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Acts 20 – Chapter Study

## INTRODUCTION

### III. Launching Out • Chs. 13-28

#### D. Paul's Third Missionary Journey • 18:23-20:12

##### 1. In Galatia • 18:23

##### 2. In Apollos • 18:24-28

##### 3. In Ephesus • Ch. 19

Paul spent a total of nearly 3 years in Ephesus during which the entire Roman province of Asia was reached with the Gospel.

Churches were planted in other major cities like Colossae, Thyatira, Hierapolis, Sardis & Pergamum.

The revival in Ephesus was so widespread it had led to a downturn in business for those who made a living off the pagan worship of the goddess Diana.

In retaliation, they caused a riot that in the end resulted in Paul's having to leave the city.

##### 4. In Greece • 20:1-6

<sup>1</sup> After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself*, embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia.

In 19:21 & 22, we learn it had been Paul's plan for a while to return to Macedonia & Greece to check up on the churches he'd planted a couple few years before on his second journey.

In fact, he sent Timothy & Erastus on ahead to let them know he was coming and probably to make a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, where he was headed after dropping back in on them.

<sup>2</sup> Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words,

he came to Greece<sup>3</sup> and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

Paul sailed first to that region of northern Greece called Macedonia where he'd planted churches in Berea, Thessalonica, & Philippi on his second journey a few years before.

Then he made his way back down to the southern Greek region of Achaia where Corinth was located.

When unbelieving Jews began their same old dirty tricks, he devised a plan to throw them off his scent so they wouldn't follow & hassle him;

He split up his team into two groups – sending most of the group on over to Asia, while he & Luke headed back north.

<sup>4</sup> And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. <sup>5</sup> These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. <sup>6</sup> But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

Paul's opponents thought Paul was with this large group that sailed east away from their region.

They landed on the western coast of Asia at the large port city of Troas where they waited for Paul & Luke who covertly headed back to Macedonia, and sailed from Philippi.

7 guys are named here, from different cities.

Paul's band of travel companions has grown to at least 9 counting Luke & himself.

From some of the letters Paul wrote, we know when he returned to Jerusalem he carried contributions from the churches of Greece & Asia with him to meet the needs of the poor believers.

It was a practice in the ancient world that when you sent a gift, you had a representative from your group bring it.

These guys were representing the churches in their cities.

Remember the big brouhaha that had risen in the Church over Paul's ministry among the Gentiles?

What a great way for the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem who had such a hard time accepting his ministry to get over it than to have Gentile believers bring them major financial relief!

This was a smart diplomatic move on Paul's part.

But imagine how incredible it must have been for these guys to hang out with Paul; to watch & listen to him!

So much of what we really learn, we gain through example.

It's one thing to hear a teaching – it's an altogether different thing to see it lived out.

One of the most powerful truths Paul taught was Galatians 2:20 and it's been a principle of life I've endeavored to live by – albeit poorly!

As we saw Sunday – Paul lived it & lived it well! So much so he could say to the Corinthians with utmost confidence, "Imitate me as I imitate Jesus Christ."

The word "imitate" is *mimetes* – mimic.

It refers to someone who duplicates the behavior of another.

In modern usage, 'mimic' has a negative, kind of sarcastic connotation.

Not so the ancient word.

The mimic was someone so skilled at following another, they were a living mirror.

Imitators/impersonators learn how to emulate the person they're seeking to copy by intense concentration on watching & listening to them.

Every little detail is examined & duplicated again & again until it's just right.

It takes time & application & the closest kind of investigation.

Remember how disciples were made in Galilee – they followed their rabbi 24/7/365.

Their goal was to become what their rabbi was & knew the only way to do that was by staying as close & attentive as possible.

This is why community, fellowship, close, intimate companionship is essential in our lives as believers, as the followers of Christ.

It's not enough to just go to Sunday & Wednesday nights.

There's the need to be invested in close, close relationships with solid, mature followers of Jesus who can model for us what it means to follow Him.

We need to see Christianity, not just hear about it.

## **5. &nbsp; sp; At Troas • 20:7-12**

<sup>7</sup> Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

The team spent a week in Troas, then prepared to begin the long journey by sea to Caesarea on the coast of Israel.

On Sunday, the traditional day of Christian worship, the believers of Troas gathered for the *agape* – the love feast, a communal meal they shared to renew & celebrate their close fellowship in Christ.

Paul knew he may never see these dear people again, so he took what hours were left to impart as much instruction as he could.

It got late. It was after dinner. Many of these people had put in a hard day's labor prior to coming to the meal.

Add it up; & you know what's coming . . .

<sup>8</sup> There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.<sup>9</sup> And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

Most of us can just picture this scene; Luke does a masterful job describing it.

Pretend you're Eutychus.

Young & not so clueless to just who Paul is or how important his teaching is.

Full. Tired after a hard day's work.

It's late, dark. The room is filled with oil lamps that have raised the temperature.

Your eyes are smarting from looking at Paul & seeing the flames around him.

The smoke from the olive oil in the lamps makes your eyes water.

You've found a cozy spot in one of the windows of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor room, & have curled up there in the sill.

You close your eyes for just a moment. It feels so good!

But you know if you keep them closed a moment longer you could fall asleep, so you snap them back open.

But a minute later your lids droop, & you close your eyes again – ahhh, blessed relief.

Then, you drop off, just for a second – & pop right back awake. Your heart pounding in your chest. Oh my, you fell asleep! That won't do!

That keeps you alert & awake for the next 5 minutes, but once again your eyelids begin to droop.

And this time, when you fall asleep, it's for good!

Eutychus tumbled out the window onto the ground 3 stories below – dead!

<sup>10</sup> But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing *him* said, “Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.” <sup>11</sup> Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.

<sup>12</sup> And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

Yeah, seeing someone raised from the dead tends to do that.

After the miracle of Eutychus' healing, there were no more sleepers at Troas.

Knowing that the entire group would stay wide awake, Paul used the available time to continue teaching them about the Lord & what it means to walk with Him.

But his method changed now – it says he “talked” with them.

The word is *homileo* – it means to converse, to be in company with others & engage in dialog.

It was a time of Q&A, of interaction where the believers of Troas had a chance to query Paul & get his perspective on the issue they faced there in their city as they sought to follow the Lord.

Let me ask you this: In light of what we read about Paul's ministry in Troas, how important was teaching to him?

\*\*\* - Before we move on – take another look at v. 7. What day did the church at Troas meet to celebrate their common faith in Christ? The first day of the week. – Sunday.

As you may be aware, some people say that Christians ought to worship on the

Sabbath, Saturday, not Sunday.

Sunday worship, they say, is pagan. In fact, one large group calls Sunday worship the Mark of the Beast.

Well, that would be news to the church at Troas, to Paul, and the entire early church!

Both Scripture & the most ancient records of the practice of the first Christians tell us they meet on Sunday to celebrate the agape & to worship the Lord.

### **E. To Jerusalem • = 20:13-21:14**

#### **1. At Miletus • 20:13-38**

##### **a. the sea route • vs. 13-16**

<sup>13</sup> Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.  
<sup>14</sup> And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

Assos is about 20 miles South of Troas.

Why Paul decided to go on foot while the rest of the party sailed is a mystery.

In light of what's coming, there's a good chance he sensed the need for some time alone.

Later he says that on his return trip to Jerusalem, in every place the Spirit warned him about the trouble that lay ahead.

The trip to Assos would take a day & would give him the opportunity to prayerfully work through some things, making sure his heart was right before the Lord about wanting to go back to Jerusalem.

When they met up with Paul at Assos, they sailed to Mitylene, the chief city of the island of Lesbos.

<sup>15</sup> We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus.

<sup>16</sup> For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

Sailing in these waters was quite dangerous because of the currents & numerous islands so mariners only sailed during daylight hours.

Every night they'd pull in close to the shore, drop anchor and wait for the next dawn.

Luke charts their course –

They left Mitylene & anchored off the island of Chios

Then they stopped at Trogylium on the island of Samos.

From there they sailed to the port of Miletus, 36 miles south of Ephesus.

Paul was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem & knew if they stopped at Ephesus he might get delayed.

But with the sense of impending doom growing over him, he had urgent words to impart to the leaders of the Church at Ephesus which had grown so dear to him. So -

### **b. &nbsp; sp; addressing the Ephesian elders • vs. 17-38**

<sup>17</sup> From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

Though Ephesus was nearly 40 miles north, a messenger could easily reach there in a day if he went by horse or boat.

A small ship could then easily return with the elders in another day.

<sup>18</sup> And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, <sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; <sup>20</sup> how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

At first blush, Paul's words here look like boasting. They're not!

Keep the context in mind – Paul knows great trouble lies ahead.

He knows he's going to be charged with serious crimes.

So he urges the Ephesian elders to remember what kind of man he was; what kind of person he'd proven himself over 3 years to be.

For false teachers would come, calling Paul's ministry into question.

They would point to the charges against him and use that as the basis of their

attack on his teaching & example.

So Paul attempts to inoculate the leaders of the Ephesians church against this tactic of the enemy.

Over the years, there've been several attempts by false teachers & evil workers to discredit Pastor Chuck.

God has done an amazing work through Chuck in raising up a generation of pastors & leaders who are devoted to the Word and making a significant impact in these last days for = the Kingdom of God, around the world.

The enemy has not taken it = sitting down. He's attempted to discredit Chuck dozens of times.

None of those attempts have= gone anywhere for one simple reason – the people who know Pastor Chuck, kn= ow better than the silly charges that are leveled at him.

He's a man & as = such, he's not perfect.

Not every decision he= 7;s made has been the best or wisest.

But the attacks of opponen= ts have never gained traction because those around Chuck KNOW him and know the charges are absurd.

Paul knew the healthy & safety of the Ephesian chu= rch was directly proportional to the steadfastness of its elders.

And he knew their steadfast= ness to the Faith was directly proportional to their trust in his ministry of teach= ing & preaching.

So he reminds them of the s= piritual quality of his ministry & example.

When it's questioned = or challenged in the days to come, they must not forget what they know to be t= rue.

<sup>22</sup> And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,=<sup>23</sup> except that the Holy S= pirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. <sup>24</sup> But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so tha= t I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.=

Paul knew that trouble lay ahead; the Spirit had made = that abundantly clear.

But Paul didn't under= stand the warnings as meant to turn him away= from Jerusalem.



He saw them as preparation for or HOW he was to go; boldly & with confidence – not freaked out when arrested & thrown into chains.

Death didn't scare Paul because he saw no judgment in it.

His sin had been judged at the cross and all that was left was eternal life.

He'd redefined death as little more than an awkward, possibly uncomfortable entrance into the glories of a heaven filled with reward for a life of faithful service.

Because death had lost its scariness & mystery, Paul was free to face the challenges & obstacles of life with courage and excitement.

After all, what's the very worst that could happen – that he'd be killed? Whuppy-do!

That is something we all need to learn.

We're not really free to live & do all the Lord has for us until we begin to look at death as Paul did.

If we're fearful of death, then we'll more probably balk at things we see as risky.

Our trust in God ought to be so complete that we trust Him to keep & protect us right up to the moment He takes us home.

And you know, sometimes, that trip home begins with what looks like difficult circumstances.

Why, it certainly looked like it was that way for Paul – and that's why the Spirit warned him, so that Paul's confidence in the keeping power of God would not waver, right up & through the end at the hands of Nero's executioner.

<sup>25</sup> “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. <sup>27</sup> For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Paul considered that he'd left nothing lacking or undone in his ministry in Ephesus.

Having given them the Word of God, he'd done all he could.

Because they'd received his ministry of the entire scope of God's Word, the responsibility was now theirs with what they'd do with it.

<sup>28</sup> Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup> For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. <sup>31</sup> Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

We'll cover these verses Sunday.

<sup>32</sup> “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

This is it, Paul's about to finish speaking. So he does all he can do – he turns them over to the Lord.

He also directs them to clinging to God's grace, which is the ONLY thing that can continue to build them up in the Spirit.

It's grace that makes a place for us among God's people, which is what he means when he refers to an inheritance.

Grace is what paves the path of faith.

Grace is what makes a way for us with God; not law, not works, Grace!

Our relationship with God is possible because of the favor He bestows, not what we earn.

Our growth in faith happens only because of His goodness, not our labor to be better.

This is why Paul commends them to the grace of God – because it's the only thing that will enable them to be the men they were made to be and the leaders the church needs them to be.

He ends with a final reminder of the example he left them.

<sup>33</sup> I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'”

The false teachers would seek to discredit Paul's ministry by saying he was a

hireling who'd only done what he did for = the income he gained by it.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul makes a solid case for those = who are devoted to full-time ministry being supported by those they're ministering to.

And though he makes the cas= e, here he says when in Ephesus for 3 years he'd never claimed that right.

On the contrary, he'd= purposefully refused such support & worked hard= to provide for his needs so that such a charge by the enemies of the Gospel wo= uld have no weight.

His lifestyle in Ephesus had shown a complete lack of concern for earthly power &= amp; wealth.

As we saw Sunday, his exam= ple stood in stark contrast with the magician-sorcerers who were all about powe= r, wealth, & status.

Such was not to be the char= acter of the elders of the church.

They were to follow PaulR= 17;s example of staying humble & mindful of the poor & weak.

He quotes Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed t= o give than to receive."

What's interesting is= that the gospels no where attribute this to Jesus.

Does that mean Paul was in= error? No!

At the end of the Gospel of= John he said Jesus said & did a whole lot more than was recorded in the Gospels= .

The early church had a large= collection of oral teaching about the words & works of Jesus, and this is one of h= is well known quotes that was never recorded in the Gospels.

What Jesus said & Paul quotes is absolutely true.<= /p>

Both Jesus & Paul didn&= #8217;t just say it; they lived it.

It is more blesse= d to give than to receive.

It is because we were creat= ed in the image of God, & God is a Giver.

True blessedness is found w= hen we live in the sweet spot of our creation; when we fit in to our purpose for being.

That means we're most= blessed when we most completely emulate the Lord.

Listen to John 3:16 à God loved t= he world so much He – what? Gave!

We were created in God= 7;s image so we could enjoy a rich, intimate love relationship with Him.

It's the nature & character of love to give.

So when we give, we'r= e doing what we were created to do =3D and that's when we'll know real blessing.

<sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup> Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, <= span lang=3DEN> <sup>38</sup> sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no m= ore. And they accompanied him to the ship.

What a tear-filled parting this was.

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