

Paul's Farewell Journey Begins

(Acts 20)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Have you ever been given a hard job to do, like cleaning the house or weeding the garden? Did you stick with it and finish the job? Or, did you get tired and feel like giving up?

We have been on a journey through the Book of Acts.

We met Paul when he persecuted believers. We travelled with him on the road to Damascus where he met the Lord Jesus Christ and became a follower of Christ. As we have read about his life from the pages of Scripture, we have learned that although he went through many trials, he was a faithful man of God.

The Holy Spirit had given the Apostle Paul a very difficult job assignment. He was to go into all the world and tell everyone the Good News that Jesus had died for their sins and if they would just put their trust in Jesus, they could have eternal life.

But not everyone wanted to hear the Good News. Paul endured a lot of difficulties. Let's review...

Acts 13:50

Then the Jews stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town.

Acts 14:5

Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them.

Acts 14:19

Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead.

Acts 16:22-24

A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. (23) They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. (24) So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

He went through all that and yet he didn't ever give up because he was continually concerned about the spiritual health of all of the people in all churches where he shared the gospel. He is a wonderful example to us of a faithful follower of Christ.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to be faithful followers of You, just like Paul. Give us the heart to follow through and finish the jobs we are given in life so that in the end, our lives will bring Your name glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. (Acts 20:24 NIV)

Lesson

Last week, we learned that there was a riot in Ephesus. Remember, many people in Ephesus worshiped the goddess Artemis. In fact, they had a beautiful temple built for people to come and worship her. But the Holy Spirit gave Paul the boldness to tell people that there is only one true God and that idols were not gods at all.

There was a silversmith by the name of Demetrius, who made silver statues of the goddess Artemis which made him a lot of money.

Paul was a big threat to his business so Demetrius stirred up the people against Paul. He told them that the message Paul was teaching was bad for business because it would make people turn from worshiping Artemis. These business owners were furious and a huge uprising broke out.

The riot in Ephesus showed Paul that it was time to move on from Ephesus. Besides, Paul was anxious to get to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:1

When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the believers and encouraged them. Then he said good-bye and left for Macedonia.

Paul loved and cared for the people of Ephesus, so before he left, he sent for the disciples. He wanted to encourage them to stay strong in their faith.

Acts 20:2-3

While there, he encouraged the believers in all the towns he passed through. Then he traveled down to Greece, where he stayed for three months. He was preparing to sail back to Syria when he discovered a plot by some Jews against his life, so he decided to return through Macedonia.

After Paul encouraged the disciples in Ephesus, he said, "Good bye". He was planning to go back to Syria, but when he heard some Jews were plotting to kill him, he changed his mind and headed back to Macedonia. [Teacher, show on map.]

As Paul traveled through all the towns and villages he had been in before, he continued to encourage the people in their faith.

[Show Paul's travels to Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica.]

Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord's Supper. Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight.

In Troas, the believers were gathered together in an upstairs room of a house. Paul taught the people for hours. It was getting very late but the people were eager to hear what he was teaching them about Jesus before he left the next day.

That night a young man (possibly between 8- and 14-years old) was sitting in a window sill and he began to fall asleep.

Acts 20:8-9

The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps. (9) As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories to his death below.

He fell to his death, so Paul ran down the stairs and put his arms around this boy.

Acts 20:10

Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. "Don't worry," he said, "he's alive!"

The power of the Holy Spirit healed the young man and he was raised back to life. Once Eutychus was back on his feet, Paul returned upstairs to teach until daylight.

Acts 20:11-12

Then they all went back upstairs, shared in the Lord's Supper, and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left. (12) Meanwhile, the young man was taken home alive and well, and everyone was greatly relieved.

Paul didn't have a lot of time left to get to Jerusalem in time to celebrate the day of Pentecost. He knew he wouldn't have time to go through Ephesus, so he sent for the leaders of the Ephesian church to meet him in Miletus. There Paul shared a message with them.

Acts 20:17-21

*But when we landed at Miletus, he sent a message to the elders of the church at Ephesus, asking them to come and meet him. (18) When they arrived he declared, "You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now (19) I have done the Lord's work **humbly** and with many tears. I have **endured the trials** that came to me from*

*the plots of the Jews. (20) I **never shrank back** from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. (21) I have had **one message** for Jews and Greeks alike—the **necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God**, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.*

Ask: What can we learn about Paul from the things he shared with the church leaders in Miletus in verses 17-21? [Teacher, discuss....]

- Paul served the Lord with great humility and tears. (Verse 19)
- Paul endured many evil plots from the Jews. (Verse 19)
- Paul faithfully taught everything he could to help other believers. (Verse 20)
- Paul shared the Good News with Jews and Greeks alike, telling them that everyone must repent of their sins and have faith in Jesus. (Verse 21)

Paul told the Ephesian elders that the Holy Spirit was leading him back to Jerusalem and he was going even though he didn't know what was going to happen to him there. He only knew that in every city the Holy Spirit warned him that he would face prison and hardships.

Acts 20:22-24

*“And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, (23) except that the Holy Spirit tells me in every city that jail and suffering lie ahead. (24) But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for **finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News** about the wonderful grace of God.*

Paul was faithful to what he knew the Holy Spirit had called him to do and that was to go throughout the world and tell everyone everywhere that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

In spite of all the hardships and difficulties that he faced, he stayed true to what he knew the Holy Spirit had called him to do. Most of us would have given up. We should have said, “*Forget it! I don't need all this bother in my life.*” But Paul wanted to finish his job well.

Then Paul told them that they would never see his face again.

Acts 20:25

“And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again.

Since Paul knew that he would not see these believers again, he gave them instructions to take care of the followers of Christ that they were responsible for.

Acts 20:28-30

“So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. (29) I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. (30) Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.

Paul warned them that false teachers would come into their churches and try to lead people away from God's truth.

Acts 20:36-38

When he had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them. (37) They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye. (38) They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship.

It was time to say farewell to these believers from Ephesus. Their hearts were sad because Paul said they would never see his face again. They loved this man who faithfully and sacrificially served them.

Paul told the leaders of the church at Ephesus that he needed to finish strong as he headed to Jerusalem, where he was certain to face more persecution. But he was determined to finish the work the Holy Spirit had given him to do—tell every man, woman and child the Good News about Jesus even when he was persecuted for telling it.

He wasn't concerned about himself; he desperately wanted everyone to come to know Jesus.

When we are facing something hard, it is easy to get discouraged and want to give up. But not Paul! He knew God had given him a race to run and he wanted to finish strong.

What about you? What do you do when the going gets tough? Do you just feel like giving up? What do you need to do to keep going so your life can bring glory to God?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, help me to keep going on this journey with You in life. I want to finish strong so others will see that I was faithful to You and You get the glory for my life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Use the following questions in a game or discussion.

1. Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem, but what made him decide to head to Macedonia first? (Vs 3. Some Jews had plotted against him, so he changed his route.)
2. Why did Paul want to go to Jerusalem? (Vs 16. He wanted to be there for the day of Pentecost.)
3. Why did Paul keep on teaching so long? (Vs 7. He was leaving the next morning and he knew he wouldn't see these people again.)
4. What happened to Eutychus? (Vs 9. He fell asleep listening to Paul and he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead.)
5. How did Paul bring Eutychus back to life? (Vs 10. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him.)
6. What did Paul do after he brought Eutychus back to life? (Vs 11. He went back upstairs, broke bread and ate, then continued teaching the people.)
7. What time did Paul go to sleep that night? (Vs 11. He didn't; he kept teaching the people until daylight.)
8. Why did Paul decide to sail past Ephesus? (Vs 16. To avoid spending time in visiting all his old friends. He knew it would delay his trip and he was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem.)
9. In verses 17-21 we learn a lot about Paul's character. What is one thing you learned about Paul from these verses? (Look back at the notes for these verses.)
10. Why did Paul want to go to Jerusalem if he knew he was going to face prison and hardships? (Vs 22-23. He knew that the Holy Spirit was leading him to go.)
11. Why did Paul consider his life worth nothing to him? (Vs 24. His only aim in life was to do what the Holy Spirit had told him to do.)
12. What was Paul's final warning to the Ephesian leaders? (Vs 28-31. Take care of the people; false teachers will come into the churches. Be on your guard.)