

MBC – 8/9/2020 – Pastor Doug Thompson
“A Week in Troas”

Acts 20:1-16

Turn with me to Acts 20 this morning – and let’s pray—

Someone described a Christian like this:

- Completely fearless,
- Continually cheerful
- Constantly in trouble.

That pretty much describes Paul, doesn’t it? Last week we saw him in Ephesus: a full-on riot had started because of his Gospel preaching. And if his friends hadn’t held him back, he would have walked right into the middle of it – to preach the Gospel! That would have gone over like walking into an Antifa rally wearing a MAGA hat!

- In the next chapter he’s arrested and for the rest of Acts he is on his way to Rome as a prisoner. Once he gets there, he is under house arrest for 3 years, where he keeps preaching the Gospel, writing epistles, and exhorting believers: “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!” Completely fearless, Continually cheerful – and Constantly in trouble.

I love this 20th chapter of Acts because it’s so full of Paul, the person. We see his plans and his priorities, and we see so much of his *passion*: he passionately loved Jesus, and he spent himself in serving His church. He was always moving, always preaching, discipling, encouraging – while he was constantly in danger: If you remember back in ch.9, just days after his conversion, they lowered him down the city wall of Damascus in a basket because the Jews were trying to kill him! And that was his life.

I’m sure some unbelievers would read Acts and say that Paul was mentally ill because he was such a fanatic for Christ. And it’s true, he wasn’t a “balanced person,” he was *obsessed with Jesus*. Didn’t he say that he would prefer to die and be with Jesus? Someone says that today, and they’re put on suicide watch.

But I remind you that Paul had seen and heard Jesus Christ, alive from the dead, right? How could he be the same after that?

- Acts 9:3–4 ³Now as he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴And falling to the ground, he heard a *voice* saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”
- Acts 18:9 ⁹And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent. . .

- Acts 22:17–18 ¹⁷“When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸and *saw him* saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’
- Acts 23:11 ¹¹The following night *the Lord stood by him* and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”
- 1 Corinthians 9:1 Have I not *seen* Jesus our Lord?

Paul personally met Jesus, saw Him, heard His voice – and it changed him. He couldn’t *not* serve Him. He lived and died for Jesus. We need to get to know this man who knew Jesus like this. So let’s begin with Paul—

I. Encouraging the saints.

- Acts 20:1–6 ¹After the uproar ceased, (the riot in the stadium over the Gospel messing with the idol business in Ephesus) Paul sent for the disciples, and after *encouraging* them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia (the churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea). ²When he had gone through those regions and had given them *much encouragement*, he came to Greece (the church at Corinth). ³There he spent three months.

Last week we saw Paul almost torn to pieces by a mob in Ephesus. Most people would have said *hasta la vista* and gotten out of there. Not Paul. He stayed to *encourage* the Christians – v.1, and then he went to the churches in Macedonia and gave them *much encouragement*. The word for encourage is *parakaleo*, which means “to come alongside:” to get close and personal, to comfort, to exhort, even to warn and admonish. We think of “*encouragement*” as speaking positive, optimistic words – but it’s much deeper than that. It’s personally giving a shot of courage to keep following Christ: to stir up one another to love and good deeds.

*What would you give to hear just *5 minutes* of the encouragement the Apostle Paul gave to those churches? A man who had been with the risen Jesus! You would cancel everything in your schedule, you would walk for miles – it would be the opportunity of a lifetime, wouldn’t it? You might even wear a mask. . .

Beloved, we have what he told the churches – in his epistles! We gather as a church to hear the same words Paul spoke to encourages the church 2,000 years ago! Here’s a sample of those words; imagine hearing Paul say this—

- ¹²Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also

must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:12–17)

Look at v.3—

A. Concern for the Christians in Corinth.

- ²When he had gone through those regions (in Macedonia) and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece (Corinth). ³There he spent three months.

I want to take a few minutes on this: The whole time Paul was in Ephesus, teaching, discipling leaders, evangelizing the lost – he was d distracted by stuff going on at the church in Corinth. He later wrote to that church and said—

- 2 Corinthians 11:28 ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (And Corinth was at the top of his prayer list.)

The first time he was in Corinth was in Acts 18 – remember he was there with Priscilla and Aquila, Timothy and Silas. He was there for about 2 years, and as soon as he left they began having problems. And the entire time he was in Ephesus, he was preoccupied with the Corinthian church and their issues. While he was at Ephesus he wrote them 3 letters that we know of, and made at least one visit. You’re going to learn something new this morning – Paul wrote at least 4 letters to the Corinthians. The first letter we call—

1. A Corinthians.

We don’t have this letter, but Paul refers to it in 1 Cor.5.9: *“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.”* He sent this letter from Ephesus, and he got back a letter from that church asking him questions about a whole variety of issues. So he responded by writing—

2. B Corinthians (1 Corinthians).

We can tell what they asked Paul by what he wrote about: divisions, immorality, Christians suing each other, food offered to idols, the Lord’s Table, spiritual gifts, marriage and divorce, and the resurrection. That’s 1st Corinthians.

And sometime during his 3 years in Ephesus, he was so concerned about the Corinthians that he made a trip there. He talked about this visit in 2 Corinthians, he called it his “painful visit” (2 Cor2:1). They challenged his apostolic authority, and he didn’t leave on great terms. So he wrote back a letter “out of much affliction and anguish of heart and many tears” (2Cor.4), calling them to repentance. We call this—

3. C Corinthians. (the “painful” letter).

And finally, when he leaves Ephesus for Macedonia – Acts 20.1, from there he wrote his final letter—

4. D Corinthians (2 Corinthians).

This is the most personal letter from Paul in your Bible. He pours out his heart to this church, defending his motives and his integrity which was under attack. And it seemed to work because he and the Corinthians were reconciled, and we read in Acts 20.3, that he spent 3 months there. While he is in Corinth he writes his most famous letter: *Romans*.

5. First Clement (95 A.D.)

And there was at least one more letter written to the Corinthians, that didn’t make the canonical cut. It was written about 95 A.D. by **Clement** who was the Bishop of Rome. Paul mentions him in Philippians. You can google “*The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*” and read it, it’s very interesting.

*So why didn’t some of these writings make it into the New Testament? The quick answer is that God didn’t want them there: and the church recognized that they were *not* God-inspired writings for the entire church until Jesus comes again. Let’s pick it up in v.3—

B. Take the money and run.

- and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria – (on his way to Jerusalem), he decided to return through Macedonia.

Now if you look on the map, if you want to go from Corinth to Syria, you get on a ship! Paul takes the long way, by land, going up and over through Macedonia, and finally sails from Philippi. Why this detour? Because the Jews wanted to kill him! If they got Paul on a ship, it would be an easy thing to kill him and toss him in the Mediterranean – so it was safer to take the land route up to Philippi and get a ship there.

But also, Paul has a bunch of money with him by now! It’s this collection he has been taking up for the saints in Jerusalem. Remember, this was a huge deal to Paul, to get this money safely from the Gentile churches to the struggling church in Jerusalem. He wanted to bring the church

together, Jew and Gentile, in one body. So Paul just couldn't take any chances – he put his buddies on the ship, while he hoofed it up to Philippi—

- ⁴Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. (These were men who represented the different churches – so they were a combination of bodyguards for Paul, and goodwill ambassadors to the church in Jerusalem). ⁵These went on ahead and were waiting for *us* at Troas, ⁶but *we* (notice the *us* and the *we* – Luke has joined Paul and the others) sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. So Paul and his friends spent—

II. A week in Troas.

And the first thing we read about in Troas was a—

A. Gathering on the Lord's Day.

- ⁷On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread. . .

We learn here about how the early church worshiped. They met on *Sunday* – that's the first day of the week – not the last day of the weekend! They gathered – that's not something we will ever take for granted again. They broke bread, and we know from what Paul writes in 1Cor.11, that this refers to the Lord's Table. And they listened – for hours – to God's Word. This is just what Luke said about the first Christians after Pentecost—

- Acts 2:42 ⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1.) Sunday.

And this is the clearest verse in the New Testament that *from the beginning, the church worshiped on Sunday, not on the Sabbath* – which is Saturday. Why Sunday? Because that's the day Jesus rose from the dead. In Jn.20:19, He appeared to His Disciples on the first day of the week. Paul wrote to the Corinthians to take up their offerings for the needy saints in Jerusalem, when they gathered: "*on the first day of every week*" (1Cor.16:2).

The Apostle John received his revelation – the Book of Revelation – *on the Lord's Day*, which was Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection. The early church met on *Sunday*. Why is this important? It is a huge witness to the historicity of Jesus' resurrection: that the people of God would change the day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection – how do you explain this unless something miraculous actually occurred?

Now 7th Day Adventists and others say that the early Christians still observed the Sabbath. It was the evil Roman Catholic church that changed worship from Saturday to Sunday – ever heard that? It's not true! In 321 The Roman Emperor Constantine I made Sunday a day of rest from work, because people worked on Sunday. He declared: "All judges and city people and the craftsmen shall rest upon the venerable day of the sun." But he didn't make Sunday a day of worship – it was already their day of worship.

- The Didache (or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) was a very important writing of the early church, perhaps written in the first century – long before Constantine, and it says this—"On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure."

The church historian Eusebius wrote this about Christians in the 4th century—

- They did not regard circumcision nor observe the Sabbath, neither do we; neither do we abstain from certain foods, nor regard other injunctions, which Moses delivered to be observed in types and symbols, because such things as these do not belong to Christians."

A couple weeks ago I mentioned something about the Jewish Sabbath and someone confronted me afterwards about Christians worshiping on Sunday instead of the Saturday Sabbath. They said I was just giving my own opinion. No, Christians have always worshiped on Sunday, the Lord's Day. And let me drive the nail in a little deeper—

2.) Not the Sabbath.

Let me give you 3 reasons that New Covenant believers do not keep the Sabbath –

1.) Christians are not under the Law of Moses, (read Galatians, Hebrews, entire New Testament) and the Sabbath was the *sign* of the Mosaic Law for Israel—

- Exodus 31:16–17 ¹⁶Therefore the people of *Israel* shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷It is a sign forever between me and the people of *Israel* that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed."

Gentiles are never commanded to keep the Sabbath. And if you remember our study in Acts 15, when those Judaizers were telling Gentile believers they had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses, what was the verdict of the Counsel? No! Christians are not under the Law of Moses. Case closed.

*And let me throw this in: many Reformed folks say that we do still keep the Sabbath, but now *Sunday* is our Sabbath. Again, no! They have as much Scripture for that as they do baptizing their babies.

2.) There are no commands in the NT to keep the Sabbath, and no warnings against breaking the Sabbath. That's significant. And finally—

3.) Paul specifically said that the Sabbath is no longer an issue for Christians—

- Romans 14:5 ⁵One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.
- Colossians 2:16–17 ¹⁶Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (Jesus is our Sabbath rest!)

Some of you have seen a little paperback book ***“National Sunday Law”*** by Jan Marcussen – you find them on the counter at the post office. It says that the mark of the beast is Sunday Worship – and if you don't keep the Jewish dietary laws and keep the Sabbath, you will go to hell. Bunch of lies. When I see it at the Post Office I throw it in the trash. One more quote from Ignatius, who wrote this in 110 A.D.—

- "For if we continue to live in accordance with Judaism, we admit that we have not received grace. . . [we] no longer keep the Sabbath but live in accordance with the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and His death."

Now let's look at one of these Lord's Day services—

B. Sleeping in church.

- Acts 20:7 ⁷On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

Remember what I just told you, that prior to Constantine's decree in the 4th century, Sunday was a work day. Christians either gathered early, before sunrise, or late, after work. That's when this worship service took place, on a Sunday evening, after a long, hard work day. But still the saints gathered together to worship and hear God's Word – doesn't that say something about those Christians? Worship and the Word was a priority to them. It was more important than their leisure or their sleep. And they heard the Word alright: for hours! If Paul began at 7 or 8, that was still a good 4 or 5 hours until midnight!

- Now it wasn't just monologue – the word for *talked* is that Gk. word for *dialogue*, so Paul was teaching doctrine, then answering their questions, and they kept it going. Wouldn't you keep it going if Paul was there to answer your Bible questions? Nothing like getting it from the man who wrote it! And Paul knows that this is his last night with his friends, so he's cramming in as much as he can. Then Luke says something important—
- Acts 20:8 ⁸There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.

Oil-burning lamps – *many* of them. So these lamps are putting off smoke and fumes and burning up the oxygen in this crowded room in the third story of this house. And it's midnight, after a long workday, and Paul is still talking. . .

- Acts 20:9 ⁹And a young man named *Eutychus*, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

Every pastor is encouraged by this story: even Paul had someone fall asleep during his sermon! So there was this young man listening to Paul named Eutychus, which ironically means “Lucky!” “Eutychus” was a common slave's name. And the word “youth” in v.12 tells us that he wasn't more than 14 years old.

So “Lucky” is a young slave kid sitting in this window opening – he's already worked for maybe 12 hours – and he has to get up and work again tomorrow. But he's a Christian! He hungers for God's Word, so he's fighting to stay awake to hear every word Paul says. But it's been a long day, it's warm in this room – third story – the air is stuffy, Paul has gone on for hours—

- . . . And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

You just imagine someone screaming! Paul stops and they are yelling that Eutychus has fallen out of the window; the whole room rushes downstairs and they find this poor boy *dead* on the ground. It was horrible. Imagine if something like that happened during one of our services. Maybe his parents were there, and siblings. People were weeping and praying.

- Acts 20:10 ¹⁰But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.”

Just like Elijah and Elisha both raised young boys from the dead by doing the same thing. By the power of the living Lord Jesus, Paul performed a resurrection, right before their eyes! They went from weeping to rejoicing, and then they went home, right? No, they went right back to worshipping! This is really amazing—

- Acts 20:11–12 ¹¹And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until *daybreak*, (another 6 hours or so? This worship service went on for half a day!) and so he departed. ¹²And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

It blows my mind that after this traumatic event, they actually resumed their worship! But nothing perks up church like a resurrection! They had the Lord's Table and their Agape meal – and then Paul went back to preaching the Word until the sun came up – and I'll bet everyone stayed awake! And they took *Lucky* home, alive. I'd say that was their best church service ever.

Never again complain about how long my sermons are! Well let's finish up this section—

III. From Troas to Miletus.

Paul is on a tight schedule. He had wanted to be in Jerusalem by Passover, that didn't happen, so now he's hoping to make it there by Pentecost, 50 days later. He's very anxious to get the offering to the saints there – and also – do you remember that Nazarite vow he took back in ch. 18? He had cut his hair, and he has to get to Jerusalem to offer it up as a sacrifice – he's been carrying around this zip-lock baggie on this entire trip. . .

- Acts 20:13 ¹³But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos,

It's about 20 miles from Troas to Assos. Everyone else hopped on a ship to get there, except for Paul—

- intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land.

I.e., Paul walked to Assos. 20 miles, a good day's walk. By himself. Why? I think he wanted to be alone. To pray. To commune with God. To make sure his spiritual compass was still pointing toward heaven. Even our Lord Jesus was always getting alone by Himself to pray to His Father. Oh, how we need to turn off all our electronics so that we can fix our minds on the things above.

- I probably walk about 15 miles a week. I do it for exercise, but mostly I do it so I can clear my head to pray.

Paul was so busy, that he had to fight for time to pray, can you imagine? **Martin Luther** was uber-busy: trying to manage a Reformation, preaching, writing, pastoring, escaping for his life! He made this famous statement: *'I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer. If I get busier, I'll spend more time.'*

And we have a clue as to what was on Paul's mind as he was walking and praying that day because he had written to the Christians in Rome while he was in Corinth, asking them to pray for him as he was headed to Jerusalem with this love offering—

- Romans 15:30–32 ³⁰I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem (the offering) may be acceptable to the saints, ³²so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

He wanted to be protected from the Jews, and he wanted to get money safely to the needy saints there. God answered the prayer for protection with a “No.” He was arrested, but at least that's what got him to Rome! Let's finish it up—

- Acts 20:14–16 Luke says, ¹⁴And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. ¹⁵And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus. ¹⁶For Paul had decided to sail *past* Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

Paul had spent 3 years in Ephesus. Planted churches from there. Wrote Epistles from there. Made lifelong friends there – and then he sneaked around them – he *avoided* them, and landed instead at Miletus. “Paul, why would you do that?” Because he's on a timetable to get to Jerusalem, and he knows that if he stops in Ephesus, he won't be able to tear himself away.

- They would insist that he join them for their potluck, speak at the Wednesday evening Bible study; drop by and visit with Auntie Chloe, giving a blessing on Eunice's new baby . . . so he had to say no. That was hard, but he had to have some boundaries.

*I'm reminded of how many times Jesus said no to people because He was on a mission. But this is what Paul did instead: really great idea—

- Acts 20:17 ¹⁷Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

He couldn't stop to spend time with the entire church, but he had the elders come to him and meet with him to give them some final exhortations. Great plan: he got to spend time with the leaders, exhort them, warn them, pray with them – and they took all of that back to the church. Look at how they acted when he finally had to leave—

- Acts 20:36–38 ³⁶And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and

kissed him, ³⁸being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

How they loved this man! Next Lord's Day – that's on Sunday – we're going to look at what said to those men on that beach. One of my favorite passages in the NT.

*And I want to exhort you to be here with us next Sunday to hear God's Word. If you can't be with us here, because of this virus, make sure you are with us on the livestream. It is such a precious *privilege* to *gather* as the church to worship God and to hear Him speak through His Word. I hope you've seen how precious it was to God's people 2,000 years ago: they moved mountains to be together, and to hear God's Word – for hours!

- They didn't take this privilege for granted. Jason and I remember meeting men in the Philippines who spent *days* walking or riding their scooters through the jungle to come and hear the Scriptures taught and preached. Pastor Nilo tells the story of walking through a river with water up to his chest to get to a village because *the saints were gathered* to worship God and hear His Word.

It's not just a privilege, it's a *necessity*. You can't grow – I'll say, you can't *survive* – as a Christian cut off from the fellowship of the saints. We are a body, and we only grow *together*.

- Ephesians 4:15–16 . . . speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

And gathering together as the church is not just a privilege, and a necessity, it's a *command* from our Lord Jesus. Hebrews 10:25: "*don't neglect to meet together.*" The Gk. word for "neglect" meant to be AWOL – absent without leave. *Not* to gather when you *can* gather is disobedience.

- "Oh pastor Doug, this was a decent sermon until you had to bring sin into it!" You are my brothers and sisters, and as your shepherd, I have to tell you what the Scriptures tell you, don't I?

I read again the sad statistic that since this pandemic 32% of practicing Christians had stopped attending church, either in person or online. I thought to myself: "That's not true. A good part of that 32% are not Christians at all. Because Christians obey the Lord Jesus, and He commands His church to gather.

And I believe with all my heart that Jesus commands us to gather because He wants to be with us, here on earth, in our worship, until we can join Him, in heaven. What a fellowship, what a joy divine. And whether it's inside or outside, let's never take it for granted, amen?

