

Saying Goodbye

Part 2 of Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey

1. Imagine saying good-bye to someone when you knew you would never see them again. Describe your thoughts and feelings.

Chapters 20 and 21 record the conclusion of Paul's third missionary journey. The first six verses of chapter 20 are a highly abbreviated summary of nearly two years of activities by Paul. He poured his efforts into visiting many of the churches he had established on his second missionary journey to encourage them and help them in their growth and development. **Read** Acts 20:1-6 from several translations. [Trace their journey from *Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece/Achaia, Macedonia and Philippi to Troas.*]

2. Why does Paul return to Philippi rather than going to Jerusalem by way of Syria (verse 3)?

Note: *2 Corinthians was written sometime during the two year period described in verses 1-6, possibly during Paul's stay at Philippi. He then heads to Greece where he spends 3 months and writes his letter to the church in Rome.*

Life Lesson

Although Paul had not yet been to Rome, believers had already started a church there (Acts 2:10; 18:2). A reading of the first few verses of Romans, (1:13 especially), relates Paul's fervent desire to visit Rome, but the sovereign hand of God had prevented it at this point. The combination of Paul's passionate desire, and God's sovereign "no"—resulted in his sitting down to write the letter to the Romans—the undisputed "Magna Carta" of the Christian faith.

3. Perhaps there are some "no's" in your life that God is planning to use greatly. With this thought in mind, **talk to God** below about faithfully doing what lies directly ahead instead of worrying about why God said, "no" in a particular situation.

Bow in Prayer: "Father God, we know that You "do all things well." Help us to always keep this perspective before us as we live out our lives from day to day."

Reread Acts 20:4-6. Pay special attention to the churches that are represented in this passage. In the spring of 57 A.D. Paul planned to return to Jerusalem in order to present the offering he had

been collecting from the Asian and Macedonian churches for the suffering church in Jerusalem. (See Romans 15:25-31; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7.) Paul would not want the Jerusalem church to think he handled the money by himself—without others to account for it. Plus, having the men deliver the gifts to Jerusalem gave the gifts a personal touch and also strengthened the unity of the church. The men were then able to report back to their church the ways in which God was working through their giving.

4. Explain why this was an effective way to teach the church about giving.

Read Acts 20:7-12.

5. On what day and for what purpose were the believers in Troas gathered?

Picture the scene: The believers are packed into a third-story room to hear Paul, their teacher and friend, encourage them and share from God's Word. Paul will be leaving the next day and may never return, so this is no ordinary meeting.

6. In your own words describe the series of dramatic incidents that occurred that night.

7. For what reasons was this an evening of great significance for the church at Troas?

Thoughtfully **read** Acts 20:13-38. While Paul walked twenty miles south from Troas, the others sailed forty miles around the peninsula, so they all arrived at *Assos* at about the same time. Then they continued down the coast of Asia, stopping at night at *Mitylene* (20:14). Then on to *Chios*, *Samos* and finally to *Miletus*. [Trace Paul's journey from Troas to Miletus on Map 6 from Lesson 17.]

Having arrived in Miletus, a seaport south of Ephesus, Paul summoned the Ephesian elders to come and meet with him, since it would not have been safe for Paul to enter Ephesus. What followed was a very emotional farewell to the people who had come to mean so much to Paul.

Reread and reflect on Acts 20:13-38. Paul continued to tirelessly preach the Gospel in all its multifaceted glory—holding up different dimensions of it in different but complementary ways.

8. How can Paul's ministry be seen as a pattern for Christians of every generation (Acts 20:18-21, 33-35)?

9. What were Paul's priorities (verses 22-25)? What motivated him to keep going? (Also reflect on Philippians 3:7-11.)

10. a. How do your priorities compare and contrast with Paul's?

b. What steps do you need to take to reorder your priorities to make your ministry a cross-shaped, Christ-centered ministry? (Consider your church, your home, your neighborhood, your workplace, etc.)

11. What final instructions did Paul give to the leaders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:28-31)?

12. According to verse 32, why can Paul leave them with confidence?

13. Who is in your spiritual care? How are you preparing those that you nurture spiritually to be left with this same confidence?

After having knelt together in prayer, they all wept freely—throwing their arms around Paul, they accompanied him and his companions to the ship. The Greek word (apospao) translated “saying farewell” carries the idea of “tearing away,”—picturing Paul tearing himself away from the embraces of his emotional friends.

Prayerfully **read** Acts 21:1-16. Put yourself in Paul's place as you read this section of Scripture. [Trace their route from Miletus to Jerusalem on Map 6 from Lesson 17.]

14. Why was Paul going to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22; 24:17)?

15. What are the significant features of Paul's visits in the cities of Tyre and Caesarea?

16. Why does Paul reject the advice of so many people who care deeply about Him? Compare Acts 19:21; 20:22-24; 21:4, 10-14.

Is Paul obedient or disobedient to the Spirit's leading? "It would seem that the specific warning not to go up to Jerusalem in Acts 21:4, was a human interpretation of the Holy Spirit's prophecy of the danger that awaited Paul, otherwise it is difficult to see why Paul would have gone against the Holy Spirit's direction." (Guzik) Sometimes the counsel of friends, filtered through the grid of their fears and concerns for our safety, can be *misguidance*. Like Paul, we must determine to "do the right thing" before God even when those around us are advising against it.

17. How do you think those observing Paul were affected by his willingness to stand alone in obedience to Christ?

18. How does Paul's decision speak to you about standing alone for Jesus Christ?

Stop and Think about how many miles and memories you have experienced with Paul on these incredible missionary journeys—not to mention how many souls had found the Savior!

19. Tell what it has been like for you personally to travel with Paul on these three journeys. Recall several ways in which your life will never be the same because of it.

Someone aptly said: "*The Gospel is a blunt package of raw truth* (about how people are rebellious, lost sinners separated from a holy God) *wrapped with exquisite cords of love* (about how God offers forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal life to those who turn from sin to Christ in simple faith)." ***Use this fitting illustration to share the Gospel message with someone this week!***