

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY

Read vs. 1-12

1. What did Paul try to do for the believers on this trip? (vs. 2)

It seems as though Paul's ministry now takes a different turn. He had been traveling and preaching in many cities. His efforts had been aimed at evangelism. Everywhere he went he was anxious to preach the gospel and see new converts. Now, as he slowly makes his way back to Jerusalem, he seems more intent on building up the believers. He wants to make sure that he has done his job well. He wants them to understand the doctrines of the faith. He wants to be assured that the churches he helped to establish will remain true to the Word.

Paul had the heart of a pastor. He cared deeply for the believers and the churches. When they were hurting, he was hurting. In his letter to the Philippians, he says he "prays for them with joy" and that he "has them in his heart." (Phil 1:6 & 7) In 2 Cor. 7:3 he tells them that they have such a place in his heart that he would die with them. In Colossians 1:24 & 25 he says that that he rejoices in what he suffered for them because he considers himself a servant of the church.

I have served on my church's mission board for a number of years. When we interview people who are asking for support to go to the mission field, I listen for the words "I feel that I am called to do this." Pastoring a church, whether in your own homeland or in a foreign place is a difficult job. Only those who are confident of God's calling will find satisfaction in doing it. Paul was able to persevere under the pressures and trials and persecutions of working with the churches because he knew without a doubt that God had given him this job. Read Phil. 3:12-14. Paul says he "presses" on with his job so that he can win the prize for which God called him.

This can be a good reminder for all of us that whatever we do, we should do it with all of our heart, because we are doing it for the Lord. (Col 3:23)

2. How many people were traveling with Paul at this time?
Notice the use of the word "us" in vs. 5 which indicates that the author was also involved.

As Paul was visiting the churches that he had established, he was also collecting offerings from them to take to the believers in Jerusalem. The area around Jerusalem was suffering a severe famine. Paul wanted to help them and he also felt that the Gentile churches had an obligation to help them. Perhaps the offering would form a further bond between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers. The men who are now traveling with Paul may have been representatives from the churches who were sending the offering.

3. What is our modern word for "breaking bread" and on what day of the week were they

doing this? (vs. 7)

The church, as opposed to the nation of Israel, seems to have made Sunday the day of worship. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week and the communion time was in remembrance of His death and resurrection. The Corinthians were instructed to set aside their offerings on the first day of the week. The Gentiles are never commanded to keep the Jewish Sabbath which was a sign to the nation of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 31:16 & 17). You will also recall from Acts 15 that the Jerusalem Council did not command the Gentile believers to keep the Sabbath.

4. *Describe the accident that is mentioned in vs. 9 and 10.*

Paul had so many things he wanted to share with these believers before he left the next day. In a third story room on a warm night, the room was no doubt stuffy. In addition, there were many oil lamps burning, which would have put off some fumes. Eutychus had positioned himself on the windowsill where a little fresh air would be available, but even so, as it got close to midnight, he fell asleep and fell out of the window. Naturally, the people were very upset and when it appeared that he was dead (and he probably was), great sorrow fell on the group. Paul reacted quickly and comforted them by telling them that Eutychus was alive. Eutychus was restored to life when Paul put his arms around him.

5. *What effect did the miraculous healing have on the people? (vs. 11 and 12)*

Suddenly, the room was energized again. This event brought everyone to attention and they wanted to hear every word that Paul spoke. Verse 11 says that Paul spoke until dawn. This was a night that everyone was going to remember!

6. *Using the map below, notice the route that they followed.*



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7. Paul wanted to celebrate _____ in Jerusalem. (vs. 16)

The many delays along the way had prevented Paul from reaching Jerusalem by Passover. Now he was hoping to arrive at least by Pentecost (50 days after Passover).

For some reason Paul had decided to make the next leg of the trip on foot while the others went by ship. They rendezvoused at Assos where Paul joined them on the ship for the rest of the trip.

Read vs. 17-38

8. How does Paul describe his own ministry in vs. 18-21?

Paul reminds them of his diligence in his ministry. He seems to sense that this phase of his life was coming to a close. The Holy Spirit had warned him that prison and hardships were ahead. And yet Paul knew that he still had things to accomplish and nothing else mattered to him.

Paul says that he must finish the race. He often used the analogy of an athlete running in a race to compare the life of a Christian. In Cor. 9:24-27 Paul talks about the discipline that is required. He isn't just running aimlessly, he has a goal in mind and he won't let anything deter him from staying on track.

Look up Gal. 5:7 and Heb. 12:1 where Christians are admonished to run their own race with diligence and perseverance. Finally, read 2 Tim. 4:7. In this passage Paul says he has finished the race. It is written from prison and is probably the last letter that Paul wrote. He is satisfied. He says that he fought a good fight and was looking forward to standing before His Lord.

When you consider standing in front of the Lord at the believer's judgment, do you feel satisfied that you have run a good race? It's not too late to refocus and to get back on track. If God has given you a ministry to do, you need to be doing it. Keep your focus on Jesus who was our great example and let Him encourage you as you run with perseverance.

9. *Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem in spite of the warnings he had received about*

(vs. 22 and 23)

The warning proved to be correct as we will see in the following chapters.

10. *How did Paul feel about the prospect of persecution? (vs. 24)*

11. *Paul didn't expect to see the Ephesian believers again. What was his biggest concern for them? (vs. 25-31)*

Be reminded from verse 17 that Paul is talking to the church elders. The thought of never seeing each other again is breaking all of their hearts. Nevertheless, Paul's biggest concern is for their spiritual well being. He knows that people will come into their church and try to corrupt their doctrine. Paul tells the elders that they must not only watch themselves but also the "flock" that they oversee. (vs. 28)

Notice in verse 32 that he commits them to God and to the word. How blessed we are to have the word of God to keep us on track. All believers, but especially the church leaders, must study the word on a daily basis. We must compare every teaching that we hear to what the word tells us. The Bible is our plumb line. Satan loves to corrupt our thinking just a little bit at a time. One of his most powerful weapons is to mix "a thimble full of error into a sea of truth." We must continually be on the guard in order to stay on track with God's original direction. Consider 2 Tim 3:16 & 17 which says that "all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Don't let yourself be side-tracked by the latest author explaining some new revelation. Only the word is "...living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Heb.

4:12) *We know this in our hearts and yet we so quickly replace reading the word with reading something about the word. We say that we are studying the Bible when we are actually studying something that occasionally quotes a Bible verse. Only the Bible is the inspired word of God.*

12. *How had Paul supported himself on this trip? (vs. 33-35)*

Paul had supported himself while he was in Ephesus, but at other times he gladly received help and support from the churches. Consider I Cor. 9:3-15, 2 Cor. 11:8 & 9 and Phil 4:10-19. Paul had every right to receive physical help from those that he helped spiritually. This is still true today. Our church leaders and missionaries should be supported by the churches so that they can spend full time in ministry. Please consider I Cor. 9:13 and Gal 6:6. God is pleased with believers who gladly and generously care for their spiritual leaders. In verse 35 of this passage, Paul quotes Jesus as saying that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” This quote is not recorded in any of the gospels, but was no doubt handed down from those who heard it in person.

13. *What was the saddest aspect of Paul's leaving? (vs. 36-38)*

Everyone present knew that Paul was headed for trouble. By this time they also realized that he wasn't going to change his mind about returning to Jerusalem. It's not difficult to imagine the turmoil and even anguish that they were feeling about his leaving. There was great love between Paul and this group of elders. No doubt they were the ones who had spent the most time with him. It was the elders that Paul had poured his heart and soul into as he prepared them to lead and guard the church. From this point on they would only communicate by letters, but they would be holding each other up with prayer for as long as they lived.

This is the end of missionary travels for Paul. The rest of the book of Acts deals with his imprisonment. Nero was now ruling in Rome. The time is about 58 A.D. It has been about 25 years since the death of Christ. In another 12 years God would use the Romans to bring His judgment on Jerusalem and the destruction prophesied in Matt. 24:2 would happen.