

The Route to Greece
Acts 20:1-16

We don't often look into eternity, the Lord who is to come, as often as we should, and it's got some difficulties looking back, too, of the "was" part of the Lord God the Holy One, and that's the challenge of the book of Acts. As we study through the book of Acts in the New Testament, we're into Acts chapter 20, and this is such a very historical book, and as a historical book, we can maybe lose the connection to this like we do with history.

Fortunately, we've got a little impetus these days, thanks to technology, where we now have the ability to have our DNA examined, and we can do a swab test and find out more about where we're from. I haven't done this. I know some of you have. My uncle did this a bit ago. I've always thought I was half Norwegian, half Spanish. My uncle's side of the family is Spanish, but he discovered that his great-grandfather, well, he's a quarter Greek which I guess that makes me an eighth. Let's see, something like that, a sixteenth. I don't know. Whatever it is. But suddenly the book of Acts got so much more exciting because now I'm part Greek, and I can root for the Greek National team as well as the Spanish National team and all that sort of stuff. So, in fact, see, I learned a vocabulary word from him because he said his great-grandfather (you can do all this and go back and research) and his grand-father was a foundling. I said what's a foundling? I mean, I thought I knew all the words in the dictionary, but I missed that one. Apparently, if you grew up in an orphanage, you're a foundling. So, I guess that's all that came about.

But, as interesting as our physical connections to our ancestors are to us (and who knows what's going to happen in the future with this kind of testing and stuff like that), how much more significant is our spiritual connection? We're brothers and sisters in Christ; and the New Testament just talks about how important that is and the connection we have in eternity together. And then, as we look back into the past and we look into the book of Acts and our brothers and sisters in Christ in the first century, without these people doing what they did to serve the Lord selflessly, what might've come about with us now two thousand years later? So, we enjoy the blessings of people that have come before us to be faithful to the Lord and communicate His Word. And now as we look in Acts chapter 20, we get more of this, and as we delve into this, we're in the third missionary journey which is really

centered on Ephesus. Paul's third missionary journey kind of stops there and spends, like, all of chapter 19 there, and we're going to get back there, but the text that we're going to look at today, Acts 20:1-16, we're going to go on a travel, and this is going to take, oh, over a year of chronological time, and so much of what we've done in the book of Acts, we can have a whole chapter being one day, and then we can kind of lose what's going on in the other chapters as the clock kind of clicks forward.

So, we've got quite a bit of movement going on here that we'll be reading and quite a bit of time going by as well. So, as we do this, let's begin with the first verse in Acts 20 when the missionary journey has moved. It started in Antioch of Syria and moved west across and now in modern-day Turkey. When you read the term Asia, it means that western province of Asia Minor that Ephesus is a port city in. So, Acts 20:1 begins (there's Ephesus there for you) this departure from Ephesus; "After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia." This uproar was in chapter 19. This riot in Ephesus to kind of set the state of the church having the opportunity to continue ministering after this riot they had. So, Paul now feels the freedom to leave and go to Macedonia. Verse 2; "When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia." So, we track this. There's a conspiracy, a plot, against him in Greece by the Jews. After the riot in Ephesus, there's a spring of 56 A.D. to kind of orient you. Paul departed to visit the churches that he planted in this second missionary journey in Macedonia. The second missionary journey was, like, 50 to 52 A.D. The first missionary journey only went to the area of Galatia. We never got as far west as Ephesus, and that was like 48-49 A.D.

So, now we're beginning the third missionary journey about 53 A.D.; quite a long time was spent in Ephesus, and now he's departing. We're now at the spring of 56 A.D., and his desire is for the churches that were established in the second missionary journey, which included Philippi, which included Thessalonica and Berea. His concern extended south to Greece and to the city of Corinth. So, he visits these churches up to the north and then circled down around to the bottom of the peninsula which is known back then as Greece or Achaia. The northern part of what is modern Greece is

Macedonia. Okay? Where Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea - that's in Macedonia, and we were in Philippi in Acts chapter 16. We saw Thessalonica and Berea in Acts chapter 17. Acts chapter 18, we were in Corinth. That was all the second missionary journey. So, his concern for the churches is moving him to go back and visit these churches that he planted a few years earlier: Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. And now he lands in Corinth. It just says Macedonia, the place that he was at for eighteen months. In Greece, the southern part of Achaia, there was Corinth, and that's undoubtedly where he spends time now.

Okay, so one reason he is doing this is because of a gift that was being collected to serve the churches in Jerusalem. We find out a lot about this in the book of 1 Corinthians in chapter 16. Luke references this in Acts 24:17, but he doesn't really talk about this in this text, but this is another reason why he's going from city to city, church to church, because of this gift that's being collected to serve and help the church in Jerusalem. Earlier, Paul had sent Titus to the Corinthian church as well. So, he had already served by sending Titus to them, and now he's going to come along and be with them, but he ran into this plot after spending three months there. The Jews, like they did so often in other places, Philippi and Derbe and Lystra and now also in Corinth... he had a plot against him, and he intended to go backward to Syria but never could get there because of this plot against him. He had to flee north, back the same way he came, to Macedonia. So, the Jewish plot prevented him from his original plan to return to Greece. So often, this is happening in the scripture in the book of Acts like it does in our lives where we kind of have a plan, and that plan doesn't happen because of external circumstances, and God has another way to minister, and we trust the Lord in this. That's what happened, and we see this now unfolding ahead of time here. So, instead of going back east all the way to Syria where Antioch is, where they started the missionary journey (that was the intent to finish this circuit and head back), he now travels back the route he came, and he will head all the way back to the area that he started in Acts chapter 20. So, that's kind of where we're going now.

While Paul was in Macedonia, that initial part where he was in Philippi and Thessalonica, this is where he wrote the book of 2 Corinthians about the fall of 56 A.D. So, 1 Corinthians was written in Ephesus when Paul was in Ephesus in Acts chapter 19. Pretty soon after that the book of 2 Corinthians was written, and then he follows up these letters with an actual visit there.

While Paul is in Corinth, we find him writing the book of Romans, and Romans was delivered to Rome by Phoebe. In Acts chapter 16, we learn about that, and so, as he's going along, he's writing these epistles that you're now, hopefully, familiar with because you're reading all that and to see how all these things fit together. So, he's on this third missionary journey writing the book of 2 Corinthians and then the book of Romans while he's in Corinth. Now he's headed back and back up to where he began.

That brings us to Philippi where we have some other people gathered around, verse 4. So, he's returning to Macedonia where Philippi is; "And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia." So, we've got these collections of people there. What is it about all these people that kind of bonds them together? Well, certainly they're connected to Paul, but they also have... they're all Greek names. We know more about Timothy, that he wasn't a complete Jewish proselyte. Paul had to have him circumcised in Acts chapter 16 for the ministry to the Jews. But he grew up with a Jewish mother, but the rest of these people, they have all Greek names, but they're also from a diverse area. So, there's geography associated with them. And undoubtedly, this geography is for a purpose to communicate the diversity of the area and likely the representation of the churches that were contributing to the gift to the Jerusalem church. They came from quite a wide area. Derbe is over in Galatia. Asia, I spoke to you, was the western province. That's where Ephesus is, and then Thessalonica and Berea are about a day's lengthy hike apart from each other over in Macedonia.

So, we also get information about another person in verse 5; "But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days..." So, there's another person identified by the pronoun we, and that's Luke. Luke is the author of the book of Acts as well as the gospel of Luke. He's a companion of Paul, and verse 5 begins the second "we" section in the book of Acts where Luke is now on the scene and relates the events with himself involved with the word "we" rather than "they." Okay? So, we last saw him in Acts chapter 16, the first "we" section where he was left behind at Philippi. Now, we find him back at Phillip. We sailed from Philippi, verse 6. So, it appears that Luke has been faithfully ministering in Philippi. He was left behind while Paul continued on with the second missionary journey.

So, years have gone by now. 52 - we're now in 56 A.D., moving into 57, the spring of 57 A.D., so we're talking maybe five years have gone by where Luke has been in Philippi, and now Paul comes back around there, and he joins with Paul.

These verses show, also, the vastness of Paul's co-laboring with other people. We have quite a collection of people. In fact, as we move along in Acts, we find Paul working with more and more people as we go along. He started the first missionary journey with just Paul and Barnabas, then in the second missionary journey, he starts out with Silas, and then he picks up Timothy, and then he picks up Luke in Troas and then moves on to Macedonia and into Corinth from there. Now we've got a whole group of people, seven of them are listed for us from a diverse collection of places. Alright? So, we could probably gain out of this the importance of the breadth of ministry working, co-laboring with other people and how important that is to serve together with people. Paul wasn't just doing this himself; he was continuing to build people into the ministry which took it to expand beyond just him.

So, this takes us now to the story of a fellow named Eutychus who is raised from the dead by Paul. So, that's going to be in verses 7-12, and so let's read that together. Acts 20:7-12, Luke writes, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, 'Do not be troubled, for his life is in him.' When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted."

So, they've now left Philippi. They've sailed from Philippi and came to Troas, stayed there, verse 7, on the first day of the week. And this is where people, I would say the vast majority of people... On, this is where Troas is by the way. It's in the northwest corner of that province of Asia. If you're at Troas, you're just at the edge of the continent of Asia. As you cross over the

waterway just to the north, you head into Europe. So, this is the division of the continents there. So, we go to this statement about this first day of the week. This is the one of the indications that the early church met on Sundays. And what would be very typical is if people see this and will make a note here that the early church met the first day of the week, which is Sunday, and that corresponds to 1 Corinthians 16:2; “On the first day of every week...” It also is when Jesus rose from the dead so it makes sense that they weren’t meeting on the Sabbath because they were trying to minister to the Jews on the Sabbath. They were going to them to preach the gospel, but then the next day, the first day of the week, Sunday, is when they met as a church.

But if you recall, one of the axioms that I’ve been pushing towards you, as we’ve been teaching through the book of Acts, has been don’t teach the experience of the apostles, experience the teaching of the apostles. In other words, the apostles did lots of things and for different reasons, and they taught lots of things. What they taught in the New Testament is normative for us. It directs us. It commands us. It guides us. It brings us these principles. Then they make choices and practices, and here’s one of these practices, the meeting on the first day of the week, and here it is, Sunday, and we’re meeting on the first day of the week. So, people like me who are teaching this on Sunday are very interested in you showing up to listen to me teach. Right? So, I’ll want to make a big deal about showing up on Sunday and being here so you can hear me because I don’t want you to not be here, and that’s a great thing, I think, because we can gather together as a church, and there’s lots of other ministries taking place on Sunday, but I have to note for you this, that the New Testament doesn’t teach Sunday as being a special holy day of obligation that if you’re not in church you’ve somehow sinned against God. I know Christianity can teach that. That’s not coming from the Scriptures.

In fact the Scriptures will say in Romans 14:5, “One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.” So, if one person holds Sunday as being a special day, that’s fine. In fact, it’s great for me because you’re more likely to sit here and listen to me teach, and I like that. But as we’ve kind of gone along in time here, even in my lifetime, here’s what I’ve observed, there’s more businesses open for business on Sundays. There’s more activities happening on Sundays. I remember... I’m a baseball fan. Right? And one of

the greatest pitchers of all time, Christie Matheson, he never pitched on Sunday because he was a Christian, and you don't pitch on Sunday. This day and age, you don't pitch on Sunday, you might as well go find another job - you're not going to be a major-league pitcher. You moved in kind of the business world. And now, there's things that hit on Sundays. Then you move into just children's activities and the world this day. I grew up playing Little League. They didn't play on Sunday. I can't even think of an organized activity on Sunday when I was growing up.

Now a days, you got lots of activities, various things kids get involved with on Sundays. So, this is all challenging. Right? Well if you could work it out, because we only have one life to live here and one moment of time, and there's a lot of great things that happen on Sundays here, and we have Awana on Sundays; we have children's ministry happening during the Sunday morning time. We have classes being taught. There's things to learn. But there's lots of things going on other times, too. We have growth groups. We have other Bible studies that are meeting. We have other children's ministries that're meeting. There's other things going on at other times, too. This is kind of the time we live in, and if we're going to reach people for Christ, we have to recognize that we're faced with this dilemma, that Sunday, for much of our society, is just another day. And when we look to the Scripture, we can't teach more than what the Scripture teaches about it. They met on Sunday. That was what they did. We meet on Sunday. It's what we do. But we meet on other days, too. What you're commanded to is to not forsake the assembling yourselves together. You're supposed to encourage one another, exhort one another, comfort one another, you know, serve one another. You have to do all these things to one another, but how you do this and when you do this and all this other stuff is really your responsibility to the Lord to carry. I'm just commenting because I'm probably deviating a little bit here from much of Christianity when they get to Acts 20:7, and they want to make something more than what's there.

But what is here is teaching then about this miracle that Paul performed where he's taking to them, and there's a guy who's in the third floor. I don't know if this is, like, a rich person's house where there's a third floor. That's possible, or this is like what we would call tenement where, as you build higher and poor people live in the third floor. It's something that, but he's there teaching; "And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep..." So, Eutychus is called "...a young

man...” You could translate this “lad” if you like. He was between eight and fourteen years old. This was this categorization of “... a young man...” back in that time. So, this isn’t what we would consider to be an adult. This is someone that is not that old, and yet, he is fallen asleep as young people are prone to do and old people are prone to do, too. So, we get people like me that are teaching. Sometimes people will fall asleep. I hope that you’re not falling asleep. I kind of... when you start to fall asleep on me, I think I need to do better, and I want to keep you awake because I think the Scripture’s really interesting, and this is all fascinating for me, and I want to communicate that. I think it’s a crime to bore people with the Scripture. So, don’t fall asleep.

But like me and like you, this guy Eutyclus, yeah, just a little tempted to not be, maybe, as interested as he should be, and he dozed off, and that happens to people, and so as this transpires, there’s a mention in verse 8 of “...many lamps...” and things aren’t just thrown in the Bible just because, hey, we got to fill up some space here. This means something. Okay? The reason that Luke includes “There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together” is what you think lamps are – like incandescent light bulbs. Or, what do we have, LEDs these days or something? What they had you could translate this “torches.” They had fire; that was how they lit rooms. So, this environment isn’t exactly conducive to learning. We try to make it really nice for you. We’ve got air conditioning and heating to kind of keep it at a nice temperature so you don’t fall asleep. We have lighting that is not sucking oxygen out of the room or filling the room up with smoke. And you kind of have these sort of environments, that it doesn’t really help people to learn, that we have now where we can help you. I’m only teaching, what? ...forty minutes this morning. I’m not going all night, and you’re not having to stay awake in a torch-lit room. So, the reason verse 8 is there is this is kind of what happens when you have torches that smoke is coming out of and just not making the air quality as good and maybe the ability to see in all this, and plus it’s going on long; Paul is teaching a long time.

Why is Paul teaching a long time? Paul is not just teaching a long time because he thinks it’s really godly to teach a long time or, if four hours are good, five hours are better. And we’ll just keep them here all night. This is a very specific set of circumstances. He’s about to leave the next day, and so he doesn’t have much time. So, this is a special meeting to try to share with

them as much as possible in this very compacted amount of time he's dealing with here. So, as he's teaching, Eutychus sinks into a deep sleep (and Paul keeps on talking), is overcome with sleep, falls down from the third floor. He's dead. How do we know he's dead? Luke's there. Luke is a medical doctor so if there's anybody that can say he's dead, it's going to be Luke because Luke is undoubtedly more familiar with dead people than you are. People died a lot back in... They didn't, like, die in a nursing home at an elderly age. They died of all kinds of causes, and Luke had to have been very familiar with all kinds of death. So, when Luke says he's dead, I think we can conclude the guy's dead. Paul then responds to this tragedy of a young person who probably has parents there or relatives there, I mean, this is quite the tragedy, with resurrecting him, this fellow Eutychus, from the dead. So, the return of Eutychus from the dead brought great comfort, and that's how this ends. "They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted." ...because he's not dead anymore. His life's not ended. Isn't that wonderful.

So, Paul keeps going. He keeps teaching. They break bread. They have a meal together, and he keeps teaching through the whole night because he has to leave the next day. So, that's why he's teaching so long. So, what we can learn here is the teaching of God's truth was more important to those at Troas than even sleep. They hung in there. They stayed awake. They had the apostle Paul; that's a plus. But we have the apostle Paul, too. He wrote letters for us so we can study. So, what a testimony to us to pay attention to what he's saying. They did, so should we. The raising of Eutychus, here is another of Luke's continual comparison between the miraculous events of Peter and of Paul. We see this, and all of this is to support the legitimacy of Paul as an apostle. Remember, much of the book of 2 Corinthians, which he wrote when he was in Macedonia on the way to Corinth, is about him defending his apostleship. That was kind of an issue. Does Paul have the authority of an apostle? So, Luke, when he constructs the book of Acts, is demonstrating that what Peter did Paul did, and there's a lot of these same things: they both healed people lame from birth; they both cursed sinners; they both had things external to themselves (in Peter's case, a shadow - in Paul's case, handkerchiefs) were being used to bring healing; and they both have chains miraculously fall off of them to free them from prison; and here, just like Peter raised Dorcas, we have Paul raising Eutychus. And there's a comparison. Also, just to top it all off, Luke's description of adding the fact that Paul was falling on top of the boy and embracing him, that harkens us back to Elijah and Elisha. Both of them kind of did the same thing in their

ministry, and kind of, in a way, equates Paul with the Old Testament prophets as well there. So, this is a bolstering by Luke of the significance of Paul's ministry. This is a miraculous event.

There's people today that they'll claim that they do this miraculous thing and that miraculous thing. We look at the Bible; I mean, talk about a categorical difference in people claiming today. I mean apples and oranges is an understatement. This is not in Paul's home town. They didn't have to come to Paul's church to experience some environment that is conducive to whatever thing they're trying to do. He's just responding to an incident that takes place that is a tragedy and raises the guy from the dead immediately. This is undeniable. We have a medical doctor there, validating and writing about this. This is significant, and its stark different from what gets claimed today.

So, as we go from here, we're going to now do another journey through some territory here as well. So, we're going to leave this instance of Paul teaching in Troas and raising the young person from the dead and then continuing to teach, and he departs. In verse 13, we're going to head back toward where we started from. We're now into 57 A.D.; "But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost." So, here's what we're doing; we're going quickly to Miletus. So, there's just a rapid-fire thing here, and some of them, all of them, the seven plus Luke, so that's eight of them, are taking a ship to these islands. And the stopovers, that's just normal. It's like if you were on a train verses a car. If you're on a car, you go directly where you want to go, but if you're on a train, you kind of have to stop along the stops that the train stops at. This is how shipping was done. They stopped here. They stopped here. They stopped here. And so, all these stops took another day and took time. So, what Paul is doing is he's bypassing this ship and taking the land route. So, by taking the land route, Paul left the other eight men in order to spend a little more time at Troas before he was leaving. So, that's why he was intending to go by land, and he met up with them. So, he delayed himself a

little bit there and then met up with them. So, they go on their journey by boat.

But there's a decision to bypass Ephesus where he'd spent so long in Ephesus, He's not going back again, and the reason he's not going back again is because he's on a timetable. He has a desire to return to Jerusalem for Pentecost that will occur in late May of 57 A.D., so he's in a hurry. And there's people gathering in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, and he's wanting to get there to connect back with all those people, the apostles, back in Jerusalem. So, he's on the clock if you were. If he were to divert himself and go to Ephesus, that would delay him. So, this is why he does what he does. He bypasses them. Pentecost was fifty days after Passover. They celebrated the Passover at Philippi. The Passover kicks off the Days of Unleavened Bread that we saw in chapter 20:6. Pentecost is fifty days after, so this is this window of time he's got to make this trip from Philippi, all the way through Miletus and then through the Mediterranean, back to Jerusalem. To visit Ephesus would require additional time, so Paul sent for the leaders of the church of Ephesus in order to exhort them, and that's what we've got coming up. The rest of Acts chapter 20 will be the leaders, the elders, of the church of Ephesus will come to Miletus, and Paul would instruct them. And there's a lot here that we'll get a chance to look at coming up about Paul teaching these elders who've come from Ephesus to Miletus to hear from him, but Paul doesn't have the ability to go to them because that just would take too much time to be with the church of Ephesus and just do a touch and go.

So, that's what's coming up. That's where we are. So, Paul had an agenda. He had a time table. He had a mission. He was intent to accomplish as much as he could with the time he had, visiting as many places and doing as much as he can because, he, like you, had only one life to live and each day was going to pass away, and God had given to him acts and works to do, and God has given to you works to do. Ephesians 2:8-10; "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." So, you have a course of ministry that God has for you to serve people, and you should hop to it, and you should make the most of it because we don't know how long we have to live here, and we should do the best we can with the life that God has entrusted us, like Paul

did, and he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem because there was ministry that was going to take place in Jerusalem, and we're going to learn a lot about that coming up here. So, my encouragement to you is to do the same; make the most of your time. Don't be the guy that falls asleep and gets distracted. May we be attentive to Christ regardless of the distractions that surround us. We try to make things easy for you. I'm not teaching that long. I've got room temperature here. I've got it lit up. All this stuff makes it easy for you. Right? Make the most of it. Live your life for Jesus to the utmost each day. You've got a lot of benefits that these people didn't have so take advantage of it, and make your life count for Jesus.