



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"RIDING THROUGH"

THE BOOK OF ACTS- LESSON 20

We ended our lesson in chapter 19 with an uproar in the city of Ephesus. After the dust had settled and the people calmed down, Paul decides that it's time to move on. The church is growing, the people are safe, and Paul now feels led by the Holy Spirit to go to Macedonia. In chapter 20, Paul gives his farewell to the people of Ephesus.

Before you begin, pray and ask the Lord to show you His heart in each verse. God has some special nuggets for you in His Word. Listen carefully for His voice!

First Day

1. Read Acts 20:1-38. Chart Paul's course on a map. Break the chapter into sections, giving each a title. Choose one key verse for each section that best describes the main thought or idea.
2. Do you find any key words, phrases, or thoughts in this chapter? From the entire chapter, what would you choose as the key verse?
3. Read Acts 20:1-5. Describe Paul's farewell. How do you think Paul felt? How did the people feel? Was it hard or easy for him to leave?
4. Answer the following questions:
 - a. How long did Paul stay in Greece?
 - b. Why did he leave?
 - c. What route did he take?
 - d. Who went with him?

As you read through this chapter, you will find a marked difference between the small amount of information in verses 1-5 and the detailed description of the rest of the journey to Jerusalem.

5. Why do you think we find more detail in verses 6-38?

Even though we don't have much detail, a lot happened in those five verses. Paul spent about a year in Macedonia. During his stay there, he wrote the second letter to the Corinthian church. Paul stayed in Corinth for three months and wrote his Roman epistle.

Paul had expected to meet Titus in Troas and hear about the problems in Corinth, but Titus never came (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). They finally meet up in Macedonia, and Paul rejoices over the news that Titus brought regarding the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:5-7).

6. Give two reasons why Paul traveled through these cities. Read Acts 20:2 and Romans 15:25-26.

We learned in a previous lesson that Paul was collecting money for the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-27, 1 Corinthians 16:1-9, 2 Corinthians 8-9). It seems like Paul brought a representative from each region to help him collect the offerings (2 Corinthians 8:18-24). Each of the men represented a specific region:

Berea- Sopiter
Thessalonica- Aristarchus and Secundus
Derbe- Gaius
Lystra- Timothy
Asia- Tychicus, Trophimus

Paul revealed, by his choice of traveling companions, that we are not to show partiality in the family of God. **Ray Stedman** says this: "The man whose name is Secundus, which means "the second", was obviously a slave. Slaves did not bother to name their children; they just numbered them -- the first, the second, the third, and so on. It may be that "number three", Tertius, who wrote the Letter to the Romans as Paul's secretary, was this man's brother (Romans 16:22).

We will end our lesson for today with this thought: **"In order to lead the orchestra, you have to turn your back on the crowd."** How is Paul an example of

this statement? What crowd did he turn his back on? Are you turning your back on the world and following Jesus?

Memory Verse of the Week: "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." **Acts 20:24**

Second Day

Review this week's memory verse. Are you running with joy?

On this leg of his third missionary journey, Paul has led us from Ephesus, through Macedonia and Greece, and now he meets the gang back in Troas. In Acts 20:6, Luke and Paul had stayed in Philippi to celebrate Passover before traveling on to Troas. (This trip took five days, whereas the reverse trip had only taken them two days; Acts:16:11.)

1. Read Acts 20:6-12. How long did the men stay in Troas?
2. There are four major principles in verse 7 regarding the worship of the early church.
 - a. When did they meet?
 - b. Was fellowship important to them?
 - c. What did they partake in together?
 - d. Was the Word of God being taught?
3. Why do you think Christians worship on Sundays rather than Saturdays, like the Jews? (Matthew 28:1)

The Jews observed the Sabbath Day on Saturdays. The Sabbath was based on the seventh day when God finished creation. Christians worship on the first day of the week, based on the fact that Jesus rose on the first day of the week, and met with His disciples that same day (Luke 24:1, 13, 33-36; John 20:1, 19) We call this the Lord's Day. The change from the Jewish calendar was gradual. We also find Paul, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, stating that the first day of the week was specifically set aside for Christians.

The partaking of the Lord's Supper was usually combined with a type of "love feast," similar to our "pot-luck." Breaking bread, in verse 7, refers to participating in the Lord's Supper, while the word "eaten" in verse 11 is used elsewhere in the New Testament of satisfying hunger pains (as in a love feast).

These early Christians met together as often as possible. Many Christians today believe that going to church is unnecessary. **"Why should we go? We can study on our own!"** My answer to that is that we clearly see that the early church recognized the importance of going to church, and fellowshiping with one another. We need to be refreshed, built up, and strengthened by God's Word. Not only do we need it, Scripture teaches us that we are supposed to do it.

4. Read Acts 2:42. What four things were practiced in the early church?
5. What does each one of these Scriptures tell us about the benefits of belonging to a local church?
 - a. Acts 20:7
 - b. Matthew 18:15-17
 - c. Hebrews 10:24-25
 - d. 1 Peter 5:1-3
6. Discuss the benefits of a local church, and the downfalls of being a "lone ranger". (Use terms like accountability, gifts, example, etc.) What can happen to "lone rangers"?
7. Are you a lone ranger? Do you isolate yourself with the lie that "you don't need" them? What can happen to your Christianity as a result?

Paul was teaching God's Word to these disciples. It's crucial to teach the Word when believers meet for worship. Listening to topicals can be very helpful and informative, but a line upon line, precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10) study of the Word is crucial to receive the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

8. When you study on your own, do you read verse by verse, chapter by chapter? If not, how do you do it? What's the danger of doing topicals every day? Describe a good, healthy diet of God's Word.

9. Read Acts 20:7-12 again. Answer these observation questions:
- What time of day did this story take place?
 - Who was speaking?
 - To whom was he speaking?
 - Who fell out of a window, and why?

Does this scenario sound familiar? Have you ever fallen asleep during a message? I have to admit that I have, but I would die if it was written down in the Bible to be read by every generation!

Imagine Eutychus sitting on the ledge. He probably had worked all day and was pretty tired. After all, it was midnight. I'm sure it was getting pretty stuffy in that room. The oil lamps they were using might have been smoking, causing more stuffiness. Eutychus was probably sitting by the window, hoping to catch some fresh air. Poor guy, it didn't work!

10. Have you ever fallen asleep during a message? Can you share any practical tips on keeping yourself awake when you're tired? (The "sleep monster" is pretty strong!)
11. Why do you think Paul was teaching so long?
12. Did Paul panic when the man fell out of the window? What did Paul do?
13. According to verse 10, what did the people do?

The word "troubled" in verse 10 is from the word "thorubeomai," and it is the same word used in connection with the "uproar" caused by the mob at Thessalonica (17:5).

14. What was God's purpose for allowing this to happen? What did it do for the believers? (vs 12)
15. Are you spiritually "drowsy"? Are you dozing off in lethargy while people are dying around you? Are you "sleeping through" your call to service? Are you looking out the window while God is trying to teach you? Meditate on these questions throughout the day, allowing God to speak right to your heart.

This ends our lesson for today. I'm sure that Paul talked so long because he had so much to say! I can just picture him ... **"Just one more thing!"** He wanted so badly to equip and strengthen these believers in their walk with God. He wanted them to know all that he knew.

Today let's rejoice for the pastors and Bible teachers that God has given us who have a passion and love for God's Word. God is using them to teach us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, because He loves us. **Rejoice!**

Third Day

Review your memory verse. What does it mean to you?

1. Read Acts 20:13-38.

In today's lesson, Paul decides to walk to Assos while the rest of the team takes to the sea. From Troas, Assos was 20 miles by road, and 30 miles by sea. Paul jumped aboard in Assos, and the team sailed to the city of Mitylene, on the island of Lesbos. The following days took them to Chios (on the island of Samos), and then to the city of Miletus, 28 miles south of Ephesus.

2. Why do you think Paul wanted to walk?

3. Why was it so important to Paul to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost?

Paul sailed past Ephesus to save some time. Pentecost was 50 days after Passover, and it had already been about 24. He was in a hurry, and stopping in Ephesus would only have delayed him. But he wanted to say good-bye to them and leave them with some parting words, so he calls the elders to Miletus to meet him.

In verses 18-38, we read Paul's emotional farewell speech. It seems that Paul, knowing that the Jews had been plotting for his life (vs 3), felt that perhaps this journey to Jerusalem might be his last. He knows he may never see these men again, and it seems very difficult for him to say his good-bye.

As you read these verses, can you feel the pain in his heart? This is not Paul the evangelist talking, this is Paul the shepherd, who loves his sheep. This is the only example in the Book of Acts by Paul that is addressed specifically to a Christian audience.

You can break up Paul's message into three sections. First he begins his speech with some nostalgia (18-21). He starts by reflecting on the three years he spent in Ephesus, ministering to them and with them. Next he reveals how he felt at

that moment (22-27), and finally he warns them of some dangers that they will be facing ahead (28-35).

4. Read Acts 20:18-21 again. Give the verse and the phrase that Paul used to answer the following questions:
- Was Paul lazy?
 - Was he prideful?
 - Did he give up?
 - Was he fearful?
 - What was his message always based on?

Paul poured his life into these people. He not only preached in public, but counseled and disciplined them individually (vs 20). Paul was not embarrassed to admit he had wept tears and bore much grief over the ministry.

5. Read the following Scriptures that tell us a little about Paul's grief and the tears he shed. What made Paul cry? What caused him grief? (Acts 20:31, 37; Romans 9:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:1-4; Philippians 3:17-19)

No matter how grieved Paul was, he never gave up. He continued doing what he knew God had called him to do.

6. Have you ever shed tears and grieved over someone you've been ministering to? Did you give up when the going got rough? Did you persevere?
7. How do Hebrews 6:10 and Galatians 6:9 encourage you?
8. What is the "condition" in Galatians 6:9?
9. What does God do with all those tears? (Psalm 56:8 and Revelation 21:4.)
10. Read Psalm 126:5-6. How will our tears in ministry be rewarded?

Paul's motive was simply to serve the Lord. It was not for money (vs 33) or for an easy life (vs 34, 35). He had a pure and humble heart.

11. What is your motive in serving? Is it obedience? Love? Is it to be seen by man? Is it to feel good about yourself? Search your heart and ask God to reveal any areas of pride that might be present.
12. Reflect back on these last few years. Using one word, how would you describe your motives in ministry, serving, etc. What one word would describe Paul's?

Today we went on a sentimental journey with Paul. Sometimes Paul is so bold and aggressive that we forget that he had a soft heart. We always need to remember that all our gifts need to be exercised with love, or else we are like clanging cymbals (1 Corinthians 13:1). Don't leave love out of your ministry. Remember, God is Love (1 John 4:8). Let His love be your "**Reason to Rejoice**" today!

Fourth Day

What's your memory verse? What are you counting dear?

Today we will continue to look at Paul's farewell address, as he shares his heart with his friends.

1. Read Acts 20:22-27. In your own words, describe how Paul felt.
2. How did he know that he was supposed to go to Jerusalem? (Also see 19:21)

The word "**bound**" is from the Greek word "**deo**", and it means that Paul was compelled by his convictions, under the constraining power of the Holy Spirit, to go to Jerusalem. (Vine's)

3. Was Paul looking for a way of escape?
4. Why didn't any of the fears of the future "move" him? (vs 24)

Dangerous waters ahead didn't cause Paul to alter his course. Instead, he continues to move forward toward Jerusalem, compelled by and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. Notice that in verse 24, he says, "my life, my race, the ministry." How does Paul see his life in relation to the ministry?
6. Paul sees his Christian life as a race. Think about that. Why do you think he says that?
7. Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8. How did Paul finish the race? What was waiting for him? Is this a promise for you too? How do you get it?
8. Read Philippians 3:12-14. While you're running, what should be your focus?
9. Read 2 Timothy 2:5. What do you have to do to get the prize?
10. Read Philippians 2:16. Are you running in vain?
11. Read Hebrews 12:1-2. What are you told to take off while you run?

When we accept Jesus Christ, we enter the race. **HOW** we run is our choice. We can either be casual joggers, or we can sprint hard. But sometimes we get tired, and we'd rather sit down on the curb and watch. We need to be participants rather than spectators.

"If we are merely spectators, the only muscles we will develop are our eye muscles."

12. Are you a participant or a spectator? How are you running? Slow and steady? Fast and focused? Describe your present running gait.
13. Is your focus on the finish line? It's easy to get distracted while we run. What's distracting you? Are you too busy watching the other runners instead of the finish line? What's come into your path that has slowed you down?
14. Are you sitting on the curb? Maybe you were running hard, but now you've "hit the wall". Where can we get our "second wind"? Read Isaiah 40:28-31.

We are supposed to run with joy (vs 24). Often we get pains that prevent us from experiencing the joy that Jesus offers to us.

15. Are you feeling any pain? Shin splints of sadness? Bad back of bitterness? Weak ankles of anger? What do you need to do to get His joy back in your life? Confess and repent? Forgive? Confront? Trust God? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you specifically what needs to be done to have your joy restored.

16. Read Deuteronomy 33:27. Who's waiting at the finish line to catch you?

17. Read Acts 20:26-27. What does Paul mean?

Paul never quit. He wanted to live for Christ -- not for his own comfort, or his reputation, or even his safety. He was willing to die, so that he might live (Philippians 1:21).

I'd like to end today with a popular quote that I'm sure you've heard before. But it's a good reminder for us as we run the race that God has set before us, "**The race is not won by the swiftest, but by the one who keeps running.**" Are you running to win?

Fifth Day

Write out your memory verse.

Paul now wraps up his farewell by encouraging the elders to watch out for the "blind spots" in the church. He wants them to be aware of all the dangers that they may be facing.

1. Read Acts 20:28-38.
2. What does Paul encourage the pastors to do in verse 28? Can they take care of the flock if they can't take care of themselves?
3. According to verse 28, to whom does the church belong? How did He buy it? What is Paul reminding them of?

The word "**elder**" that is used in verse 17 is the same word that is translated "**overseer**" in verse 28.

4. How is a pastor like a shepherd? Give verses to support your answer.
5. List any warnings you find in verses 29-30.
6. What's a wolf? Read Matthew 7:15-23 and 2 Peter 2:1-3 to help with your answer.

**Sheep come in from among you, as an external attack.
Internal attacks come in many forms.**

7. Paul encourages them to "watch" in verse 31. A watchman keeps alert and awake so he doesn't get caught by surprise. What things in these last days do our pastors need to be aware of?
8. Are you watching for things of this world to creep into your own life? What are those things?

Paul now commends these men to the Lord. They are God's, not his. He was leaving, but they had God's Word. God's Word has the power to protect them, strengthen them, and be the guarantee of their inheritance.

9. What two things does Paul say that the Gospel can do, in verse 32?

Paul reminds them that there is no place for greed in the ministry (33). In fact, Paul didn't take their money, or their time (vs 33).

10. What does Paul remind them of in verse 35?

Paul quotes Jesus in verse 35. This saying is called an "agrapha," which is a term used to describe the sayings of Jesus which are not recorded in the four Gospels. I'm sure there were many such words (John 21:25).

11. Why is it so important for pastors to remember that it's more blessed to give than to receive? Why is this principle essential for the ministry?

12. Read Acts 20:36-38. Describe the final farewell.

Paul knows that he will never see them again. He is sad to leave, and they're sad to let him go. But Paul is a man with a mission! He keeps pluggin' on, following God's call. Let's ask ourselves just three more questions:

13. As you studied this week, what ministered to you the most in this lesson?

14. What changes do you need to make in your life as a result of Acts 20?

15. What did you learn about God this week?

I pray that this week you "ran harder" in your race. I also pray that you ran focused and purposefully. Remember, don't be a spectator, be a participant! In the movie Chariots of Fire, Eric Liddel said that "When I run, I feel His pleasure." **Are you feeling His pleasure as you run?** Is your hair blowing in the wind? Don't give up -- **Go For the Gold!!**