

PAUL'S FINAL WORK IN ASIA

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 20:1-38

LESSON 347 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 20:1-38

¹ And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

² And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

³ And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

⁴ And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

⁵ These going before tarried for us at Troas.

⁶ And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

⁷ And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

⁸ And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

⁹ And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Paul's Journey from Ephesus to Corinth and Back to Troas

1. Paul departs via Troas for Macedonia after the uproar at Ephesus, Acts 20:1;

2 Corinthians 2:12

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

2 Corinthians 2:13

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. He comes to Corinth in Greece, Acts 20:2.

3. He returns to Troas, Acts 20:3-6.

II Paul's Journey from Troas to Miletus

1. Eutychus falls from a third-story window during Paul's sermon, Acts 20:7-9.

2. His life is restored, Acts 20:10-12.

3. Paul travels to Miletus, Acts 20:13-17.

III Paul's Exhortation to the Ephesian Elders

1. He reminds the elders of his humble preaching and doctrine, Acts 20:18-21;

Titus 2:7

⁷ In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

Titus 2:8

⁸ Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

2. His departure is without regrets, Acts 20:22-27;

2 Timothy 4:7

⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

3. The elders are exhorted to feed the flock, and are warned against evil men, Acts 20:28-32;

2 Timothy 3:1-5

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

2 Peter 2:1-3

¹ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

² And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

³ And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

4. Paul's freedom from covetousness is an example to all, Acts

¹⁰ And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

¹¹ When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

¹² And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

¹³ And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

¹⁴ And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

¹⁵ And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next *day* we came to Miletus.

¹⁶ For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

¹⁷ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

¹⁸ And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

¹⁹ Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

²⁰ *And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

²¹ Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance

20:33-35;

1 Samuel 12:3

³ Behold, here I *am*: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

5. His exhortation ends with prayer, Acts 20:36-38.

NOTES:

Paul's Missionary Spirit

"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" (Romans 15:19). Thus wrote Paul to Rome while on this third missionary journey. Illyricum, over a thousand miles in a straight line from Jerusalem, lay just across the sea from Italy. Having fully covered the territory between Jerusalem and Italy, Paul now desired to pass through Rome to Spain and regions beyond. "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you" (Romans 15:23, 24).

In these few words we see the vast field the Apostle had already covered, and yet his heart was reaching out for new horizons for the Gospel. His was truly a missionary spirit that knew no stopping. The toils of the road meant nothing if he could but preach Christ and sow the seed of the Gospel in fertile, virgin fields.

The Journey from Ephesus

Leaving Ephesus after the great uproar caused by Demetrius, Paul took his journey through Macedonia to Corinth in Greece; then, somewhat retracing his steps, started back for Jerusalem whence he desired to sail to Rome. One of his first stops from Ephesus was Troas. He relates: "When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, 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" (II Corinthians 2:12, 13). It is believed his next stay was at Philippi whence he wrote this second letter to the Corinthians in which he states: "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (II Corinthians 7:5, 6).

Difficulties

Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, did not dwell long on the many incidents that happened, but in the beginning of Paul's ministry, God had said, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16). The life of the Apostle Paul was certainly no path of roses as he made his way from place to place on foot or by boat. His letter to Corinth reveals a little of the difficulties he faced. "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measures, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver" (II Corinthians 1:8-10). Though faced with death Paul could say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians 4:17). "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about

toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

²² And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

²³ Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

²⁴ But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

²⁵ And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

²⁶ Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*.

²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

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.

³² And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (II Corinthians 4:8-10). It should help us to forget our trials and complaints if we realise how trivial and little are our troubles as compared with those of this pioneer of the Gospel.

Think of the things he had already been through, as he compares his labours with those of false apostles: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Trice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, imperils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II Corinthians 11:23-27). Surely nothing short of divine inspiration could impel a man to continue such a hazardous career.

Corinth

After "much exhortation" throughout Macedonia Paul arrived in Greece, where he abode three months with the Corinthians to whom he had written. In spite of all he had suffered for Christ, Paul, who was now nearing sixty years of age, was by no means through preaching the Gospel, for it was here he wrote his epistle to Rome forcefully declaring: "As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:15).

First Day of the Week

Instead of sailing from Corinth as he had planned, Paul sent his friends on to Troas by boat while he covered the 400 miles or more on foot to Philippi, sailing from thence to Troas. Here, on Sunday, the first day of the week, the disciples assembled. This was the day the disciples were accustomed to observing after the Lord's resurrection, for Paul instructed the Corinthians to bring their offering to the church on that day. Jesus, also, after He arose on Sunday morning, met with the Apostles on that and the following Sunday, the Lord Himself setting His seal upon the observance of Sunday instead of the Jewish Sabbath. The disciples at Troas also observed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as commanded by our Lord.

The Hungry

God's mighty power was manifest in Troas in the raising of the dead. The people there must have had hungry hearts, for Paul preached until midnight, stopping then only long enough to restore the young man to life, and then continued his talk until break of day. Without taking time to rest, Paul set out on foot to cover the twenty miles to Assos. Perhaps Paul felt refreshed, as did Jesus at Jacob's well when He met with the woman of Samaria whose heart was hungry for the truth.

Paul's Final Exhortation to the Elders at Ephesus

Paul did not take time to stop at Ephesus, because he desired to be in Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost; but, sending for the elders, he gave them his final exhortation, telling them that they should see his face no more. Citing his example, Paul exhorted them to humility and faithfulness. They were reminded that it was the Holy Ghost who made them overseers, and that they were to feed the flock of God by not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. Christ's doctrine was very important to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, for he realised the time would come when people would not endure sound doctrine.

Paul did not want these Ephesians to leave out repentance. Perhaps he realised the tendency that would come when people would be told to accept Christ instead of having godly sorrow for

³³ I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

³⁴ Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

³⁵ I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

³⁶ And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

³⁷ And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

³⁸ Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

their sins and truly repenting and receiving a change of heart. He did not want them to have shallow religion without the Blood of Atonement as some do today; for he reminded them that the Church of God was purchased with Jesus' Blood. He also said that the Word of God was able to build them up and give them an inheritance among those who are sanctified.

Paul must have known of the greedy wolves that would commercialise religion, so he warned the elders against covetousness. Let the hands of Paul, which ministered to his necessities be a rebuke to those who plead for silver and gold and preach the Gospel for filthy lucre's sake.

Night and day for three years Paul's warnings and tears had shown his love and anxiety for the people of Ephesus. His wholehearted preaching of the Word was manifested by his statement: "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you."

The Holy Ghost revealed that the course ahead of Paul offered bonds and afflictions, but his staunch heart could reply: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Do you have that same determination to hold out until the end?

QUESTIONS

1. Find out what you can about the men mentioned in Acts 20:4.
2. Trace the footsteps of Paul in today's lesson.
3. Cite examples of Paul's ambition and energy.
4. How many instances of the dead being raised are found in Scripture?
5. Give several reasons why we worship on Sunday instead of the Sabbath.
6. By whom were the elders of Ephesus made overseers?
7. How long had Paul spent in Ephesus?
8. How did Paul demonstrate his lack of covetousness?
9. See how many doctrinal points you can find mentioned in this chapter.
10. Name some of the things Paul suffered for the Gospel.