

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

Study Number Sixteen – Acts 20:1-38

Our last study closed with Paul in the city of Ephesus in Acts 19. He had just experienced a riot. Actually what had happened during his two years of ministry there was that he nearly put Demetrius and the silver craftsmen out of business.

Demetrius had decided that he was going to build a lot of these little replicas of Artemis in silver so that the men could hang them on their rearview mirror in their chariots and the women could set them in their windows. And they were selling a lot of them. But all of a sudden, just as they got ready to expand their plant for production and increase their warehouse and storage and shipping, here comes Paul to town.

And they actually were ready to picket at the school of Tyrannus because he was affecting their sales tremendously by his ministry. And yet the riot got out of hand and they ended up in the main theater of the town yelling for two hours, “Great is the god Artemis!”

Finally the town clerk ended the riot with a statement of what

was going to happen if they didn't settle down. And as we approach Acts 20, the riot is over and things have settled down a little.

v. 1 And after the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and having exhorted them, having taken leave of them, he departed to be going to Macedonia.

“And after the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and having exhorted them, having taken leave of them, he departed to be going to Macedonia.”

This chapter has Paul leaving Ephesus at the front of it and Paul leaving Ephesus at the back end of it. But the farewells are both very graphically different.

This first one is just “Goodbye, I’ll see you in a little while.” But the last one at the end of the chapter, he’s saying goodbye to them for the last time and so it’s a very, very emotional parting.

It says he “departed to be going into Macedonia.”

Remember in Acts 16 he had the vision of the man from Macedonia who said come over to help us, and they went up there and had a ministry?

He really needed a little TLC—tender loving care. These people were his favorites. Remember how responsive they

were in Berea and how much he loved the people in Philippi? And it's a 300 mile trip north from where he is in Ephesus, but he is wanting to make this trip to go back and check on everybody.

v. 2 And when he passed through those districts and having exhorted them with much talk, he went to Greece.

“And when he passed through those districts and having exhorted them with much talk, he went to Greece.”

Now it doesn't mention the cities. It just says, “he passed through the districts.”

We know from our study of the second journey that when they landed at Neapolis they went up to Philippi. And then they moved from Philippi to Thessalonica, and they moved from Thessalonica from Berea. So we know at least three of the churches that he visited on this occasion.

Then it says after “exhorting them with much talk, he went to Greece.” That's 180 miles south.

Now who's he going to see in Greece? Well he's going to see all the people in the city of Corinth and visit with them once again.

v. 3 And having spent three months there, a plot having been formed against him by the Jews as he was

about to be sailing for Syria, he became of the opinion to return through Macedonia.

“And having spent three months there, a plot having been formed against him by the Jews as he was about to be sailing for Syria, he became of the opinion to return through Macedonia.”

Well he's ready to get on the boat and go to Antioch of Syria, the home base, and report in and tell everybody about the wonderful things that the Lord's been doing. All of a sudden he gets privy of the fact that there's a group of Jews that have found out his name is on the passenger list as having booked passage to Syria. They're planning on hijacking the ship or putting a bomb in Paul's luggage or something. He decides that discretion is the better part of valor.

Sometimes we think that it's courageous to look death in the face and give up our lives easily. Paul didn't read that book. He's not a chicken at all to face it, but he also realizes he's of value to the church and to the Lord while he's here. That his life is precious and he's not going to give it away easily.

And so he decides, “Why not go back the way I came?” So he turns around from Corinth and heads on back north and goes to Berea and Thessalonica and to Philippi.

And then verse 4 tells us something else.

v. 4 And there were accompanying him Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; and Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians; and Gaius of Derbe and Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

“And there were accompanying him Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; and Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians; and Gaius of Derbe and Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.”

What’s neat about that verse? Those are the results of his ministry in all these towns. He goes into a town and he touches people’s lives and as a result of that they get involved in his ministry in working with him.

Sopater came out of the ministry in Berea.

And then Aristarchus and Secundus came from the ministry in Thessalonica.

Gaius came out of the ministry at Derbe.

Timothy we know came out of the ministry at Lystra after Paul was stoned there.

And we’re not sure, maybe Tychicus came from Ephesus and Trophimus—somewhere there in Asia he picked up these two guys.

This is his internship program. These are his traveling team

of trainees, his seven seminary students that are getting their on-the-job training with the apostle. And they are traveling here.

Now it says something here in verse 5:

v. 5 And these, having gone on ahead, were waiting for us at Troas.

“And these, having gone on ahead, were waiting for us at Troas.”

The fact he used the word “us” tells us that it’s Paul, Silas and Luke that are together. But these other seven fellas have already gone down to Troas. Now that’s 120 miles south of Neapolis—it’s a little sailing trip. But these fellas are already down there.

What Paul probably did to them is he told them, “Hey look, go down to Troas and see if you can lease a conference room at the Hyatt Regency there and we’ll plan to have a week-long advanced seminar on discipleship and ministry. And we’ll deal with counseling and church organization and administration. And I’ll just spend some intense time with you when we get there.”

And so they go on ahead and make these arrangements and then verse 6 tells us:

v. 6 And we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days, where we stayed seven days.

“And we sailed from Philippi”—or Neapolis the seaport—
“after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days, where we stayed seven days.”

So they waited until “after the days of Unleavened Bread.”

When is that?

The seven days following the Passover are “the days of Unleavened Bread.” They ate their last meal in Egypt after the death angel passed over, and then they made their exodus.

And “the days of Unleavened Bread” are the days of eating the bread of the Haste. In other words, this is the bread they ate for the seven days going out into the wilderness after they left Egypt. So seven days following Passover they stayed there, until those days were over. Then it tells us they came to “Troas within five days.”

An interesting thing about that is that Paul had weather problems too in his travels and in his work. In Acts 16, when we studied them going up to Philippi, they went 60 miles one day and stopped at Samothrace. The next day they ended up in Neapolis, right at Philippi.

It was a two day trip going up and a five day trip coming back

down so they had some adverse winds and some problems in sailing those five days to get back down to Troas coming the other way.

It's interesting to note that their means of travel were affected greatly by weather and winds because they were basically novices in the sea at this point. And so it took them five days to get down to be with them and they planned to have this week together. They had seven days together.

v. 7 And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul was talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he was prolonging his speech until midnight.

“And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul was talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he was prolonging his speech until midnight.”

There's a phrase in this verse that comes out for the first time

“on the first day of the week”—that's the first time that occurs.

So many people ask, “Why don't we worship the Lord on Saturday?” Or “Why do we worship the Lord on Sunday?”

Roy Laurin in his commentary says this:

On a Sunday the Lord Jesus rose from the dead.
On a Sunday He appeared to His disciples.
On a Sunday the Holy Spirit came from heaven.
On a Sunday the believers got together to break bread.
On a Sunday they gave to God their offerings.
On a Sunday the first Christians were in fellowship together.

There is an incontrovertible contrast between the 7th day and the 1st day which establishes the first day as a proper day of worship.

The Sabbath was the 7th day; Sunday is the 1st day.

The 7th day was associated with Creation; the 1st day is associated with Redemption.

The 7th day was a memorial to God's work; the 1st day is a memorial to Christ's resurrection.

The 7th day marked an unfinished redemption; the 1st day marked a finished redemption.

The 7th day was based upon law; the 1st day is based upon grace.

The 7th day looked back upon an old week; the 1st day looked ahead upon a new week.

The 7th day was rest at the end of a week; the 1st day was preparation at the beginning of a week.

The 7th day was reward for work done; the 1st day was preparation for work yet to do.

The 7th day was obligatory; the 1st day is voluntary.

On the 7th day God said, "Give me this day and I will bless

you.”

On the 1st day the Christian says to God, “Because Thou hast blessed me, I will give Thee this day.”

The 7th day was a shadow of things to come; the 1st day is the substance of things that have come.

The 7th day was a sign of God’s old covenant with His earthly people the Jews. The 1st day is a confirmation of God’s new covenant with His heavenly people the church.

The 7th day had to do with the first man Adam; the 1st day had to do with the second man Christ.

The 7th day stands for the earth; the 1st day stands for heaven.

The 7th day is on the other side of the cross and the grave; the 1st day is on this side of the cross and the grave.

(source unknown)

It capsulizes here why now they are meeting “on the first day of the week.”

They had planned this first day—Sunday—to be the concluding day of their all-week seminar. And as it turned out here, it becomes a real barn-burner, doesn’t it?

They “gathered together” on the “first day of the week” for the purpose of breaking bread. And Paul got to talking and “he was prolonging his speech until midnight.”

He had so much to share with them during this time together that he just couldn’t get it all in. And so he just keeps going and going and talking. And they don’t stop. They like listening

to what he has to say.

v. 8 And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

“And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.”

Here they are in the upper room, but they don't have electricity. And because they didn't, they have these lamps burning so they can see. We know what burning lamps will do to the oxygen in the room with a bunch of warm bodies, don't we?

He's setting all this up to let us understand why poor Eutychus has a problem when we get to the ninth verse. The poor guy, here he is:

v. 9 And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window-sill, sinking into a deep sleep; while Paul was continuing his discourse yet longer, having finally been completely overwhelmed by sleep, he fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead.

“And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window-sill,”

And the reason he is, is because that's the only way he can get some fresh air and stay awake. And he's just sitting there just

fighting it like crazy.

“sinking into a deep sleep; while Paul was continuing his discourse yet longer, having finally been completely overwhelmed by sleep, he fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead.”

The poor guy. There are two words that characterize him. He is:

1. “sitting” and
2. “sinking.”

And it’s tough! And “Paul was continuing his discourse yet longer.”

Now in our evaluation of sleepers in church, we’ve come up with four kinds of sleepers. These **FOUR TYPES OF SLEEPERS** are:

1. The first sleeper is **THE OIL PUMP SLEEPER**—He is the guy who has the head bobber. He just, as he goes to sleep, moves forward very gradually and all of a sudden he will do this [head bob] and he will come back again.

Now sometimes that is accompanied with a thump if he gets too far forward and his head hits the front of the pew. And that does startle him and the people that are around him, needless to say, when that takes place.

2. The second kind of sleeper is **THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA**. This guy is out of it, he's sound asleep. And as he leans, he leans into his loved one's elbow which brings him back erect very quickly. And we can watch it just happen so beautifully.

3. And then there is **THE OWL AT NOON SLEEPER**. Some people have the strange ability to sleep with their eyes wide open. Ever seen them? They don't blink or bat an eye. They're looking right at us and it's like they are concentrating completely but they are long gone—eyes wide open and bright.

4. And then there is the classic. When we listen to a good sermon we need to **MEDITATE**. He has his hymn book on his knee and his elbow cupped and he's looking right at us, balanced perfectly so that it looks like he is really taking it in, but he is also, if he's getting anything, it's meditation by osmosis.

The famous prayer of all the sleepers in church is:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
The speaker's boring and the subject's deep.
If I should snore before I wake,
Please poke me, for heaven's sake!
(source unknown)

One writer said this:

“The art of preaching is taking in another person’s sleep.”
(source unknown)

One old fella was given to sleep often in church and he was really gone. And one morning his wife poked him right in the middle of the message and he jumped and pronounced the benediction. It was just totally embarrassing but here he was giving the benediction right in the middle of the sermon.
(source unknown)

There was another minister who had a sleeper in his church and he decided he was going to play a real trick on him. So one morning he very softly spoke to his congregation while this guy was sleeping in the middle of the message. He said, “Will all those who are going to heaven please stand up.” Of course everybody in the congregation stood up and this guy is just zonked, just sitting over in the corner. And very much to his chagrin that he continued, and then finally he said, “Will all those that are going to hell, please **STAND UP!**” And this guy jumped to his feet and he looked around and he looked at the minister and he said, “I don’t know what we’re voting for but it looks like you and I are the only ones for it.”
(source unknown)

Grady Nutt tells some of the cutest stories about sleeping in church and his favorite is about old Brother Hawkins who was in the old country church. In the old days, they had just gotten electricity. And it was a Sunday night and he was already sawing logs and his old head was just up against a wall and he was really going after it. And all of a sudden they had a power

failure. And in a country church, when they have a power failure, it is pitch dark. There's nothing we can do. Everything stops. There are no lights outside—nothing. And the minister couldn't go on because he couldn't see his Bible or his notes. And so he very gently said to the congregation, "I would suggest that we just all sit quietly and meditate and pray until the lights come on." So there was just complete silence in the congregation while the lights were off. Well old Hawkins wakes up in the middle of all this. And he has heard to jump up and say, "Well, they went off and left me!" Thinking that he just slept through the whole thing!
(source unknown)

This poor guy falls out of the window. He just finally bails out and falls three stories flat on the ground below and he did not survive the fall.

That evidently interrupted Paul's sermon here because he stops, goes down, goes through the weeping crowd, and comes to where the young man is.

v. 10 But Paul having gone down, fell upon him and after embracing him, he said, "Stop being troubled, for his life is in him."

"But Paul"—that evidently interrupted his sermon here because he stops and goes down, goes through the weeping crowd here, comes to where the young man is and—"fell down upon him and after embracing him, he said, 'Stop being troubled, for his life is in him.'"

v. 11 And when he had gone back up, and having broken the bread and having eaten, after talking a long time until daylight, without further ado he departed.

“And when he had gone back up,”—they took this time for recess—“they broke some bread together and ate together, and after talking a long time until daylight, without further ado he departed.”

It’s just wild to think that that could actually happen.

There are just some great verses in this chapter that are great statements.

Verse 2—“he...exhorted them with much talk.”

Verse 7—“he was prolonging his speech until midnight.”

Verse 9—“[he] was continuing his discourse yet longer.”

Verse 11—“after talking a long time until daylight.”

Oh what great encouragement! No kick-offs, no tee times, no burning roasts. Just kept it going until Monday morning. And finally as the daylight comes on, he bids them ado and the team departs.

Now where do they depart? We’ll see in the next verse.

v. 12 And they took away the boy alive, and they were not moderately comforted.

“And they took away the boy alive, and they were not moderately comforted.”

v. 13 But we, having gone on ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for thus he had arranged it, intending himself to travel on foot.

“But we, having gone on ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for thus he had arranged it, intending himself to travel on foot.”

It’s 30 miles to Assos by water and they’re going to go around Point Lectum—which is kind of a scary deal. And Paul is going to go overland 20 miles and meet them in Assos. He’s made that arrangement.

After being up all night, having an intense week of ministry with these seven trainees, he is going to put in 20 miles on the road on Monday and meet them Monday night down there around the corner.

Now some have said he was scared to sail is the reason he wanted to do this. That’s not true. We’ll see later in the book of Acts that he is a staunch sailor. He needed time alone with the Lord.

There come times in our life when we are depleted. When our resources are used up and we have to back off and get alone with the Lord.

He needed these 20 miles for time alone with the Lord, to search his own heart and to be sure that he is doing the right thing and he's in fellowship with the Lord. That's a critical understanding of what we're getting ready to talk about. Because the house is divided when we come to some things that are coming up in the passage here in just a second.

v. 14 And when he was meeting us at Assos, having taken him on board, we came to Mitylene.

“And when he was meeting us at Assos, having taken him on board, we came to Mitylene.”

Now that's 40 miles southeast of Assos. So they've had a pretty good sailing day to get 40 miles on that day.

v. 15 And having set sail from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus.

“And having set sail from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus.”

Chios and Samos are islands. They're all 60 miles apart so that means they had three good days sailing. If they get 60 miles in, they do good. So they left Mitylene, came down to Chios—or Samos and then to Chios—and then to Miletus. That's 60-60-60. Three days of 60 miles so they must have had good weather and good winds. And they end up at Miletus, which is a port city.

Now geographically Miletus is about 20-30 miles south of Ephesus, to put it on the map.

v. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not waste time in Asia, for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if it were possible, on the day of Pentecost.

“For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not waste time in Asia, for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if it were possible, on the day of Pentecost.”

Okay, now here we can have a fun time for just a minute to understand the problems that Paul is facing. Remember, Passover—then when is Pentecost? Fifty days following it.

Seven weeks of seven, plus one is 50 days.

So when they were in Philippi for Passover they had 50 days, basically, as parameters to get to Jerusalem to accomplish his goal of being in Jerusalem for Pentecost.

Okay, now how much time has transpired since they left Philippi? Well we know one week for Unleavened Bread, then five days to sail. And we also know seven days in Troas for their conference—and now at least three or four more days.

So on the outside, three weeks are gone already and basically it's about three weeks and a little bit more to make this long trip to get to Jerusalem in time to be there for Pentecost.

So the word “hurrying” in the text is not there to tell us Paul is leaving the will of God like some people think. It is there because he feels that he needs to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost. Why?

We love to go to places where we're going to see a lot of people. Passover and Pentecost are two of the feasts when everybody's in town. So he's going to get the greatest concentration of Jews in town for this feast. Plus it's the twenty-ninth anniversary of Pentecost—the coming of the Holy Spirit—and he wants to be there for that occasion because this is 58 A.D. He's anxious to be there.

And then for another reason, he's carrying a tremendous amount of money with him—an offering from all the saints in Macedonia for the poor saints in Jerusalem. So he has a lot of bucks on him and he's eager not to be robbed and to get there with this offering and meet their needs.

There are **TWO WORDS** that stand out in verse 13 and verse 16:

1. in verse 13 it's the word "arranged" and
2. in verse 16 it's "decided."

When someone is a leader and they're walking by the Lord, they make decisions. They make ARRANGEMENTS and DECISIONS.

He "arranged" to go by land.

He "decided" to go "past Ephesus" because he's hurrying to get to Jerusalem, "if it were possible, on the day of Pentecost."

v. 17 And from Miletus, having sent to Ephesus, he called to him the elders of the church.

"And from Miletus, having sent to Ephesus, he called to him the elders of the church."

Isn't that just like Paul? He loves those fellas in Ephesus. And he feels a constraining urge to talk to the leadership of Ephesus one more time, thinking this is the last time.

So he asks them to make this 20-30 mile trip down to the boat docks and give him some time to say goodbye to them. He calls the elders to come down and visit with him.

v. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves are knowing, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

“And when they came to him, he said to them: ‘You yourselves are knowing, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,’”

It’s a very emotional farewell.

Ever said goodbye to someone? And as we say goodbye, we think of the good times and the bad times. We laugh and we cry because there have been good times when we’ve laughed and there’ve been sad times when we’ve cried. And the emotions go from one gamut to the other.

As we read this farewell to them, we are reminded of a historical account of Robert E. Lee’s farewell to the troops after the Civil War. That too was a very emotional speech. It was a very brief word:

“After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources. You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed with an increasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration of myself. I bid you an affectionate farewell.”

(source unknown)

Paul's doing that. And in this address that he gives to them, now that wraps up our study:

in verses 18-21 he talks about the PAST,

in verses 22-35 he talks about the PRESENT and the FUTURE.

His little speech or little farewell address breaks at verse 22 and moves from the PAST to the PRESENT and the FUTURE.

What he's saying is, "You know from the time I came to Asia, gave myself to you unselfishly. I spoke for 3,120 hours at the school of Tyrannus."

Six days a week, five hours a day for two solid years. So he has given to them more than he's given to any other of the churches that he's ministered to.

v. 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which fell upon me through the plots of the Jews;

"serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which fell upon me through the plots of the Jews;"

Is it fun being in ministry?

Look at what he says: “I serve the Lord unselfishly with all humility, with a lot of tears and with trials that came upon me, of course, by the plot of the Jews.”

We saw one back earlier in the chapter in Corinth, in chapter 20 and verse 3.

v. 20 how I have kept silent about nothing that is profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

“how I have kept silent about nothing that is profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,”

He believes in the home Bible class movement anyway—going “from house to house” to teach the Word of God in the area.

v. 21 testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.

“testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Well this MILETUS MESSAGE OF FAREWELL is focusing on repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus. That’s been his message.

Now here we come to the KEY POINT:

v. 22 And now, behold, having been bound in spirit, I am proceeding to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

“And now, behold, having been bound in spirit, I am proceeding to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,”

What does it mean being “bound in spirit?”

When we come to this verse in the book of Acts and we take the commentaries, we can line them up on both sides—and we have great men on both sides, depending upon their perspective.

There are those who will stay on this side, and there’s a lot of weight on this side: “Paul is leaving the will of God. He’s a stubborn, bull-headed choleric that is determined on going to Jerusalem no matter what.”

So he’s going to Jerusalem and he is “bound” in his personal spirit to go to Jerusalem. And they’ll say he’s just going to go no matter what anybody says.

Now on the other side there are those who say that he’s walking in the will of God. And that he is indeed in the will of God going to Jerusalem.

“And now, behold, having been bound in spirit,”

What does that mean? To be “bound in spirit?”

Well back in Acts 19 we picked up a verse:

Acts 19:21

Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

He “purposed in the spirit.” This man has been very sensitive to the Spirit all through his ministry to this point. We have no reason to question him at this point.

Remember when they were going to cross, in the second journey, and they were coming across through Phrygia in Galatia? It said the Spirit of God forbid them from talking there. (ref. Acts 16:6)

And then they finally got over to Troas and they decided they were going to go north into Bithynia. It said the Lord forbid them from going north. (ref. Acts 16:7)

“Keep going west young man!”

And they finally went to Troas. At Troas they got the vision to go to Macedonia. They’d been directed by the Spirit all along! And nowhere in the text does it ever tell us that Paul has any different attitude. Nor anywhere in the book of Acts does it

tell us that he cut his life short by the fact that he made a decision to go to Jerusalem and all of a sudden he has to make a confession, “Boy, I’m really out of the will of God.” We don’t find that.

We find him walking peacefully in the will of God. To be “bound in the spirit” is the opposite of having our life at loose ends.

To be “bound in the spirit” is Paul saying, “I’ve got to do it. I have no choice.”

What’s interesting about this word “bound?” This is the same word “to be shackled and imprisoned.”

He says, “I am shackled in spirit, knowing that I’m going to be shackled in body!” And so he uses the very term to describe what’s coming before him.

“I am shackled, bound. I am chained in my spirit in the prison of His will. I’m locked into the orbit of His will.”

That’s Philippians 3:14: “I press toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

What is this experience? This is the Garden of Gethsemane for Paul.

Remember when Jesus came to the Garden of Gethsemane? It was, “Father, I don’t want to die. Nevertheless, not my will

but yours be done.” (ref. Luke 22:42)

“I’m locked into the accomplishment of Your will and I want to do that no matter what it’s going to cost me. I’m bound to do it! But I don’t want to.”

Isaiah 30:21

Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it,” when you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left.

Paul’s saying, “I would like to turn to the right and to the left, but my course is set for Jerusalem.”

And there’s a neat verse in 2 Corinthians 2:9 that uses these words in play against each other:

2 Corinthians 2:9

For which I suffer hardship, even to imprisonment as a criminal, but the word of God is not imprisoned.

Or is not bound—“it continues to do its work even though I am.”

Now let’s spell this out further. Remember those great verses in Romans 8:38 and 39 where Paul says, “who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus?” Nothing can do it. And he makes this long list. Well that’s it! It’s like the

marriage commitment.

“What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”
(Mark 10:9)

We are bound in that commitment! We are locked together in oneness!

Paul’s saying, “I am locked in eternally doing the will of God for my life and I am going to be a faithful completer of the task that’s set before me.” He’s dreading it. But he knows it’s the Lord’s will and the Lord will use it, and He’s in it. And He is not concerned about the apostle on this occasion.

“I am chained in spirit now, but I’m going to be chained in body later.”

Paul calls himself a “bond-slave of Jesus Christ.” (ref. Romans 1:1) That’s a man without rights. That’s a man who is the servant of another. And that’s truly the background of this.

Shackled in the Spirit.

W. H. Griffith Thomas has a poem that describes real well the words and feelings of the apostle at this point:

I know not what will befall me; God hangs a mist o’er my eyes;
And thus, each step of my onward path, He makes new scenes
 arise,
And every joy He sends to me comes like a glad surprise.

For perhaps the dreaded future is less bitter than I think;
The Lord may sweeten the waters before I stoop to drink;
Or, if Marah must be Marah, He will stand beside the brink.

O restful, blissful ignorance! 'Tis blessed not to know;
It keeps me still in those mighty arms which will not let me
go,
And lulls my weariness to rest on the bosom which loves me
so.

So I go on not knowing—I would not if I might;
I would rather walk in the dark with God than go alone in the
light;
I would rather walk with Him by faith than walk alone by
sight.

(source unknown)

When we're struggling with something like this and we're trying to forge out the concepts and do a good job on the working of the study of the words, sometimes the Lord will verify our study with a verse.

Way back in the study of the life of David in 1 Samuel 25 there's a verse that stands out that fits into this situation here.

In 1 Samuel 25 Nabal, the town drunk, refused hospitality rights to David. And David has taken 400 of his men, he's going to wipe out the house of Nabal. He is very angry and upset. And on his way he meets Abigail, this beautiful wife of

Nabal, who has all the provisions quickly gathered together. She confronts all 400 of them plus David and she gives David a little speech. Her speech ends with a great verse:

1 Samuel 25:29

And should anyone rise up to pursue you, and to seek your life, then the life of my lord [David] shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out from the hollow of a sling.

What's she saying?

“Nothing's going to touch my Lord the king because he is bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord his God!”

And anytime an enemy comes along, God's going to stick them in a slingshot and away they go! Does that communicate to him after the experience with Goliath?

God is wonderful in binding that which is precious in the bundle of the living. And all Paul is saying is, “I am bound in the bundle of the living. That where He is, I'll be too.”

F. B. Meyer wrote a book call *The Christ-Life for Your Life* and in it he says this:

(The Christ-Life for Your Life by F. B. Meyer)

It is said of Rowland Hill, my great predecessor at Christ

Church, London, that when an old man of eighty-four and just before he died, one Sunday night when the lights had been put out in Surrey Chapel, the vergier [who was] in attendance heard him go to and fro in the aisle, singing to himself:

When I am to die, “Receive me”—I’ll cry,
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why;
But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He’ll not be in heaven and leave me behind.
(source unknown)

That’s the thesis behind being “bound in the spirit!” We are placed in the Beloved, Paul says. We are in His hands and no one can take us out of His hands. And no matter how bad this is, the love relationship between Paul and Christ has bound him to the point of making a permanent commitment.

Josh McDowell wrote a book called *The Secret of Loving*. He quotes from C. S. Lewis and makes a very prominent point that fits here:

(The Secret of Loving by Josh McDowell)

C. S. Lewis observed, “In one high bound, (love) has the massive wall of our selfhood; it has made appetite itself altruistic, tossed personal happiness aside as a triviality and planted the interests of another in the center of our being.”

Lewis goes on to compare love between two people to a violin and a bow. In the hands of a skilled musician, the two yield a beautiful sound which can hardly be imagined when

viewing the bow and violin separately. Similarly, when a man and a woman come together in a mature and giving love relationship, the beauty and harmony which exists when the two are together is hard to imagine when seeing them apart. (source unknown)

Paul is saying, “I am bound in spirit to this! I’m committed to it! It is the will of God for me to go.”

v. 23 except that the Holy Spirit is testifying to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions are awaiting me.

“except that the Holy Spirit is testifying to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions are awaiting me.”

Every town I go to the brothers and sisters say, ‘Don’t go to Jerusalem man! You are going to be in trouble up there!’”

Paul’s saying, “Well so what else is new? You know I’ve had rough times, trials and tears all the way along.”

The reason so many people want out of the will of God, they believe the joy-boys preaching on TV. That when we come to know the Lord He solves all our problems and we never have any difficulty! And we can’t have difficulty in the will of God!

There are an awful lot of wonderful people who are running uphill into the wind and having some pretty tough times and God’s using it to make them into something beautiful.

And the message here is Paul is facing something hard, something pretty difficult.

Meyer goes on to say:

(The Christ-Life for the Self-Life by F. B. Meyer)

His permission and His appointments are equally His will. Job thought so, for though Satan blasted his prosperity he said: "The Lord hath taken away." Joseph thought so, for he said: "It was not you that sent me down here, but God." David thought so, because he said, "God hath let Shimei curse let him curse." Jesus thought so, because when Judas came into the garden to arrest Him He said, "The cup that My Father giveth Me to drink, shall I not drink it?" Though it had been brought to His lips by a Judas, it had been mixed by His [heavenly] Father.
(source unknown)

And Paul recognizes it's going to be tough.

Stanley said:

"I have noticed that God is not impressed with our cries of unreasonable, untimely, and unfair. That does not move God at all."
(source unknown)

Paul's just sensitive. And the saints are ministering to his

needs, determining the will of God for his life. There are a bunch of people running down who know the will of God for our life. And they just love to come and tell us about it.

It would be great to tell these people, “You know more about the will of God in my life than I do. I’m just taking it a day at a time, you know, as it unfolds. Just going one day at a time.”

That’s Mark Twain:

“Life is so daily.”
(source unknown)

Just take it a day at a time and keep going. And he’s sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leadership here through his brothers and sisters in the body of Christ who are saying, “Oh if you go up there it’s going to be bad.” “Oh I told you so.”

v. 24 But I am not considering my life of any account as precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear testimony to the good news of the grace of God.

“But I am not considering my life of any account as precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear testimony to the good news of the grace of God.”

There it is! He wants to finish his course—his ministry for the

glory of God that God has given him.

And that's Philippians 1—my life isn't precious to myself, I gave it to the Lord. (ref. Philippians 1:19-23)

Philippians 3:7, 8

Whatever things were gain to me, these I counted loss for the sake of Christ...

"I'm not counting it precious unto myself because I want to 'finish my course.'"

Heaven is a great place for finishers. In John 17 Jesus said:

John 17:4

...I finished the work.

In John 19 He said "Tetelestai, it is finished!" when He died on the Cross.

Paul said:

2 Timothy 4:7

I fought a good fight; I finished the course, I kept the faith.

There is a price involved, isn't there? There's a price of persevering when everything falls apart and the wheels come

off, to keep going so we can be a finisher.

That's Hebrews 12:

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Since you're compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses who already finished, you lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets you; and run with patience the race that's set before you, looking unto Jesus who finished...

Everybody's going to get a computer print-out when they get to the Judgment Seat of Christ as to whether we're finished in our work and with our spouse and with our witness. All three of those things are going to be there and God intends for us to finish in those realms of our life as a stewardship before God.

“that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus,”

Why don't we have a few more national heroes in Christian circles? People who are tough and who are eager and desirous to finish?

Chuck Yeager speaks of his wife in a very fond way in his book. He says:

(Yeager, An Autobiography by Chuck Yeager)

When Glennis got sick, friends said to me, “If anyone can beat

cancer, she's the one." That's exactly right. I had seen guys doing all they could to survive in an airplane out of control, but their best just wasn't good enough. Glennis did her best and won. They kept zapping her with chemotherapy past the point where many people just couldn't take it anymore, and in the end, when the surgeons opened her up, they found the cancer destroyed. It was her tremendous victory. She toughed out the long ordeal and wouldn't allow herself to be defeated. My wife would have been one [heckuva test] pilot.
(source unknown)

Why is it that the world does that? We have so many wimps who are sitting around arguing about things in the body of Christ that really are selfish for themselves and they don't know anything about serving and spending themselves in sacrificial service for God.

Paul knows all about that! He says, "I don't even count my life dear unto myself. So all I want to do is finish my job."

One writer says:

"Why worry about life and death anyway? Why take life too seriously? You'll never get out of it alive anyhow."
(source unknown)

v. 25 And now, behold, I am knowing that you all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more.

“And now, behold, I am knowing that you all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more.”

Talk about a tear-jerker. He says, “I’m saying goodbye for the last time.” Thank goodness this isn’t true because he does come back one brief time, according to 1 Timothy, to see them one more time.

v. 26 Therefore I am calling you to witness this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

“Therefore I am calling you to witness this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.”

That’s Acts 24:16: “He has a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.”

And Ezekiel 3:18 and 19.

v. 27 For I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the whole purpose of God.

“For I did not shrink”—there’s a good word—“from proclaiming to you the whole purpose of God.”

“I stayed with you. I didn’t back off or turn tail and run in anxiety and fear.”

Now he commands TWO THINGS as he wraps up his little talk with them.

v. 28 Be maintaining a careful watch over yourselves and over all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit appointed you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He acquired with His own blood.

“Be maintaining a careful watch over yourselves and over all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit appointed you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He acquired with His own blood.”

“watch over yourselves” and “watch over [your] flock.”

That is taken from John 10, naturally. And the Lord is thinking about the thief coming in to steal from the good shepherd.

Now he speaks of DANGER FROM WITHOUT in verse 29 and DANGERS FROM WITHIN in verse 30.

v. 29 I am knowing that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

“I am knowing”—for instance—“that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;”

These people will come in bringing destructive heresy and he foresees this trend in the church.

v. 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking things which have been distorted to draw away the disciples after them.

“and from among your own selves”— it’s going to come from within.

“men will arise, speaking things which have been distorted to draw away the disciples after them.”

Oh that’s sad! Just a tiny little doctrinal diversion, but it draws the saints away and nullifies the ministry. And he sees that happening in this church and it disturbs him greatly.

This is the whole thesis of the charismatic movement. With a tiny doctrinal distortion we have split the body of Christ. And as a result, we’ve been rendered terribly ineffective—divided when we ought to be untied together.

And when Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 12, 13 and 14 he centers the whole part of it on LOVE in chapter 13 in trying to deal with the problem.

In Revelation 2, when Jesus speaks of the church of Ephesus, He says, “I’ve one thing against you, you have left your first love. And because you have, I’m going to take your candlestick away if you don’t repent.” (ref. Revelation 2:4, 5)

What’s a candlestick? It’s their witness.

It happened at Ephesus. They never did recover and the church of Ephesus just kind of drops out of the way. Paul's greatest ministry. He foresaw it coming—dangers from without and dangers from within.

v. 31 Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.

“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.”

v. 32 And now I am giving you over to the Lord and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been set apart for God.

“And now I am giving you over to the Lord and to the word of His grace,”— what a great place to put them—“which is able”—the Word—“to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been set apart for God.”

That is Romans 8:16 and 17: “We are heirs and joint heirs with Christ.”

1 Peter 1:4

We have an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, reserved in heaven for us.

v. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.

“I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.”

“I wasn't selfish when I was with you.”

v. 34 You yourselves are knowing that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.

“You yourselves are knowing that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.”

“I served and made my own living.”

v. 35 In everything I showed you that by working hard in manner you must help those who are weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

“In everything I showed you that by working hard in manner you must help those who are weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Now what the apostle probably did when he finished that was handed over his sweatband and apron as a memorial of his ministry while he was there in the city of Ephesus. He was a

man who worked hard and gave of himself so that people could have a benefit of his teaching gifts in presenting the Word of God to them.

Now comes the emotional time.

v. 36 And when he said these things, having kneeled upon his knees, he prayed with all of them.

“And when he said these things, having kneeled upon his knees, he prayed with all of them.”

v. 37 And there was considerable weeping by all, and having fallen upon Paul’s neck they were kissing him,

“And there was considerable weeping by all, and having fallen upon Paul’s neck they were kissing him,”

v. 38 grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

“grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship.”

We can sense the love and commitment through his ministry there over the years with the Ephesian saints. And this is a very painful farewell.

There are a number of lessons and let's go over them as we close.

Lesson #1: God expects us to be wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.

It was the better part of valor for Paul to decide to go back through Macedonia rather than get on the ship and put himself in those precarious circumstances. God wants us and expects us to be wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.

Lesson #2: Paul is discipling quite a number of men here in this passage.

Do we have some people that we are discipling or do we need to be discipled?

Would we spend an hour with someone each week just helping them understand a walk with God? If we did more of this it would be incredible. Paul had seven of them with him, these men that he was discipling.

Lesson #3: Have you made a commitment to fulfill His will, no matter what?

Are we bound to Him in the bundle of the living? We've made a commitment to fulfill His will, no matter what.

Lesson #4: God delights in a finished course.

“I fought a good fight, I finished the course.” (ref. 2 Timothy 4:7)

Lesson #5: Watch for the dangers without and within.

Lesson #6: Working hard brings glory to God.

Paul said “I worked hard.” Colossians 3:23: “Whatever you do, do heartily as to the Lord and not unto men.”

Lesson #7: Paul exercises servant leadership in this passage.

We don't know where this study finds each of you, but where it does, let God speak to you. If it has to do with our commitment to Christ, deal with that. If it has to do with our relationship to Him, please flee to the Cross of Christ and come to know Him in a personal way.

Now that the study is over, it's time to wake up, lest you fall out the window!

Father, we thank You for Your Word and for the book of Acts—for the power of it. Lord, teach us that we're in an inseparable, unbreakable relationship with You. We're bound to complete the course that's set before us to fulfill the curriculum of Your will. Please enable us to have the same fortitude, the same intense desire to be finishers like the apostle Paul. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

STUDY NUMBER SIXTEEN – ACTS 20:1-38

NOTES

v. 1 And after the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and having exhorted them, having taken leave of them, he departed to be going to Macedonia.

v. 2 And when he passed through those districts and having exhorted them with much talk, he went to Greece.

v. 3 And having spent three months there, a plot having been formed against him by the Jews as he was about to be sailing for Syria, he became of the opinion to return through Macedonia.

v. 4 And there were accompanying him Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; and Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians; and Gaius of Derbe and Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

v. 5 And these, having gone on ahead, were waiting for us at Troas.

v. 6 And we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days, where we stayed seven days.

v. 7 And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul was talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he was prolonging his speech until midnight.

v. 8 And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

v. 9 And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window-sill, sinking into a deep sleep; while Paul was continuing his discourse yet longer, having finally been completely overwhelmed by sleep, he fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead.

v. 10 But Paul having gone down, fell upon him and after embracing him, he said, “Stop being troubled, for his life is in him.”

NOTES

v. 11 And when he had gone back up, and having broken the bread and having eaten, after talking a long time until daylight, without further ado he departed.

v. 12 And they took away the boy alive, and they were not moderately comforted.

v. 13 But we, having gone on ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for thus he had arranged it, intending himself to travel on foot.

v. 14 And when he was meeting us at Assos, having taken him on board, we came to Mitylene.

v. 15 And having set sail from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus.

v. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not waste time in Asia, for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if it were possible, on the day of Pentecost.

v. 17 And from Miletus, having sent to Ephesus, he called to him the elders of the church.

v. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves are knowing, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

v. 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which fell upon me through the plots of the Jews;

v. 20 how I have kept silent about nothing that is profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

v. 21 testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.

v. 22 And now, behold, having been bound in spirit, I am proceeding to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

v. 23 except that the Holy Spirit is testifying to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions are awaiting me.

v. 24 But I am not considering my life of any account as precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear testimony to the good news of the grace of God.

v. 25 And now, behold, I am knowing that you all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more.

v. 26 Therefore I am calling you to witness this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

NOTES

v. 27 For I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the whole purpose of God.

v. 28 Be maintaining a careful watch over yourselves and over all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit appointed you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He acquired with His own blood.

v. 29 I am knowing that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

v. 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking things which have been distorted to draw away the disciples after them.

v. 31 Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.

v. 32 And now I am giving you over to the Lord and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been set apart for God.

v. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.

v. 34 You yourselves are knowing that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.

v. 35 In everything I showed you that by working hard in manner you must help those who are weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

v. 36 And when he said these things, having kneeled upon his knees, he prayed with all of them.

v. 37 And there was considerable weeping by all, and having fallen upon Paul's neck they were kissing him,

v. 38 grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 20:1-38 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does Paul do in verse 7 while he is in Troas?

3. What happens to Eutychus, according to verse 9?

4. What does Paul do for Eutychus, according to verse 10?

5. Why was Paul in such a hurry, according to verse 16?

6. What is Paul's attitude toward his ministry, according to verse 24?

7. What does Paul say he is doing for the Ephesian saints, according to verse 32?

8. What is the response of the Ephesian saints after Paul's message is concluded in verses 37 & 38?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: God expects us to be wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.

LESSON #2: Paul is disciplining quite a number of men here in this passage.

LESSON #3: Have you made a commitment to fulfill His will, no matter what?

LESSON #4: God delights in a finished course.

LESSON #5: Watch for the dangers without and within.

LESSON #6: Working hard brings glory to God.

LESSON #7: Paul exercises servant leadership in this passage.