

Acts Chapter 20, part 1

Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

Further Study

Complete on your own or with your small group.

Personal Reflection

Song for the week: No One Like the Lord - Bethel

Song links: <https://youtu.be/6DjKbUQfe9U?si=shp-y3l-EIOpZ9sV>

Read Acts 20:1-12 Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.



By Acts 20 Paul had left Ephesus (#4 on the map) and met Timothy and Erastus in Macedonia (#5). Paul spoke words of encouragement and collected for the believers in Jerusalem as he traveled throughout the region, arriving in Greece (Corinth #6). *Optional, read Romans 15:26*

Paul had been in Corinth before, where he met Aquila and Priscilla who traveled with him from Corinth to Ephesus. While in Ephesus, he wrote his first letter to Corinth which is now lost. From 1 Corinthians, it is known that the first letter addressed sexual immorality. *Optional, read Acts 18:1-4, 1 Corinthians 5:9-11*

After that, Paul received news from Chloe's household about divisions in the church as well as questions delivered by Fortunatus, Achaicus and Stephanas. (Stephanas, along with his household, were the first converts in Greece and had been baptized by Paul.) Paul responded by writing his second letter to Corinth and said he would return soon. This letter is now known as 1 Corinthians. *Optional, read 1 Corinthians 1:16, 1 Corinthians 16:15-18, 1 Corinthians 1:11, 1 Corinthians 16:17, 1 Corinthians 4:19*

"Paul's unrecorded visit (his second visit) is probably the sorrowful visit mentioned in 2 Corinthians (Bible.org)." Paul referred to a tearful letter he had sent following that visit, which would have been his third letter to Corinth. Paul's fourth letter to Corinth was what is now known as 2 Corinthians. "Acts 20:1-3 is probably the third visit which Paul promised to make in 2 Corinthians 12:14 and 2 Corinthians 13:1 (Bible.org)." *Optional, read 2 Corinthians 2:1-4, 2 Corinthians 10:7-11*

What can you learn from Paul's consistent intentionality with the believers in Corinth?

Paul's letter to the church of Thessalonica in Macedonia is "the oldest book of the New Testament, written from Corinth to the Thessalonian congregation (*pbs.org*)." About a year later, while still in Corinth, he wrote his second letter to the church of Thessalonica. As there were people plotting against Paul in Corinth, he traveled back to Macedonia (#7 on the map).

"Travel was safest in groups. Respected representatives from local Jewish communities would carry their communities' temples tax to Jerusalem; Paul adopts a similar approach (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible)." The men traveling with him represented churches he had started in Asia. In many commentaries it is interpreted that each man represented a different church with an offering gift for the believers in Jerusalem. This would have given a personal touch as they were able to deliver in person and report back to their respective churches how God was working through their giving. He traveled with 7 men plus Luke. *Optional, read 2 Corinthians 8:1-21*

Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea: In Acts 17 Paul and Silas went to Berea in Macedonia. The Berean Jews "examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true (*Acts 17:11*)." Luke wrote that Berean Jews, prominent Greek women and Greek men believed.

Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica: There is "a logical inference from their names ... The name Aristarchus is related to aristocracy, the ruling class. It's likely that he came from a wealthy and powerful family ... Secundus was a common name for a slave. It meant "Second." Slaves were often not called by their true names, and the first-ranking slave in a household would often be called Primus. The second-ranking slave was often called Secundus. So, there they were – Aristarchus and Secundus, one probably a nobleman and the other probably a slave. Yet side by side they served the Lord and the Apostle Paul (*enduringword.com*)."

Gaius from Derbe: Derbe was a town where Paul went and received no opposition. Gaius was one of the few baptized by Paul and was one of his friends who was seized in Ephesus and taken into the theater during the riot. He showed Paul and the church hospitality. *Optional, read Acts 16:1, 1 Corinthians 1:14, Acts 19:29, Romans 16:23*

Timothy: "One of the best known of Paul's companions and fellow-laborers (*Biblestudytools.com*)," Timothy was from Derbe or Lystra. Paul viewed Timothy as his son and wrote two letters to him (1 & 2 Timothy). *Optional, read Acts 16:1, 1 Corinthians 4:17*

Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia: Later, Tychicus was sent by Paul to tell the Ephesians, Colossians and Titus how he was doing. *Optional, read Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7, Titus 3:12, 2 Timothy 4:12*

It can be tempting to skip through a list of names in a Bible verse. What can you learn from the men listed above?

If Luke were to write about your impact on the spread of the gospel, what might he include about you?

Luke and Paul next went to Phillipi (#8 on the map), perhaps to visit the believers there, the same ones to whom he would write a letter while in jail - the letter is now known as Phillipians. They then joined the others in Troas (#9 on the map).

Knowing he was leaving, Paul continued talking all through the night. Listening was Eutychus who Luke described as a young man; in those days a young man was between the ages of 8-14 years old. Eutychus's fatigue caused him to sleep, fall out a window and die. "The mention of the causes of Eutychus' drowsiness - the heat and smell arising from the numerous lamps, the length of the discourse, and the lateness of the hour - are characteristic of a physician's narrative (Vincent's Word Studies)." While there has been some debate as to if Eutychus was truly dead, Luke was a physician and wrote that he was dead, which, along with Luke's careful, orderly account, should end the debate.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Peter raised Tabitha from the dead and Paul raised Eutychus from the dead. Whenever people were raised from the dead, it showed God as the source of life.

Read *John 11:38-44* and *Acts 20:7-12*. How does each story help spread the gospel of Jesus?

Read *1 Kings 17:17-27* and *2 Kings 3:32-35*. How do these Old Testament stories show God as the source of life?

Elijah "stretched himself upon the child; not as if he thought this could contribute any warmth or life to the child; but partly to express ... his grief for the child's death, and his desire of its reviving; that thereby his prayers might be more fervent, and consequently more prevalent with God; and partly that it might appear that this miracle, though wrought by God alone, yet was done for the sake of Elijah, and in answer to his prayers (Matthew Poole's Commentary)."

What might Paul have been thinking when he threw himself on Eutychus and put his arms around him, much like Elijah and Elisha had done?

Putting it into practice:

"Corinth was home to many people with diverse backgrounds, a characteristic reflected in the Corinthian church that contributed to some division and confusion. Previously legalistic Jews needed to hear about the freedom of the New Covenant in Christ; previously pagan Gentiles needed to be reminded that the gospel is not a license to sin. Both groups needed to learn to love the other and live at peace ... In our fractious world, this message of self-sacrificial love based in the person and work of Jesus Christ is equally important (*gotquestions.org*)."

Which of Paul's messages do you need to hear more, the freedom in Christ (not legalism) or that being forgiven isn't a license to sin?

Spend some time talking with God about your answer.

Further Study

Paul's letters provided encouragement. "Within the word *encouragement* we see the word "courage," which means the ability to face danger and deal with it. To encourage, then, is to help develop that ability in someone, while the "ment" at the end makes that development into a noun, the act of giving courage or support to another (*vocabulary.com*)."

Paul was focused on what God called him to do, including encouraging the church at Corinth to live God's way and addressing divisions in the church to bring unity.

Identify a time when someone encouraged you, giving you the courage to face something. How did their encouragement help you? How did it impact your relationship?

Luke mentioned the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the Bible, leaven is most often symbolic of sin which, like leaven, spreads. The price for sin is death. Jesus' first full day in the grave fell on the first day of Unleavened bread - bread without leaven and He was without sin. *Optional, read Galatians 5:9, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:21*

In the very next verse, Luke mentioned that they came together to break bread. One of Jesus's commandments was "do this in remembrance of me." They were remembering Jesus (who had no sin) dying, paying the price for us, and then rising again..

This is a good reminder of how important it is for us to stay committed to sharing the experience of breaking bread together as a church community. What does communion mean to you personally? How does celebrating it each week impact your relationship with God?

"The 'first day of the week' was Sunday. This is the first clear reference to believers meeting for worship on the first day of the week, but Sunday worship may have already become a regular practice. Although some scholars mention that the meetings were held on Sunday evenings, since the Jewish day began at 6:00 the previous evening, Luke's method of counting days and reporting happenings in this Hellenistic city were probably not Jewish but Roman, which counted from midnight to midnight (*Archaeological Study Bible*)."
Optional, read Acts 20:7

"Paul's mission churches follow Jerusalem's practice of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. The church is nourished by its sacraments (*Life with God Bible*)."

What else do we have in common with the early church?

Luke wrote that he and Paul traveled with seven other people. Each added something unique to the group.

Consider your small group. What do you each uniquely bring? Call out each other's strengths and encourage use of those strengths in small group, at One Hope, in your families. How might the strengths be used to spread the gospel of Jesus?

Prayer

Read: *Matthew 18:19-20*. As you are comfortable, share with your small group what you need courage for right now. Spend time praying for these situations, asking the Holy Spirit to provide what only He can - direction, wisdom, peace, courage, patience ...