

## **The Acts of the Apostles**

**Sermon Number: 29**

**Acts 20:1 – 21:14**

**April 22, 2012**

### **The Visible Apostle**

In the previous lesson we found Paul's preaching is the excuse for a riot in Ephesus. This commotion was instigated by Demetrius, a silversmith, who was upset because when people became Christians they no longer had any use for his silver idols of the goddess Artemis. The people took all of their religious junk and burned it in a public square. The record says it was worth 50,000 days' wages.

When the Lord saves a person there will be a radical change in their thinking and their behaviour. A drunkard like I was is no longer a drunk; an openly profane man as I was immediately begins to clean up his manner of life.

Likewise, the sweet little religious hypocrite will see their self-righteousness and agree with God that they are just as guilty and lost as the profligate sinner and they too will repent and put their entire thrust of eternal life in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Even before the riot, Paul had planned to leave Ephesus and visit Macedonia and Achaia and then go on to Jerusalem and finally on to Rome.

Acts 19:21-22

<sup>21</sup> Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." <sup>22</sup> And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

In the Letter to the Romans [15:22-29], Paul indicates that he intended to concentrate his ministry in the western Mediterranean region, especially Spain. He dispatched Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, intending to join them soon. When the riot erupted in Ephesus Paul saw it as sign that his presence was causing more problems than help for the young church there. So when the commotion subsided, he gathered the believers around him and gave them a farewell message of encouragement. Paul had been in Ephesus for three years.

## **When to Move On**

**Acts 20:1**

After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

## **Revisiting Young Churches**

**Acts 20:2**

<sup>2</sup> When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.

Paul wanted to spend time with the groups of believers he and his associates had established. Paul encouraged them.

## **Teamwork**

**Acts 20:3-6**

<sup>3</sup> There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. <sup>4</sup> Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus from Berea, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. <sup>5</sup> These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, <sup>6</sup> but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

The men who traveled with Paul were representatives of the Gentile churches who were on their way to Jerusalem to bring offerings to the believers there who were suffering extreme poverty.

Paul mentions this act of charity in both Romans and First Corinthians:

Rom 15:25-28

<sup>25</sup> At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. <sup>26</sup> For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. <sup>28</sup> When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.

1 Cor 16:1-4

Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no

collecting when I come.<sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

Paul never travelled alone; there were always at least two or more together.

Paul and his entourage stayed at Philippi until after Passover and then sailed for Troas.

### **What can happen when you fall asleep in church?      Acts 20:7-12**

<sup>7</sup> On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. <sup>8</sup> There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. <sup>9</sup> And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. <sup>10</sup> But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." <sup>11</sup> And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. <sup>12</sup> And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

This is the first mention in the New Testament to Sunday being the regular day of the week for the church to meet. [Cf. 1 Corinthians 16:2]

The church assembled for prayer and ministry of the Word; to “break bread” which is a fellowship meal, and was followed by observing the Lord’s Supper.

They met at night, probably because it was the only time that slaves could be free to attend a meeting, after their day’s work was done.

On this occasion the meeting place was on the third floor.

Apparently they were not concerned about when it was “time to quit.”

A young man named Eutychus sat in an open window on the third floor and he was probably tired from a hard day’s work. The room would have been lit with smoky lanterns. No doubt the air was stuffy. Sometime after midnight his eyelids grew heavy and he fell sound asleep. His body sagged and he fell three stories to the ground below. The writer, who is Doctor Luke, says Eutychus was dead! Paul came down, and like Elijah in 1 Kings 17:21, stretched his body over Eutychus and announced, “He is alive!”

They ate some more food and talked until daybreak.

Eutychus was alive and well!

### **Paul heads for Jerusalem**

**Acts 20:13-16**

<sup>13</sup> But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. <sup>14</sup> And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. <sup>15</sup> And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus. <sup>16</sup> For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

### **The Elders at Ephesus**

**Acts 20:17-35**

This is a rather long passage and I will read it and make very few comments because it preaches itself.

Paul's charge to the elders:

<sup>17</sup> Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. <sup>18</sup> And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, <sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; <sup>20</sup> how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. <sup>24</sup> But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. <sup>25</sup> And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, <sup>27</sup> for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. <sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is

able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and I remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Paul intended to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost. He had travelled the 20 miles from Troas to Assos, where the ship was scheduled to make a stop.

Miletus was 30 miles from Ephesus and the ship was to be in port for several days. Paul sent for the elders at Ephesus to come to Miletus for a farewell meeting.

The term "elders" refers to church leaders who are supposed to have spiritual maturity. They are "bishops" or "overseers" which means they are responsible to protect and guard the local church. A "shepherd" is a pastor who feeds the flock from the Word of God.

Elder, bishop, shepherd, and pastor all refer to the same person in this office and indicates the different functions that the leader has.

Paul's message to the Ephesian elders presents his philosophy of Christian leadership. The church leaders are to be examples to the church.

Thus my title of this message is "The Visible Apostle."

By that I mean that Paul was an open book to be read of men.

There is an old compute term "WYSIWYG."  
What You See Is What You Get.

Paul served the Lord with humility. [20:19]

He did not hesitate to preach what the people needed to hear.  
His preaching was in public and from house to house. [20:20]

He invited people regardless of race or ethnicity to repent and have faith in Jesus.  
[20:21]

He put his life on the line if need be to serve the Lord. [20:24]

He made sure that he had fulfilled his spiritual responsibilities. [20:26]

He did not hesitate to preach the whole counsel of God. [20:27]

Paul never ceased to warn believers about spiritual dangers. [20:31]

He entrusted the people to God. [20:32]

He ministered without thought of material gain. [20:33]

He worked hard to help the weak; and he found joy in giving. [20:35]

The reaction of the elders is seen in the emotional goodbye. [20:36-38]

<sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup> And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, <sup>38</sup> being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

## **Paul Goes to Jerusalem**

## **Acts 21:1-14**

Luke's record of Paul's travels takes him from Miletus through many places until he reaches Caesarea. There he stayed with Philip the evangelist. Philip was one of the seven men called out 20 years earlier to properly administer feeding the widows. [Cf. Acts 6:1-7]

Four of Philip's daughters were prophetesses.

And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. <sup>2</sup> And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. <sup>3</sup> When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. <sup>4</sup> And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed <sup>6</sup> and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

<sup>7</sup> When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. <sup>8</sup> On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. <sup>9</sup> He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.

“He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.”

As with many events in the Book of Acts caution is advised.

Compare Scripture with Scripture in order to interpret a difficult passage.

Paul, in the epistles, gives restrictions about women having authority {teaching grown men} over men and on speaking in the church assembled. So before anyone takes this verse to “prove” that women are called to preach; I suggest that these four women prophesied at home.

### **Prepared for Trouble**

### **Acts 21:10-11**

During the week spent with the believers in Tyre, the Holy Spirit revealed that there was danger if Paul travelled on to Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup> And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

In Caesarea, Agabus came from Judea with a message for Paul.

<sup>10</sup> While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. <sup>11</sup> And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

In the style of the Old Testament prophets, Agabus pantomimed part of his prophecy. He took Paul's belt and tied his own hands and feet with it. Then he announced the Holy Spirit's message that the owner of the belt would be bound in Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles.

### **Let the Will of the Lord be Done!**

### **Acts 21:12-14**

<sup>12</sup> When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." <sup>14</sup> And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

Like Jesus before him, Paul resolutely set out for Jerusalem. [Cf. Luke 9:51]

Paul, no doubt, appreciated the concern for his safety, but he could not be dissuaded from what he saw as his commission from the Lord Jesus.

He knew what he must do no matter what the cost.

"Let the will of the Lord be done."

That should be our goal in the face of trial: "Let the will of the Lord be done."