

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

April 22, 2018

Sail Past Ephesus

by Frank Himmel

At the close of his third preaching tour Paul was hurriedly returning to Jerusalem with the contributions from a number of churches for the needy saints there. His plan to sail directly from Achaia to Syria was interrupted by a plot against his life, forcing him to return through Macedonia. His company quickly sailed from port to port, not even stopping at Ephesus. "For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost" (Acts 20:16).

The verb rendered "spend time" literally means to rub out or wear out time, and "lends itself to the idea of wasting time" (Robertson). Why would Paul have considered it a waste of time to go to Ephesus? Certainly not because of lack of interest in the church there! Neither was there a lack of need for his services. The Apostle had spent three years at Ephesus (v. 31), and the elders of that fine church realized the value of his work (v. 38). It was simply not expedient to stop there since it would endanger Paul's chances of arriving at Jerusalem by Pentecost. McGarvey suggests it would have created problems in connecting with other vessels going to Jerusalem. Perhaps Paul just feared getting caught up with the church at Ephesus and not being able to depart quickly.

There are times when we must "sail past Ephesus," avoiding that which deters progress.

A good teacher will not allow his Bible class to drift into speculation or unrelated questions; he will stay on course to accomplish his objectives. Likewise, "side excursions" in sermons often add length with little benefit. Elders meetings at times bog down in discussions of relatively unimportant details, steering the focus away from what should be their primary consideration: the spiritual condition of the sheep and how to improve that.

Religious conversations often sink into matters not germane to the point in question. It is sad when a debater chooses some quibble and rides it throughout the discussion rather than squarely facing the issue. ▶





The Preacher's Work

by Frank Himmel

Preachers, reread the little book of Titus and focus on the verbs. This is the work you are to be doing.

- ✓ “Set in order what remains” (1:5). You must address church problems, though not necessarily all at once.
- ✓ “Appoint elders” (1:5). You don’t choose them. You teach the church how to (see Acts 6:1-6).
- ✓ “Reprove severely” (1:13). You can’t be all positive. Clear doctrinal sermons are required, ones that expose error, not just lessons on daily living.
- ✓ “Speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (2:1). Preaching must be balanced as well as truthful. Daily living sermons are required, not just doctrinal ones.
- ✓ “Show yourself an example of good deeds” (2:7). Live what you preach.
- ✓ “Speak and exhort and reprove with all authority” (2:15). Take a stand. Preach “thus saith the Lord.”

- ✓ “Remind them” (3:1). Most folks’ “forgetteries” work better than their memories.
- ✓ “Shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law” (3:9). Some fusses are not worth getting involved in.
- ✓ “Reject a factious man” (3:10). He can destroy faster than you can build.

And in 3:13-14, do not try to do everything yourself. ■

Sail Past Ephesus - *continued from p. 1*

Our personal teaching efforts will be more successful if we will stick to one point instead of trying to field a variety of questions.

When charting the course of our spiritual lives, we must be careful to bypass those things which would distract us. Many have started the journey but turned aside to riches or recreation. Even when such things do not result in complete “shipwreck of the faith,” they may prevent us from accomplishing what we otherwise could. “Ephesus” might also include circumstances of temptation which we need to avoid. Sailing past Ephesus requires discernment of what is beneficial in view of the goal, not just what is right or wrong.

Paul could have accomplished much at Ephesus or Jerusalem; circumstances made Jerusalem the greater priority. A frequent appraisal of our priorities will help us determine which ports are of lesser importance and keep us from “wearing out time” in our lives. ■

Service Leaders for the Week		
	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Chris Brooks	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Albert Lee Harrison
OPENING PRAYER	Brian Wilson	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Greg Winget	
CUP	Ray Moore	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Daven Daniel	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	J B Williams
CLOSING PRAYER	Chris Brooks	John Baucom