

Acts 20: The Journey and the Farewell

Where We Left Off

Acts 19:21–22

Near the end of his time in Ephesus, Paul had already begun looking toward:

- **Macedonia → Achaia → Jerusalem → Rome**
- After the uproar in Ephesus, he encourages the disciples, says goodbye, and begins that journey.

1. Back Through Familiar Churches

Read Acts 20:1–3

“After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. 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.”

- Paul travels through Macedonia, giving the believers ***“much encouragement.”***
- **Think back to the churches we have met in this region:**
 - Philippi
 - Thessalonica
 - Berea
- **He then comes to Greece and stays three months.**
 - Luke doesn’t name the city.
 - Corinth is the most likely setting.

Paul Had Written About This Journey

- **Remember, that we said that 1 Corinthians was written by Paul while he was in Ephesus.**
 - In it, he was responding to specific circumstances and issues within the church there, but also...
 - He was relaying his plans to come and visit them again.
 - He had planned to visit them after leaving Ephesus, and after stopping first in the churches of Macedonia
 - One of the things he discussed was a collection among the churches for a gift to the suffering believers in the churches of Judea

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1–9

“Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. 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. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me. I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

In 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote from Ephesus about:

- A collection for the saints.
- His plan to travel through Macedonia before visiting Corinth.
- The possibility of spending the winter with the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians was written from Macedonia

- After traveling to Troas and not finding Titus there, he traveled to Macedonia (likely Philippi),
 - where he found Titus and received a report about the Corinthian church that comforted him.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:1–5

“Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.”

2 Corinthians 13:1

“This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

- **Paul is still preparing the Corinthians for his visit.**
 - He wants their promised gift to be ready.
- The churches in Macedonia and Achaia are participating in care for believers in Jerusalem. See also Romans 15:25–28 (written from Corinth)
 - *“At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For 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. When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.”*

Paul also explains in **2 Corinthians 1:15–16, 23** that he had considered visiting Corinth both before and after traveling through Macedonia. He postponed that earlier visit because of the strained relationship between them. His plans had changed along the way.

For Discussion

- *What do Paul’s letters add to the brief account Luke gives us in Acts 20?*

The Plot and the Changed Route

Return to Acts 20:3

“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.”

- **Paul was preparing to sail for Syria.**
 - A plot against him led him to return through Macedonia instead.
 - **Luke doesn’t tell us how the plot would have been carried out.**
 - Could a voyage aboard a ship with hostile travelers have been dangerous for Paul? Possibly.
 - **The route change itself is stated clearly.**

Read Acts 20:4–6

“Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, 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.”

Notice the places associated with Paul’s traveling companions:

- **Sopater** is from Berea

- **Aristarchus and Secundus** are from Thessalonica
- **Gaius** is from Derbe
- **Tychicus and Trophimus** are from Asia
- **Timothy** (from Lystra) also travels with them.
 - **I wonder if there was any intention in this to send representatives from the various churches/cities along with the gift for the church at Jerusalem?**

In verse 5, the narrative changes from “they” to “us” once again. Luke appears to have rejoined Paul’s traveling party at Philippi.

2. A Night at Troas

Read Acts 20:7–12

“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. There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. 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. 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.” And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.”

Watch the sequence:

- The believers gather on **the first day of the week**. (that’s a Sunday)
- Paul intends to leave the following day.
- He continues speaking late into the night.
- Eutychus falls from a third-story window and is taken up dead.
- Paul goes down to him.
- The believers take the young man home alive.

Luke’s final observation: **they were greatly comforted.**

For Discussion

- ***Why is it significant that the believers were worshipping on a Sunday?***
- ***What does the willingness of the believers to stay listening to Paul “late into the night” say about their spiritual hunger?***

3. From Troas to Miletus

Read Acts 20:13–17

“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. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. 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. 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. Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.”

- Paul travels overland to Assos while his companions go by ship.
- They continue along the coast toward Miletus.
- Paul has decided to sail past Ephesus.
- He hopes to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost.
- From Miletus, he sends for the elders of the Ephesian church.

On a map: Trace Troas → Assos → Miletus. Notice how close Paul comes to Ephesus without entering the city.

- Paul had spent about three years among the Ephesian believers. These elders are coming to meet a man they know well. A spiritual father, and mentor.

4. Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

Read Acts 20:18–38

As we walk through the speech, notice when Paul speaks about **the past, his coming journey, and the church after his departure.**

Their Years Together — Verses 18–21

“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, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul reminds them of what they saw:

- His humility, tears, and trials.
- Teaching in public and from house to house.
- **His message to Jews and Greeks alike:**
 - Repentance toward God.
 - Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This gives us another window into his years in Ephesus beyond the events Luke recorded in Acts 19.

Paul's Coming Journey — Verses 22–27

“And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 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. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”

- He is going to Jerusalem.
- He expects imprisonment and afflictions.
- He wants to finish the ministry he received from Jesus.
- He says he did not shrink from declaring what they needed to hear.

Paul tells them that he does not expect them to see his face again. Hear the rest of the speech in light of that statement.

His Charge to the Elders — Verses 28–31

“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. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.”

- Watch yourselves.
- Pay careful attention to the flock.
- Shepherd the church of God.
- Be alert to dangers from outside and within.

Notice that Paul's warning is accompanied by tears. He is concerned for people he loves.

For Discussion

- ***Why does Paul begin by telling the elders to watch themselves?***

His Final Words — Verses 32–35

“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. I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

- Paul commends them to God and to the word of his grace.
- He reminds them of his work with his own hands.
- He speaks of helping the weak and of the blessing of giving.

Acts 20:35 also preserves a saying of Jesus that is not recorded in the four Gospels.

- *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

The Farewell: Verses 36–38

“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, 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 kneels and prays with them.
- They weep and embrace him.
- They accompany him to the ship.
- They grieve especially because they believe they will not see his face again.

Final Discussion

- *After tracing Paul’s journey and hearing his farewell, what stands out to you about the way he cared for the churches?*

Closing Observation

Acts 20 takes us back through churches we have watched begin and grow. Paul’s letters let us hear about the journey from his own side. Then, at Miletus, Luke lets us witness a farewell between people who have spent years sharing the gospel and sharing their lives.

