

## Scripture Reading:

Acts 20:13 “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. 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board & came to Mitylene. 15 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. 16 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. 17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 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, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And see, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that 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. 25 And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”

# 'Paul Bids Farewell to Asia'

We come now to Paul’s journey to Miletus where he calls for the elders from the Ephesian church.

- The Apostle knows that the time has come to bid farewell to those with whom he had spent much time there in Ephesus.

Paul also knows that he must journey on if he is to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost and so he sails past Ephesus and has the elders join him in Miletus. We spent a good deal of time on the many details that Luke provides for these journeys a few weeks ago, but I want to quietly touch on just two more that can be edifying to us as well. We spoke about how all the details that Luke provides are a strong foundation for knowing that the Bible is grounded in real history.

- This truth applies not only to the people and places that Luke mentioned, but even in some sailing protocol for that region!

We should notice that they make a stop each day on this journey: Going from Troas to Assos, from Assos to Mitylene, from Mitylene to near Chios, from Chios to Samos and finally from Samos to Miletus where they depart the ship and stay for a few days. These daily stops were a necessity with the sailing conditions found in that region at that time of year: Most days the wind would come early in the morning from the north [allowing them to sail south] and by afternoon it would be completely still with even a slight southerly breeze in the evening.

- Thus we see again that Luke, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is giving us details about a real journey that was taken to real places at a particular time in real history!

The other detail that is easy to overlook is the fact that Paul journeyed alone on foot during the first day of this trip. The commentators give several reasons for why Paul chose to do this, but I think the simplest explanation is to see it as a much needed time alone just as we saw at times in the life of Jesus. We see Jesus going off by Himself to pray after the death of John the Baptist and again in the Garden of Gethsemane before His death.

**The Apostle Paul has set his course to preach the Gospel in Rome, but the Spirit has made clear that this journey will be by way of Jerusalem where he will face some serious persecution.**

- **The Apostle Paul took the opportunity of this first day's travel to go quietly on foot so he would have some time to reflect on his plans and likely for much prayer.**
- **Remember that his original plan was to sail directly from Corinth to Syria, but this was disrupted with a plot by the Jews to kill him while on board the first ship.**

**Instead, Paul traveled by land through Troas, a visit which we studied last week. Paul now continues his trip to Jerusalem by ship. I believe that what he wrote to the Saints at Rome while in Corinth for his last visit to that church, reveals the thoughts and burdens of his heart as he traveled alone on foot on the first day of this final journey to Jerusalem: Romans 15:20 "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, 21 but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand." 22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 "But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. 25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. 30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."**

- **We need to remember these burdens on Paul's heart throughout this journey and his trials in Jerusalem.**

**After his arrest in Jerusalem, the Lord would assure Paul that He would answer his prayers and those of the Saints in Rome. The Lord comes to Paul at night saying, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified of me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness of me in Rome!"**

- **God truly does know where history is going!**

**This gives us great confidence as we serve the Lord, but we must also remember as we toil in the Lord's field that we too may need times of refreshment or solitude.**

**After Paul reaches Miletus, Luke's orderly account tells us that the time has come for Paul to bid farewell to the Saints at Ephesus and to the region referred to as Asia, which we would know as modern day Turkey. Paul calls for the elders and they make the thirty mile trip to Miletus.**

- **It is noteworthy to mention that what Luke gives us here in our text is the only recorded message from Paul that was given to an audience that was made up of believers!**

**We know that Paul preached to the Saints for a long time at Troas, but Luke gave no details of that message and it has been the same with all of the other follow-up visits to the churches that were planted.**

**I think there are two reasons for this:**

- **First and foremost we have the many letters from Paul to the Churches and Saints that were inspired by the Holy Spirit and brought down to us in the Canon of Scripture for our edification!**

If you ever find yourself longing to have been one of those who actually sat at the feet of the mighty Apostle Paul being instructed in the faith...

- All you have to do is open your Bible and read what he wrote!
- The Apostle Paul **STILL** ministers to the Saints!

The second reason relates to how Luke put together his orderly account... always remembering that Luke was moved by the Holy Spirit as Peter declared in his final letter to the Saints.

The pattern for Luke was to include a major address that was given to the various audiences that Paul would minister to: The stubborn Jews; the pagan Gentiles; and the converted Saints.

We know that Paul spoke in many synagogues and yet we have only what he spoke at Antioch Presidia recorded for us in detail. We know that Paul often spoke to unbelieving Gentiles and yet we have only the words of his address on Mars Hill in Athens from Luke as an example of what he shared.

We know that Paul's heart was to disciple and encourage the young churches that were planted and that he made many return visits, spending months & years discipling them.

- And yet, it is only the message given to these Ephesian elders that Luke records for us!

And putting these two things together we know that the other writings in the New Testament help us to flesh out what Paul would have said to each of these audiences. So with that in mind I will take a closer look at what the Apostle Paul shared with those Ephesian elders over two weeks:

- This morning we will consider his farewell and review of his ministry.
- Next week we will consider his warnings and encouragements for the Saints at Ephesus, and by extension, the Saints in all of church history!

The Apostle Paul begins with a simple statement of what they know:

18 "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews"

- In our corporate time of prayer after we present our gifts to God each week in worship, we include prayers for the elders and deacons here at Church of the King.
- Prayers that we covet & need!

God has provided the qualifications that men must meet to serve in these positions and we have the Apostle Paul and others in the Scriptures as our example of how to serve. We must heed the warnings that we will see Paul give next week, but also strive to live as he calls us to live, knowing we will face the same challenges that Paul did and all of this provides a basis for such prayers.

The first is to serve humbly: The church father Augustine said that to follow Christ's way, the 1<sup>st</sup> most important thing was humility, the second most important thing was humility and the third most important thing was humility!

- All of us as leaders in the Church do covet your prayers & specifically that you would pray that we understand what it means to serve in humility and to learn to do so!

Next we should notice that Paul speaks of tears and trials and I think they are to be distinguished.

He says the trials are the plotting of the Jews meaning the many persecutions that he faced during his ministry.

When Paul mentions tears, I believe he is referring to the struggle that he had in his heart for those he was calling to new life in Jesus: Much as Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. We can see from Paul's letters that he had shed tears for both Jews and Gentiles: Early in his ministry Paul had to write a very strong letter to the Gentile believers from Galatia who were being taken in by Jewish legalists and we should hear his tears as he cries "O foolish Galatians!"

- We know that Paul's heart was broken over the rebellion of his own people: Again from his letter to the Romans Paul had recently written,

"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

These are qualities that are vital for right service in the Kingdom by elders and deacons, but as we strive to model these things you must also see their importance & relevance to all our lives

- We must all serve humbly remembering the many examples that Jesus gave about the first being last and not seizing the better seats at the banquet.
- We must all have real tears if we truly have hearts for the lost...  
In our families, among our friends and the world at large!
- And yes, we must be prepared to face the trials that will come when we preach the truth in word and deed to those around us.

Paul goes on to talk about his service in Ephesus and all of Asia: [you know] 20 "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

- Again we see important principles that church leaders must learn which will impact other lives as well:

We see first something in the ministry of Paul that is sorely needed in our modern world and even some churches:

- Paul preached not what people wanted to hear, but what the Word of God said they needed.
- This was a stumbling block to Jews and an offense to the Greeks, but it was the power of the Gospel that brought these Saints to new life in Jesus.

Paul preached the truth and he does so in a way that reflected what God commanded in Deuteronomy.

- Paul preached not merely on Sunday but house to house as well.
- Preaching not just repentance or faith, but repentance AND faith.
- Paul preached the Lordship of Jesus over all of life, all of the time!

The Apostle Paul often saw those he ministered to as his children and he taught them just as God had instructed His people as they entered the promised land: "18 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 19 You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 20 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 21 that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which Jehovah swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. 22 "For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do--to love Jehovah your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him-- 23 then Jehovah will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves"

- YES, this should remind us of the Great Commission!

- Theron and Roger and Mark and I certainly pray that God would give us the wisdom and desire to teach in this way here at Church of the King!
- Our desire is also for all of you to practice such things in your personal lives and the parenting of our covenant children!

Paul then reflects on his personal struggle with the current trip but assures them that his joy is found in the work that the Spirit has accomplished here in Asia:

22 “And see, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that 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’s joy was in his ministry!
- The ministry that Jesus gave him on the road to Damascus and his years of discipling in Tarsus.

Just as Jesus told Ananias as He sent him to baptize Paul: “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Paul had faithfully preached the Gospel of the grace of God just as Jesus had told him to do as he sent him to the Gentiles, “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

- But now Paul knows that his time in Asia has grown to a close:

25 “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.”

Please note that just as Paul never separated repentance and faith in the life of a believer, he does not separate the preaching of the Gospel of grace with the preaching of the Kingdom. Having the confidence that he has presented the whole counsel of God, Paul then returns to where he began:

26 “Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.””

- Bringing to remembrance the words of the Prophet Ezekiel, Paul says that he has sounded the Trumpet warning!
- And the preaching of the whole counsel of God brought forth great fruit!

I can think of no better way to finish our reflections on what Paul told these elders, than to turn Paul’s own letter to these same Ephesians which he likely wrote from Rome a few years later:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.”

- **And may the prayer that Paul lifted up in this same letter be on our lips often for our brothers & sisters here at Church of the King, and all those who serve Jesus around the world today:**

**Paul prayed, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”**

**Communion Meditation: John 13:**

**“ 1 Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. 2 And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." 8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." 9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." ”**