

Christ's Church and the Apostles (30-100 CE)

Third Missionary Journey

Readings: *Acts 20:3-21:16*

Reflections:

- From Greece to Troas: We see that human opposition caused Paul to redirect his plans. This sometimes happen when people who oppose God's leaders result in change of plans. God's purposes can't be stopped but sometimes human resistance will change the path by which it is accomplished. Luke gives a bunch of details that are helpful in confirming the historicity of his account. The people listed here are mentioned throughout Paul's letters. Trophimus – 2 Timothy 4:20; Aristarchus – Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 1:24; Gaius – Romans 16:23; Timothy – tons of references; Tychicus – Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12. These were obviously key young leaders Paul was developing who were ultimately key to growth of the movement. This reference by Luke confirms the accuracy of his detailed account and also underscores the importance of leadership development within a growing movement.
- Eutychus revived: Here is another one of Luke's incredibly funny stories. He paints the picture beautifully and gets a little dig in against Paul on how he would talk on and on. Anyways, this situation was frightening but in the end Luke saw the incredible humor it in. Paul almost preached someone to death.
- From Troas to Miletus: Simply more travel details provided to help us track with Paul's journey.
- Discourse to Ephesian elders: We see here the importance of the Ephesus as a regional church. The letter to the Ephesians was Paul's summary letter to this capital city in the region of Asia Minor. Ephesus served as a leadership hub for the entire region. (See Revelations 2-3 for an outline of the churches in the region that looked to Ephesus as their key city). This final message to the Ephesian Elders captures a wonderful summary of Paul's approach to leadership and mission.
 - "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you" – Paul's leadership was something he lived and modeled, it wasn't just do what I say but rather watch how I live

- “I served the Lord with great humility and tears” – We see the value of servant leadership and a broken, honest heart
- “severely tested” – Paul was honest about the struggles he faced and shared that pain with those that supported him
- “I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful” – Paul gave them everything he could think of to help them in their spiritual journey
- “taught you publically and from house to house” – Here is Paul’s basic strategy for community – 1) public preaching points where people can invite their friends and 2) family-styled community within homes where they process the message and get organized to serve the poor
- “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks (everyone) that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith (complete trust) in our Lord Jesus” – Paul’s basic message of turning from both moral sin as well as religious sin to trust Jesus as the Lord of their lives and the one who restores relationship with God
- “compelled by the Spirit” – God’s Spirit is the one who empowers and guides Paul in everything he does
- “Holy Spirit warns me” – The Spirit opens the way for constant communication and guidance from God, this makes living with God relational
- “prison and hardships are facing me” – To follow Jesus means we will face spiritual struggle and suffering
- “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” – Paul had a very clear and well defined personal mission and this reminds us each leader must know exactly what God is asking them to do
- “preaching the kingdom” – Ultimately the movement of Jesus is a counter-cultural movement that calls people into a new kingdom and to loyalty to a new king
- “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood” – ultimately spiritual leadership is shepherding or parental leadership (See John 10) where we own people as our own because of the incredibly high value they have before God and the ultimate cost Jesus paid for them
- “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.” – we must be on guard against false teachers and leaders who are ever present to divide and harm the community

- “I commit you to God and to the word of his grace (rather than the word of his law – Torah) which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified (changed from the inside out).” We see Paul’s confidence is not in what is outside a person but rather who is inside them transforming their lives
 - “I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing” – Paul wasn’t in it for the money or the perks, his vision was to offer the truth for free
 - “You yourselves know that these hands of mine supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions” – Wow! Paul not only didn’t take financial support but he financially supported his own ministry team
 - “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak” – Paul was motivated to work hard so that the weak and poor would be lifted up and cared for
- Sad farewell: They as a community were so deeply united in love that Paul’s farewell led to expressions of deep sadness and emotion. When we truly share our hearts and lives with others we ultimately bond and saying good-bye is hard.
 - Visiting disciples at Tyre: Here we have more details of their journey. Interesting that through the Spirit the disciples of Tyre urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. The Spirit was making it clear what was awaiting Paul through these disciples and in turn they urged him not to go. We see that when speaking about what God gives us, our own emotions and thoughts can be mixed in. We shouldn’t be worried about this but see that as a natural part of God working in us. We simply must be aware of this reality. We shouldn’t see this text as God actually telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem and Paul choosing to disobey. We should see it as God helping Paul and the others count the cost of what is going to take place and the disciples in their love for Paul wanting him to avoid this cost. The entire family groups go with Paul to the ship as they head out and again we see the value placed on families in community.
 - Agabus prophecies imprisonment: Philip is called an evangelist here and still referenced as one of the key leaders of the movement harkening back to him being placed as an official minister or servant of the apostles. Apparently his title, role and influence grew since then. Philip is a good example of how those who accept humble positions can grow into to greater roles as they serve faithfully. Agabus reappears on the scene and this time prophesies in dramatic fashion about Paul’s impending imprisonment. We see here that sometimes those with prophetic callings may seem a bit over the top or crazy. Definitely John the Baptizer was a wild figure. Paul’s response is to declare his willingness to both suffer and die for Christ. Once we are ready to die for Christ then we are truly ready to fully live with abandon to him. Those that were there and could see what was coming simply declared, “The Lord’s will be done.” Sometimes God warns us ahead of times of what will happen and we may want to avoid the cost of following Jesus. We are called to simply submit to his purposes, whether it is for our lives or those

we love, and say, “May God’s will be done.” Here we see in one passage as well the combination of apostle (Paul), prophet (Agabus) and evangelist (Philip). Just previously in Ephesians, he also has mentioned shepherds or pastors (Ephesian elders). These represent the various leadership roles within the church (see Ephesians 4:11).

- Journey ends in Jerusalem: Luke summarizes Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem by highlighting who he was staying with. These leaders are mentioned by Luke most likely because they were key leaders who would have churches in their homes and were recognized within the broader Christ-following community.