



Acts- The Church Unleashed: Acts 18 and 20

11.25.18

Reference notes ETB, Spring 2017

Introduction

In your personal experience, was there a time when you had to move and leave behind friends? Was it easier or harder as you got older? What was the one thing that you wanted the friends that you left to remember about you?

What is the best way to say goodbye to friends? What would you want a friend to remember about you?

Goodbyes are hard. They are hard when you know you may never see that person again. When leaving for college, work, or other reasons, you will eventually move on and so will the people left behind. That doesn't negate the relationships, but it does change them. They are no longer your neighbors, your coworkers, or your classmates.

Even with the transitions of life there are ways in which we remember someone and the impact they made in our lives for the time they were present. We like to think about those that made a positive lasting impact in our lives and how we have carried forward the ideals we learned from them.

Transition: As Paul transitioned through his ministry, there were times when he knew that he was telling fellow workers for the Lord goodbye, possibly for the last time. He had been warned by the Holy Spirit that imprisonment awaited him as a consequence of his decision to go to Jerusalem. Nonetheless we can sense Paul's resolve and satisfaction as he sought only to remain faithful to his calling regardless of the cost that involved how he shared the gospel and disciplined the future leaders of the church. We can also see how the church in Ephesus responded to being "handed" the ministry there that Paul had prepared to leave behind.

1. PAUL'S COMPANIONS (Acts 18:1-4, 24-28)

Have a volunteer to read Acts 18:1-4, 24-28.

1-4

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³ and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴ Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

24-28

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. ²⁷ When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸ For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

We can see the principle of how God is the business of using the least likely of people in the least likely of places. Corinth, similar to Athens, was overrun by the sexual culture and idolatry (refer to the commentary). Paul met people there (Priscilla and Aquilla) in the areas that sought to be distinctive and influencers for Christ.

What is a characteristic of Priscilla and Aquilla that you can relate with in these verses? What actions did they take challenged how you would have responded?

What does it mean to be someone that influences others to share the gospel?

What would it look like for you to invest in someone that is the “least likely” with the intention to share the gospel with them or to lead them to grow in their faith?

One of our measures at New Vision is that we want to leverage earthly resources for gospel impact. This measure means that God has blessed us and gifted each one of us in ways that we can truly make an impact to reach people with the gospel. God also desires to leverage your gifts and talents for the furthering of the kingdom of God. Therefore, Paul demonstrated this principle as he learned by trade the ability to make tents. He allowed his personal talent to be a way to provide for him to share the gospel in this foreign culture.

When you consider how we are ALL gifted by God through the Holy Spirit with skills and competencies that can be used to further the kingdom, the question comes; how are we truly using our gifts? If your passion is to teach, why should that only occur in the school setting? If your passion is to help others, why should that only occur in our secular jobs?

If you could snap your fingers and be living out your passion to serve the church, what area would it be in? What hinders you from living that out? What would need to change in your life to see your dream become a reality?

Transition: Paul transitions from Corinth to spending time with the church in Ephesus in preparation for his final focus of ministry.

2. PAUL’S CONCERN (Acts 20:7-12)

Have a volunteer to read Acts 20:7-12

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting.

⁹ Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. ¹⁰ Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” ¹¹ Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. ¹² The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

From a literal viewpoint, the young man was full of the meal, since it was around the time of Easter and the church met late into the evening. It was a tragic event to see how the man fell out of the window and died. Yet, God allowed the miracle of his resurrection, especially during the Easter time, to be a reminder of the resurrection of Christ and the call to continue doing the work of God.

Paul’s concern, as noted in the sermon, is that too often we have become like the young man falling asleep in our Christian experience. We long for an experience more than finding the satisfaction in Jesus Christ and the resurrection. Our hope is not in the next big thing, but our hope is in Jesus and that alone should renew us every day. Then from that truth we embrace our call to live for Christ!

When have you found yourself “falling asleep” in your Christian walk? What impact did it make?

What priorities changed in your life to help you to be used by God?

What does it look like to be someone that is being used completely by God?

Transition: Final words are powerful and can help to define a legacy. In this next section, we are going to see how Paul shares some of his final words to the church in an effort to hand off for the next generation of ministry.

3. PAUL’S COMMITMENT (Acts 20:17-27)

Have a volunteer to read Acts 20:17-27

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ 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. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

According to these verses, what are some of the ways that Paul describes the actions he took in his life to reflect commitment to Christ? (I served, I did not hesitate, I preached, I aim to finish the race).

In your personal experience, what does it look like for someone to have focus? How does that relate to what Paul has stated here in his life? How do these actions challenge or encourage you?

Review other places where Paul has stated his focus: Philippians 3:10-12, 2 Timothy 4. *How do these passages relate to what Paul was stating here? What common theme do you see in these verses?*

Consider some of the takeaways for us to learn from Paul's commitment: Be honest, be humble, share the gospel at all times, listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, be obedient, and be a steward.

Which one of these takeaways do you struggle with the most? Why is it a struggle for us to sometimes live fully committed to the Christian life? How can we change our commitment and experience growth?

Paul ends his time with the leaders in Ephesus by giving some of his final words to the church that explain how he has remained committed. Read Acts 20:28-35.

What does it mean to you to fulfill God's purpose for your life? Do you honestly believe that faithfully fulfilling God's purpose brings contentment?

Application

If you could write a letter giving your final words to your family encouraging them to remain committed to Christ, what would you say? Does your life reflect what you would encourage others to do? What would need to change?

Quotes/Commentary

Acts 18:1-4, 24-28

Paul's arrival in Corinth is related in verses 1–4. He found there some fellow Jewish tentmakers who may already have been Christians, Priscilla and Aquila. They had recently come from Rome because Claudius had expelled the Jews from the city. (The expulsion is recorded by Roman historians. It took place in A.D. 49 and seems to have been provoked by riots in the Jewish population of Rome involving the message about Christ.) Paul began his Corinthian witness in the synagogue, as usual. Again, Jewish opposition became so strong that he eventually had to abandon the synagogue and concentrate on the Gentiles (vv. 5–6). Paul moved next door, to the house of Titius Justus, who had been attached to the synagogue as a Gentile God-fearer. Others came over from the synagogue, including Crispus, one of the ruling elders. (Paul mentioned Crispus's baptism in 1 Cor. 1:14.) Paul remained in Corinth for at least eighteen months because he had been assured by God that his work there would be blessed.¹

Paul began his third mission by visiting for the third time the churches established on his first missionary journey. His ultimate destination was Ephesus, where he had left Priscilla and Aquila. Before Paul's return, the two encountered Apollos, who came to Ephesus from Alexandria. Luke described him as a Jew who knew of Jesus and taught accurately about

¹ Polhill, J. B. (1998). [Acts](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 526). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Him. He was deficient in this Christian knowledge, knowing only of John's baptism (v. 25). Priscilla and Aquila soon instructed him more accurately. He eventually went to Corinth. Paul in 1 Corinthians referred to Apollos's ministry in Corinth a number of times.²

Acts 20:7-12

This story is one of those delightful Lukan anecdotes, full of colorful detail—a full meal, a lamp-filled room consuming all the oxygen, a long-winded apostle, a young man seated in the window. It is often debated whether Eutychus was actually dead or just had the wind knocked out of him. The text seems to indicate he was dead. It was Easter season, and Eutychus's raising would have been a vivid reminder of the resurrection.³

Acts 20:17-35

Paul's Miletus address is the only major speech of Paul which Luke recorded for his third missionary period. It is the only speech in Acts addressed to a Christian audience and as such is the most like Paul's epistles, which were also addressed to Christians. It can be outlined in four parts.

First, Paul pointed to his *past* example during his three-year ministry in Ephesus. He emphasized his witness to both Jews and Gentiles in the face of constant opposition. Second, he pointed to his own *present* prospects. He was on his way to Jerusalem, led by the Spirit, aware that he was facing real danger. He was saying his farewell to Ephesus; he would not be returning there. Third, Paul looked toward the more distant *future* of the Ephesian church. He warned the church that "fierce wolves" would come and ravage the flock. (His prediction did indeed come true, as false teachings constantly besieged Ephesus in later years [e.g., Rev. 2:6]). Finally, Paul offered a benediction for the church and a reminder of how he had always avoided greed in his ministry to them, urging them to follow his example. He concluded with Jesus' saying that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This saying is only found here. Paul said farewell. The reminder that he would not return set an ominous tone for Paul's journey to Jerusalem.⁴

² Polhill, J. B. (1998). [Acts](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 527). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

³ Polhill, J. B. (1998). [Acts](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 528). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁴ Polhill, J. B. (1998). [Acts](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 530). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.