

"The Third Missionary Journey"

Part 11

Acts 18:23-21:26

Introduction: Tonight, we come back to Acts and as we do, we are again stepping into a very interesting conversation that Paul had with the elders at Ephesus. He is on his way to Jerusalem with the love offering for the Jews. He does not take the time to go to Ephesus but he sends for them to meet him in Miletus.

- **Returning to Jerusalem**
- **"Time with the Ephesian Elders"**

Notice Acts 20:19

Let us take a moment and consider the tears of the Apostle. What was it that caused Paul to weep? There are several things that brought Paul to tears.

1. Sin in the church.

2 Corinthians 2:4

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.*

The sin that was in the church at Corinth brought Paul to tears because he knew that the sin hindered the work of the Spirit and that it would affect many in the church.

2. People who rejected the Gospel.

Philippians 3:17-19

¹⁷ *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

¹⁸ *(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and **now tell you even weeping**, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:*

¹⁹ *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*

Romans 9:1-4a

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

² **That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.**

³ *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*

⁴ *Who are Israelites:*

3. False teachers and believers who defect.

Acts 20:29-31

²⁹ *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

³⁰ *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

³¹ *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years **I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.***

Paul was a man that was completely focused upon the eternal. Everyone of his concerns were for the very things that mattered to our Lord.

Application:

This is the very heart that God desires for us to have. We really do get caught up in so many things that have no eternal value. Too many times we are far too earthly minded.

Colossians 3:1-3

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

² **Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**

³ *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

2 Timothy 2:3-4

³ *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

⁴ *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

Notice Acts 20:20-21

As Paul reviews his time with the Ephesians, he reminds them that he held nothing back but taught them all Truth for it was profitable to them. Now there is something in this statement that we really need to consider. Paul taught them the Word of God and in so doing he even taught them Truth that may have very well cut deeply into their lives. But they needed to hear it. Paul did not skip any Truth because it might make someone uncomfortable. That is what the Truth often does as the Spirit of God uses it to bring conviction. Truth is what is needed in the lives of believers today.

John 8:31-32

³¹ *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

³² *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

It is the Truth of God's Word that sets people free from the power and the bondage of sin. It is of no value to people when the Truth is hidden from them and they are lost in their sins. It is not love to withhold the Truth from a believer who is on a path of chastisement or destruction. Love speaks the Truth even when it is the most difficult thing to do. The Truth must be proclaimed even when we know that someone in the audience is of a different belief. Paul never held back the Truth to any of his audience. Notice how Paul exhorted Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:1-3

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

² *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.*

³ *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*

Notice Acts 20:22

Now Paul reveals there were things that he did not know. He did not know exactly what awaited him at Jerusalem but he did know that the Spirit of God was impressing upon him

to go. We often use the phrase "Bound and Determined" and here Paul was bound as a bond slave of the Lord going where he was led to go not knowing what awaited him in Jerusalem. He was determined to stay the course no matter what it was that greeted him there. I want you to notice the words of G. Campbell Morgan on the "not knowing" of Paul.

"This phrase from the lips of Paul reveals one of the things that, through very varied experience, he had come to know. He knew that there were things in his program that he did not know. Locally, the phrase was expressive of uncertainty as to the reception he would receive in Jerusalem.

But its chief value for us lies in the fact that it is so used as to show that such ignorance did not interfere with the certainties of the future.

He had received a ministry from the Lord Jesus, and the one and only thing that concerned him was that he should accomplish (finish) that ministry (Acts 20:24). What lay in the course (the race), of bonds or affliction, or even death, mattered nothing; the doing of the appointed work was supreme. Thus, there is the touch of a splendid carelessness in the words "not knowing"; a carelessness as to minor matters, born of a constant carefulness as to the principal matter. Thus the "not knowing" of Paul meant not caring to know, not asking to know; indeed, it meant preferring not to know. That is the true attitude of all who are walking in an appointed course, in the service of the Lord. We know Whose we are and Whom we serve. (Note the order - first Whose we are then Whom we serve. Being should always precede doing.) We know the way of His will for us. As to the rest, we can say not knowing; and that is the ignorance of a perfect rest."

Paul was led by the Spirit and when he did not know what was ahead, he rested in the Lord's perfect plan. Notice what David wrote.

Psalm 23:3

³ *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

Here in this verse, we find some much-needed insight for times when we do not know what is ahead. As we follow our Lord, we must understand that what is ahead is always for His name's sake. In other words, it is always for the purpose of glorifying our Lord.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

⁶ *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

Psalm 37:5, 23-25

⁵ *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*

²³ *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.*

²⁴ *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.*

²⁵ *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

Notice Acts 20:23

Paul did know by the Spirit that bonds and afflictions were awaiting him in Jerusalem. But this would not deter him because he knew he was in the will of God. Notice the words of Thomas Brooks.

"Stars shine brightest in the darkest night. Torches are the better for beating. Grapes come not to the proof till they come to the press. Spices smell sweetest when pounded. Young trees root the faster for shaking. Vines are the better for bleeding. Gold looks the brighter for scouring; and juniper smells sweeter in the fire."

The Bible is very clear that as believers there will be times of struggles in this life. Notice the Words of our Lord.

John 16:33

³³ *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Conclusion:

All of the struggles in this life are for man's benefit.

Genesis 3:17-19

¹⁷ *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*

¹⁸ Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

¹⁹ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.