

"The Third Missionary Journey"

Part 8

Acts 18:23-21:26

Introduction: Tonight, in our study of Acts we have now come to chapter 20. Paul had stayed in Ephesus for three years and as we step into chapter 20, we shall see his departure.

➤ **The Continued Journey/Leaving Ephesus**

Notice Acts 20:1

There are several points for us to see here. First of all, the "uproar" referred to here was the riot that took place in chapter 19. This happened as the Gospel was proclaimed and those who were true believers had their lives changed and they turned away from idols. In Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the world which was the Temple of Diana. Many in the city made a living from the silver shrines they made of the temple and of Diana and when the Gospel came in people stopped buying the idols. This then caused a major stir led by Demetrius and the other craftsmen. The stir had the potential to turn into a deadly situation for the believers but the town clerk spoke up and stopped the riot before anyone was harmed. Now as we come to chapter 20 the uproar has ceased and the situation has calmed down.

Another point to see here is that Paul stayed with the believers until this situation calmed down. He did not let them in the middle of a disturbance to face it on their own. Before he left, he wanted to be sure the church was standing firm. There would be more storms that would blow through the city and Paul would not be there but as for this storm, he would remain and offer encouragement to the believers.

Application:

Let us learn from Paul the importance of staying by the side of friends when there is a storm in their lives.

Galatians 6:1-2

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

² *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

James tells us that true genuine faith reaches out to those who are in need.

James 2:14-18

¹⁴ *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*

¹⁵ *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,*

¹⁶ *And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

¹⁷ *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

¹⁸ *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

Notice Acts 20:1 again.

We need to also notice that Paul "embraced" the saints before he left Ephesus. He had been there for three years so the relationships ran deep. I am sure that with the embrace came words of comfort. The saints at Ephesus would have been concerned after the riot so they needed comfort. This takes my mind to several verses.

John 13:34-35

³⁴ *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

³⁵ *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Paul was fulfilling the "New Commandment."

Our God is the God of all comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

³ *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*

⁴ *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

⁵ *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

In 2 Corinthians 1:4 we see a very important point. That while God is the God of all comfort it is our responsibility as His representatives to comfort each other.

2 Corinthians 5:20

²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ so when we are there to comfort those who are afraid or those who are discouraged, we are being used by the Lord in their lives.

I believe it is also important that after three years the saints at Corinth are still called disciples. Notice the words of Barclay on this thought.

"All his life a Christian should be learning more and more about Jesus. The shut mind is the end of discipleship!"

Notice Acts 20:2-5

Here in these verses Luke gives us a very quick overview of Paul's journey to the churches in Macedonia and then the journey to Greece. This was a very long journey but Luke gave us no details. Paul gives some details in his second letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13

¹² Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

¹³ I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 7:5-7

⁵ For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears.

⁶ Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

⁷ And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

There is more to this that we need to understand. Paul founded the church at Corinth on his second missionary journey. On his third missionary journey before Paul came to Ephesus Apollos was sent from Ephesus to Corinth. Paul then learned of the problems in Corinth from the household of Chloe.

1 Corinthians 1:11

¹¹ For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

Paul then received more news from Corinth.

1 Corinthians 16:17-19

¹⁷ I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

¹⁸ For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

¹⁹ The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Paul then wrote what we know as 1 Corinthians to answer questions from Corinth. This letter did not resolve the problems and therefore Paul made a quick journey from Ephesus to Corinth which is known as the painful journey.

2 Corinthians 2:1

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

It was on this visit that Paul addressed the immorality in the church. Paul then went back to Ephesus and wrote a letter that has been lost. It was a very pointed letter addressing sin.

2 Corinthians 2:3-4

³ And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

It was after the riot that Paul then left Ephesus and hoped to meet up with Titus in Troas in anticipation of how the letter was received in Corinth. Paul finally met Titus in Macedonia and received the good news about the church. Paul then wrote 2 Corinthians and sent it off to Corinth from Macedonia. Paul then made his third visit to Corinth which is included in this third missionary journey.

The third missionary journey through Macedonia and then to Greece where he would go to Corinth, was to collect the love offering for the saints at Jerusalem.

Notice Acts 20:2 again.

It is important to notice here that as Paul made this journey, he spent much of the time exhorting the believers. This was Paul using the Word of God to teach and to make disciples of the believers. He knew that there would be trials and there would be attacks from the enemy and he knew that they needed to be grounded in the Word of God if they were going to stand firm.

It is also important to consider how far Paul traveled facing many dangers just to see that the money was collected for the saints at Jerusalem.

Application:

It is good to consider when the last time was that we were burdened for those who were less fortunate. Those who have made a great difference for the Lord are those who were burdened for those in need.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

² *That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.*

³ *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

⁴ *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*

Notice Acts 20:3 again.

The Jews laid wait for Paul and someone has said that they were looking to steal the money he had collected from the churches. This then caused Paul to go back through Macedonia. God turned this plot into something good.

Isaiah 54:17

¹⁷ No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Let us notice how God used this for good.

Romans 15:19

¹⁹ Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

There is no mention elsewhere of Paul going to Illyricum. It is believed that because of the Jews plot to kill Paul on the third missionary journey Paul then visited Illyricum. These people then received the Gospel.

Conclusion/application:

Let us understand that our plans are often change because God wants us to speak the Truth into the life of someone in need.

Proverbs 16:9

⁹ A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Proverbs 19:20-21

²⁰ Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

²¹ There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.