

Acts 20:1-12

Introduction

Encouragement, particularly in the sense of comfort and consolation, is essential in the Christian life. The apostle Paul certainly thought so.

Acts 20:1-12 begins and ends with the theme of such encouragement.

In the aftermath of the near riot in Ephesus, Paul makes another extensive road trip that will eventually take him to Jerusalem and on to Rome.

Summary

In Acts 20:1-12, Paul begins his planned return to Jerusalem via Macedonia and Achaia, encouraging the previously planted local churches along the way.

1. Reunions and Farewells vv. 1-3

Once the riot in Ephesus was quelled and order restored, Paul said farewell to the disciples in Ephesus and departed, crossing the Aegean sea to Macedonia (**Acts 20:1**). Having encouraged the churches in the region (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea), Paul continued down into Greece and eventually came to Corinth.

Such encouragement of Christian brothers and sisters is a privilege and responsibility for all believers (**Heb 3:13**). Are you an encourager of your brethren?

Paul's three months in Greece were probably spent primarily in Corinth, during the winter season when sea travel to Jerusalem was difficult (**Acts 20:3a**).

When travel by sea was possible again, Paul learned of another plot of the Jews, perhaps to attack him once the ship had set sail, so he went north by land instead.

2. Traveling Companions vv. 3-6

For this return route via the churches of Macedonia, Galatia and Asia, Paul was accompanied by a number of representatives (**Acts 20:4-5**). These were probably the delegates selected by the Gentile congregations to accompany their offerings for needy Christians in Judea and to express in person the Gentiles' gratitude to their Jewish brothers and sisters (**1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:18-24**).

We are given an insight here to the diversity of unity of the fellowship that existed among these brothers in the work of the kingdom of God (**Psalms 133:1**).

Paul observed the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread with the Philippian church (**Acts 20:6**), no doubt showing them its fulfillment in Christ the final Passover Lamb, and the inner purity it evokes in us for whom he died (**1 Cor. 5:7-8**).

Once Passover was concluded, Luke records, 'we sailed away from Philippi' (in Macedonia) to Troas in Asia (**Acts 20:6**), indicating that he had now rejoined Paul's group, having remained at Philippi on Paul's second missionary journey.

3. Lord's Day Worship vs. 7

Paul and Luke, reunited with the company of the eight men who had gone there ahead of Paul, spent a full seven days in Troas, gathering with the church to break bread on the eve of their departure, on the first day of the week.

The church worshipped on the first day of the week, which had been set apart by the Lord's resurrection as the Lord's Day (**Luke 24:1, Rev. 1:10**).

Two things took place in their gathering together: Paul spoke and they "broke bread" (**Acts 20:7**). The sermon on this occasion was a lengthy one. Though this was not necessarily a customary pattern of the church in Troas or of Paul, we must conclude that there was at a remarkable thirst for the Word of God.

Is this so amongst us?

They had also gathered for the purpose of eating. Luke's description here of an upper room on first day of the week in which there is breaking of bread reminds us of the picture of the institution of the Lord's Supper (**Luke 22:12; 24:30-35**).

The church has seen in this narrative, however, one principle in worship that we are always to follow: the Lord's Supper is to follow the preaching of the Word.

4. Deadly Fall vv. 8-12

A young man in the congregation, Eutychus, was overcome by sleep during Paul's long sermon and fell from the third story of the building to the ground and was pronounced dead at the scene (**Acts 20:9**). Paul, having descended the stairs from the upper room, bent over and took him in his arms, saying, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him" (**Acts 20:10**) indicating that Eutychus had miraculously come to life. Important as this miracle of Eutychus being raised from the dead is, the main point of the story is the importance of the preaching of God's Word as a ministry of encouragement to the saints..

Paul was probably never going to see these believers again in this world.

The length of Paul's address that night had all the hallmarks of a farewell, but it was not a message about Paul that they would recall; it would be a message about Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinners and the Lord of Glory.

Although threats loomed on the horizon for the apostle and the church, Paul's concern was that fellow Christians be encouraged to stand fast in their hope, resting on Christ's sufficiency.

Do you share his selfless focus on others growth in Christ?