus before continuing to the next port in Cos.

Paul had wanted to visit the brethren in Ephesus one final time before going to Jerusalem. In Corinth, Paul was planning to get on a ship from Cenchræa to Ephesus, but his plans changed when he discovered the plot from the Jews, Acts 20:3. Because of this, his travels were delayed. But still wanting to see those in Ephesus he decides not to go inland to the city, but to sail past Ephesus and meet the elders in Miletus.

**20:16** 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.

Even though Paul was not in control of this ship, it is possible that he could have asked the captain to drop them off at Ephesus. This is why Luke says, **For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus**. If Paul would have gone to Ephesus, the merchant ship would have sailed on, and he would have had to find another ship. So instead of taking that risk, he goes along with the course of the ship in route to Miletus and calls for the Ephesian elders to meet him there.

Paul’s main focus in the last leg of his journey is to bring the contribution to the saints in Jerusalem. And he wanted to make it there, if possible, by the Day of Pentecost. Below is a table that details the 50 days from Passover to Pentecost.

	Week 1							Week 2							Week 3							Week 4							Week 5							Week 6							Week 7						
Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday											
Passover	Feast of Unleavened Bread	Weekly Sabath	Feast of Firstfruits				Weekly Sabath						Weekly Sabath										Weekly Sabath															Weekly Sabath	Day of Pentecost										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50

Paul had left Philippi after the Passover week and from there he would have 50 days to get to Jerusalem (over 1,000 mile journey). This is very doable, but with the uncertainties of travel, Paul is pressing forward not to take any chances of delay.

Luke is so exact in his writings, that we can calculate Paul’s travel days from Philippi to Jerusalem and we find that he traveled a total of about 36 days, with an unknown timeframe spent with Philip in Caesarea, Acts 21:8-10, but we can assume that even if Paul spent up to two weeks in Caesarea, he would still arrive in Jerusalem by the Day of Pentecost.

But even in his efforts to get to Jerusalem with the contribution, he also has a desire to say a final farewell to his Ephesian brethren whom he spent three years with. Remember, I believe Paul was setting up Ephesus to be the next major hub of Christianity. So next week we’ll look at this farewell address in the remainder of chapter 20 as he with many tears says goodbye and gives them some strict admonitions to be watchful of the wolves in sheep’s clothing trying to destroy the church from within.