

"The Third Missionary Journey"**Part 10****Acts 18:23-21:26**

Introduction: Last week as we followed along with Paul and his company on the third missionary trip, they were on their way back to Jerusalem with the love offerings they had collected from the churches in Macedonia and Corinth. When we stopped last week Paul was preaching at Troas and he spoke until late in the night when a man by the name of Eutychus fell asleep and fell down from the third floor and was dead. Paul and the others rushed to his side and Paul then raised him from the dead and then he went back to teaching and taught until the morning.

Notice Acts 20:6-12

There is little attention given to this miracle because Paul is focused upon strengthening the disciples and it is not miracles that strengthen believers but it is a solid diet of the Word of God. The miracle was done by God through Paul for the benefit of the believers who were in attendance. Last week I explained that Paul came under attack by the Pharisees many times and in many ways. One of the ways was that they attacked his Apostleship. When they could not dispute his message, they would then attack his person and when they did, they always tried to cast doubt upon his Apostleship because he was not one of the original Apostles who had walked with Jesus while He was on earth. He became an Apostle after the ascension of our Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:8-9

⁸ *And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

⁹ *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

The miracle of raising Eutychus from the dead would therefore work to prove that Paul was an Apostle because the gift of miracles was an Apostolic gift.

➤ **Returning to Jerusalem**

Notice Acts 20:13

Here is a very interesting verse. We are told here that Paul sent the others ahead by boat and he traveled on foot to Assos. This was about twenty-one miles that Paul would walk after teaching all night. Why would he walk this distance on his own? No doubt he wanted time alone to think and pray.

Notice Acts 20:22-23

Here is what Paul revealed to the elders at Ephesus. He knew that when he arrived at Jerusalem that he would be taken captive. So, getting back to Paul's time alone I am sure he needed this time with the Lord to strengthen him for what was ahead.

Application:

This is something that is so important for us as believers today. We need time alone with the Lord so that He can minister to us in our daily lives. Jesus often left the multitudes to get alone. Here are just a few of the times.

Luke 5:15-16

¹⁵ *But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.*

¹⁶ *And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.*

Luke 6:12

¹² *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*

We live in a very noisy world and for this reason we need time alone. The Bible encourages times of solitude for us.

Psalms 46:10

¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Lamentations 3:25-28

²⁵ The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

²⁶ It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

²⁷ It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

²⁸ He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. (God has put it upon him for his benefit)

Let us notice what Jesus experienced in His time alone the night of His arrest.

Luke 22:41-43

⁴¹ And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

⁴² Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

⁴³ And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

We surely need time alone with our Lord so that we too may be strengthened and ministered to for the challenges that lay before us.

Luke 10:40-42

⁴⁰ But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

⁴² But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Notice Acts 20:14-17

Paul probably decided not to go into Asia because of all the stops the ship was making as it unloaded in each of the ports. Paul therefore sent a messenger to Ephesus which was a day's journey to bring the elders back which was another day's journey. The meeting that is about to take place is one of the most emotional meetings Paul will ever have. He had spent three years with these people and they were very close. Paul knew that this was the last time he would see them on this side of heaven. He would do all he could to give them words of encouragement and edification. After this meeting they would be left to stand or to fall on their own.

Notice Acts 20:18

There is so much to consider in what Paul tells these believers and we will therefore take our time working through his words. Paul starts his discourse with these elders by referring to his own integrity. When he was with these people at Ephesus, he was an open book. They knew everything about him. There was not one area of his life that they did not see. There was nothing hidden from these believers.

Application:

As believers can we say with all truthfulness and integrity, the same thing to those we have ministered to or have had personal fellowship with, "You know what my lifestyle was when I was with you." Or do we have some area in our heart that we have kept shut so that no one could see how we lived? As we consider this, the man who comes to mind here is Uriah in 2 Samuel 11. He was a man of great integrity who was even trusted by David to carry his own death sentence back to Joab. Even while intoxicated he remained a man of integrity.

Notice Acts 20:19

The first thing we see here concerning Paul was that when he came to Ephesus, he did not come with the mindset that he was better than these people. He was right down on their level and rightly so because he too was a sinner saved by grace. He came as a servant of the Lord with humility of mind. He came to Ephesus with the heart of Jesus Christ in him.

He came because he truly cared about the souls of the people who lived in Asia. It was the spirit of humility which brought about the power of God in Paul's life. Paul recognized his weaknesses and his insufficiency. Let us remember what Paul had learned earlier.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

⁷ *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

⁸ *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

⁹ *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

¹⁰ *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

This experience of the thorn in the flesh was believed to have happened during the first missionary journey. Here in Acts 20, he is closing his third missionary journey.

Application:

Here is a thought to consider. What is to us a thorn in the flesh at the present can take on a different purpose over time as we surrender to the Lord, grow in grace, and not allow bitterness to enter in. Instead of turning bitter we can become better over time.

Let us consider the word "humility" for a moment.

John Wesley observed that "neither the Romans nor the Greeks had a word for humility." The very concept was so foreign and abhorrent to their way of thinking that they had no term to describe it. When, during the first several centuries of Christianity, pagan writers borrowed the term tapeinophrosune, they always used it derogatorily—frequently of Christians—because to them humility was a pitiable weakness!

Notice Vine's thought on humility of mind.

"Not a merely moral quality, but the subjection of self under the authority of, and in response to, the love of the Lord Jesus (2Cor 5:14), and the power of the Holy Spirit to conform the believer to the character of Christ. In contrast to the world's idea of being "poor-spirited", the Lord commends "the poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3).

Notice Acts 20:19 again.

Paul had shed many tears while he served in Ephesus. Paul had a heart of compassion. He understood what would happen to people who never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 126:5-6

⁵ They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

⁶ He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

The temptations spoken of here were the trials and the times of affliction that Paul faced.

Conclusion:

Spurgeon's wise words regarding times of affliction...

"I am afraid that all the grace that I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable. What do I not owe to the crucible and the furnace, the bellows that have blown up the coals, and the hand which has thrust me into the heat?... I bear my witness that the worst days I have ever had have turned out to be my best days... I can bear my personal testimony that the best piece of furniture that I ever had in the house was a cross. I do not mean a material cross; I mean the cross of affliction and trouble.... In shunning a trial we are seeking to avoid a blessing."