

Acts 20

Under the shadow of the end of Acts and with new assurances of the Way's triumph in Ephesus, Paul resumes his preparations to extend the scope of his mission to include Rome.

He first desires to go to Jerusalem to worship God on the day of Pentecost.

Scholars take note of the similar path Paul and Jesus took to their final journeys to Jerusalem.

In Macedonia, Paul gave the disciples much encouragement. The people of Jesus' Way must persevere through many trials, so the task of comforting them is a big part of faithful ministry (comfort the afflicted).

Paul had decided to leave Ephesus before the turmoil provoked by the silversmiths. It was God's will.

Before leaving Paul sends for the disciples and encourages them.

As Willimon says in his Interpretation commentary: "Exhortation by Christian teachers and preachers enables disciples to discern between true and false gospels, authentic tradition, and spurious imitation. It doesn't really matter what a person believes as long as he or she is sincere, is not a slogan devised by Paul"

We do not know how Paul gets to Macedonia, but when he gets there he stays 3 months.

Then surprise – there are Jews out to plot against him, so instead of sailing directly toward Jerusalem he goes by land (presumably to foil the plot against him).

We get a list of names of 7 traveling companions, we don't know their roles. The assumption is that for Luke their names lend local credibility to the story.,

Paul is still a very religious and practicing religious Jew. The Passover in Philippi must be recognized as theologically significant. Acts demonizes Philippi as a lawless city, full of anti-Semitic bias without an urban synagogue before Paul arrived.

By the time he leaves town he establishes a house of worship in the city – mostly composed of God fearers – Gentile converts.,

Vvs 7-12

Paul arrives with Luke in Troas. He breaks bread with the congregation on the first day of the week (Sunday).

This is the first mention in the NT of worship on Sunday. Setting Sunday as the day of Christian worship.

Paul has a mission to proclaim Jesus alive. Yet in this congregational setting worship probably began on Saturday evening after sunset into Sunday's dawn.

Breaking bread is a common meal not the eucharist. Surprise, surprise the community (the church) likes to eat together and share fellowship. Discussion was probably the central aspect of worship. Discerning what Jesus would have the congregation understand and how they would live together. They would have had Hebrew Bible and so they would be interpreting Scripture to understand how Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy and the Messiah.

They are in an upper room, stuffy and filled with lamps. A long speech well past bedtime would make it easy to fall asleep. Also allusions to the last Supper.

Then we are introduced to a young man named Eutychus (translation = Lucky)

He is balanced on a window sill – falls asleep and out the window he goes to land 3 stories below. Thought to be dead. Paul resuscitates Lucky - he has life in him.

Apparently teaching and healing go hand in hand, but Paul is not done teaching. Teaching until dawn. As Luke says after the boy Lucky comes back in they were not a little comforted. Prophets comfort the grief stricken. Death is not granted a monopoly on the future.

Vvs 13-16

Paul wants to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost. He is avoiding those who would oppose him.

You have to wonder if he was not allowed back in Ephesus, but most likely he was ready to get to Jerusalem and just avoided going back to stir up more controversy.

17 – 38

Luke is making a statement through this speech of Paul's. Paul is proclaiming himself to be a model leader.

Paul has served the Lord with tears and trials. Now he sets himself to Jerusalem much a Jesus before him.

Paul is also warning those who follow Jesus that life will not be easy. Again many parallels to Jesus.

Willimon in his commentary on Acts says: "Somehow, when it comes to duties of the church's leaders, heresy, infidelity, and love of silver and gold go hand in hand."

Jesus in his farewell speech at the Last Supper, contrasted leaders of the Gentiles with leaders among disciples. Disciples serve and do not seek privilege, power, and do not love money..

Paul is not afraid to offer himself as a model for leaders. He humbly speaks of his humility. Paul's description of prophetic tasks performed is exemplary of Christian leadership for the church's future. He served well is what he is saying

It is still the Holy Spirit that is leading the development of the church and leading Paul. Jesus came preaching a new way of living and dying and Paul is living what Jesus taught. Holy living and dying are still important to the church.

Paul is asking us to live a sanctified life --- what is a sanctified life?

Paul is indeed setting his face to Jerusalem but not as a final act. It is an intermittent step on his way to Rome. His mission is still to proclaim the kingdom of God.

Paul's departure lays the burden of leadership on the church leaders of Ephesus. He will not return, he has taught them what Jesus taught and given them the example of a Christian leader. Christian leadership is servant leadership.

What do you think servant leadership is?

The second half of Paul's speech shifts from description of his past and prophecy of his future to consideration of his succession in Ephesus by the elders of the church. They are called episkopoi – overseers.

They will face dangers- they are to keep watch as a shepherd watches the flock.

They are competent to do so because the Holy Spirit has made them episkopoi.

God saves and thus acquires a church.

The church has extraordinary value for God. This is what Paul is conveying.

He ends with blessing and exhortation and fond farewell. He leaves them with a call to help the poor and powerless.

For Paul the primary marks of the Christian leader correspond to the primary problems Paul anticipates will always threaten the Christian leader: purity, possessions, power.

The purity of Jesus' message is central and important.

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Personal power is not the point of ministry.

Love as Jesus loved.