



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 16 - STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 20:1-21:40

DAY ONE

1. As you think about Lesson 15 (Acts Chapters 18 and 19), what stands out in your mind?

Read Acts 20:1-12

2a. In yesterday's passage, we read that the town clerk of Ephesus was able to calm the followers of Artemis who had taken offense at Paul. As today's lesson begins, according to verse 1, what did Paul do after the uproar had ceased?

b. What did Paul do as he traveled through the regions of Macedonia (verse 2)?

NOTE: During this sweep of Macedonia, and then in Greece, it is believed that Paul wrote The Letter of Paul to the Romans and The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

3a. After Paul reached Greece, he spent three months there. Describe Paul's change of plans and the reasons behind it (verse 3).

b. According to verse 4, Paul was accompanied by seven men of different nationalities. Name the four places from which they came.

4a. What things did the people who were accompanying Paul do (verse 5)?

b. Verse 6 tells us that Paul and Luke rejoined the others who had been accompanying them. When and where did this meeting take place?

5a. As Paul was holding a discussion late into the night on the first day of the week when they met to break bread (verses 7-8), a tragedy took place. Record what happened in verse 9.

b. Paul went downstairs, bent over the young man and took him in his arms saying "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him" (verse 10). He then returned upstairs, and at midnight he broke the bread and ate, continuing his conversation till dawn. What happened to Eutychus (verse 12)?

6. CONNECTION: In the mysterious and miraculous story of Eutychus, we have the earliest mention of Christians gathering together to break bread on Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Christ comes to us in word and sacrament. Consider in this story of Eutychus the sequence of preaching, breaking bread, and restoration to life. How do you see this reflected in the structure of our Christian liturgy?

Read and record Acts 2:42 regarding the fellowship of the believers and let this image lead you into prayer.

THINK: In the year 110 AD, Ignatius of Antioch, a bishop of the Church taught by St. John the Evangelist, on his way to martyrdom in Rome, wrote to the Romans: "I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible" (*Letter to the Romans* 7:3 [A.D. 110]).

DAY TWO

Read Acts 20:13-24

7. Verses 13 to 16 begin today's passage telling more of Paul's third missionary journey in Luke's voice. We learn that they sailed to Assos, where they met Paul. Then, over the next

few days, they stopped in Mitylene, Chios, Samos, and Miletus. Verse 16 gives us more information about Paul's plans. What does he decide to do and why?

8a. Although Paul sailed past Ephesus, he still called for the elders of that church to meet with him in nearby Miletus and they came (verse 17-18). Summarize the five things he reminded them he had done for them while he had lived with them (verses 19-20).

b. What does Paul's description of his actions tell us about his character?

9. From verse 21, to what did Paul testify to both Jews and Greeks?

10a. According to verse 22, Paul tells them his plans and concerns. Where is he going and why?

b. What has the Holy Spirit testified to him in every city (verse 23)?

11a. Record the moving last words of Paul's speech (verse 24) (Good memory verse).

b. Read and record 2 Timothy 4:7, which tells us of Paul's courage and faith even in the face of what he knows is impending imprisonment and persecution.

12. CONNECTION: Paul is so devoted to the Lord and to the spreading of the gospel that he can honestly say, "I do not count my life of any value to myself." Paul's only desire was to finish the course, his ministry - testifying to the good news of God's grace. Two things are clear to him according to this passage: (1) what his ministry is and (2) that it is from the Lord Jesus. How about you? What is your ministry and do you realize it is from the Lord Jesus? Record some thoughts here.

Read and record John 15:16. Let those thoughts lead you into prayer.

DAY THREE

Read Acts 20:25-38

13a. As today's passage begins, Paul told the Ephesian elders that he did not expect to see them again. Record his poignant statement (verse 25).

b. Paul continues his goodbye to them in verses 26-27 by saying: "Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." How would you explain his reasoning?

14a. The Latin word for "shepherd" is "pastor." With this in mind, read and record verse 28, in which Paul continued to speak to the Ephesian elders.

b. Keeping with that same shepherd imagery, Paul gives them a warning in verse 29. What is the warning, and what do you think he means?

15a. According to verse 30, some of these "wolves" will even be among the believers, and they will seek to destroy the flock (truly "wolves in sheep's clothing"). How will these wolves operate?

b. Paul warns them to be alert; then of what does he remind them (verse 31)?

16. In verse 32 Paul commended the elders "to God and to the message of his grace." What does he say the message of God's grace could do for us (verse 32)?

17a. In verses 33-35, Paul sets an example for believers to follow. What is it?

b. Paul concludes his talk by kneeling and praying with them all. From verses 37-38, describe in your own words the parting between Paul and the Elders of Ephesus.

18. CONNECTION: In today's lesson, Paul shared a heartfelt farewell with the elders of Ephesus, in which he discussed how he has lived as an example to his followers. Paul had a special relationship with the Ephesians. He invested his heart and soul into that community for almost three years, but he also worried about their future after he was gone. As a result, Paul knelt down and prayed with and for them, commending his dearly loved Ephesians to God. We, too, sometimes worry and feel helpless about the future of our loved ones. Is there a special way you pray with and/or for your loved ones when they are with you or far away? Relate this to your small group.

Read the 23rd Psalm and record a favorite line, then incorporate this line in your prayer today.

DAY FOUR **Read Acts 21:1-16**

NOTE: After saying goodbye to the Ephesian leaders, Paul and his companions continued toward Jerusalem. In verses 1 to 16 of today's lesson, Luke recorded details of the mostly sea travels of Paul and company continuing on his third missionary journey. They visited many places including Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Cyprus, Syria, Tyre, Ptolemais, and Caesarea on their way to Jerusalem.

19. When Paul and the others arrived in Tyre, they sought out the disciples there. How long did they stay and what message did they receive from them (and through whom)?

20. The communities must have known this was a last farewell from Paul. Read verses 5-6 regarding the departure from Tyre and comment on why it is apparent that the disciples there were very close to Paul.

21a. In verse 8, Philip is referred to as one of the seven. What do you think is meant by this (for a hint, refer back to Acts Chapter 6)?

b. What do we learn about Philip in verse 9?

22a. An amazing thing happened while Paul was staying with Philip. Using your own words, describe the incident (verses 10-11).

b. How did the people react to this (verse 12)?

23a. In response to the people's urgings, Paul told them he was ready to accept his fate, even to die in Jerusalem (verse 13). Read and record the people's response from verse 14 to his courageous and dutiful statement.

b. Verses 15-16 conclude this passage. Again, Paul and company are on the move - this time headed for Jerusalem. According to verse 16, who came along and what did they do?

24. CONNECTION: Reread Acts 21:14. Almost every one of us has experienced a situation similar to the one described in this verse. We have all tried in vain to convince someone of something for his or her own protection. We have all felt the disappointment that the people around Paul felt when he chose to do things his own way. We have all had to console ourselves with the words, "The Lord's will be done." Briefly describe such a time from your own experience and how, indeed, the Lord's will was done.

Read and record Romans 8:27, and begin your prayer today with gratefulness to the Holy Spirit for opening your heart to the will of God.

DAY FIVE

Read Acts 21:17-26

25a. As today's lesson begins, Paul and his companions had arrived in Jerusalem, where, according to verse 17, they were welcomed warmly by the Christian believers. The next day, with whom did Paul visit and who was present (verse 18)?

b. After greeting them, what did Paul relate to them (verse 19)?

26a. According to verse 20, James and the elders praised God for all that Paul had been blessed to accomplish for the Lord. What did they point out to him at the end of verse 20?

b. They also advised Paul of a rumor going around about him. Briefly, what was the rumor (verse 21)?

27. Before Paul was given a chance to react to these concerns, James and the elders told Paul what to do to show that he still observed the law. According to verses 23-24, what was their plan? Explain it in your own words.

28a. Thus far, James and the elders had been expressing ways to placate the Jewish Christians. In verse 25, they changed the subject and spoke of the Gentile Christians. Their words reflected the outcome of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:19-20). From what did they say these Christians should abstain?

b. From verse 26, briefly note in your own words the outcome of James and the elders' advice to Paul.

29. CONNECTION: James and the elders of the Jerusalem church knew the potential for a clash between Paul and the Jewish Christians, so they came up with a plan to offset the rumors about Paul. Paul listened to them and followed their directions, perhaps hoping his

actions would demonstrate unity with the traditional laws of Moses. Think of an example when you, too, have tried to do something to "bridge a gap" ... perhaps in a family disagreement or in a work situation. How did your faith help you put aside personal preferences for the greater good?

Read and record Matthew 5:9 and begin your prayer today asking the Holy Spirit to help you to walk the path of righteousness and peace.

DAY SIX
Read 21:27-40

30. When "the seven days of purification" were almost over, the Jews from Asia who had seen Paul in the temple stirred up the crowd, who seized him (verse 27). What were the Asian Jews' accusations against Paul (verse 28)?

31. The Jews had seen Paul with Trophimus, an Ephesian, elsewhere in the city, and falsely assumed that Paul had defiled the temple by bringing him in (verse 29). As a result of these accusations, the city was aroused, and the people rushed together. From the second sentence in verse 30, what did they then do?

32a. The mob tried to kill Paul and word reached the Roman tribune that all Jerusalem was in an uproar (verse 31). A group of soldiers and centurions, along with the tribune, ran down to see. According to verse 32, what effect did this have on the crowd?

b. When the tribune arrived on the scene, he arrested Paul and ordered him to be bound with two chains; he then inquired who he was and what he had done (verse 33). What tells you that he couldn't get a clear answer and what did the tribune do as a result (verse 34)?

33a. What additional facts do verses 35-36 add?

b. About whom have you read these words before? Read and record John 19:15 and note the similarities.

34. In verse 37, Paul asks the tribune a question. The tribune is surprised that Paul speaks Greek (verse 37). Who did he think Paul was (verse 38)?

35. Paul replied to the tribune that he was a Jew of Tarsus, and asked to speak to the people (verse 39). In verse 40, Luke tells us that Paul stood on the steps, and motioned to the people for silence. What was the response of the crowd?

36. CONNECTION: Isn't it amazing that Paul would want to speak to this crowd who wanted to kill him? He wasn't giving up on them no matter what they did to him. He stood, battered and beaten, but not defeated. With selfless courage, faithful to the heart ... Paul had compassion for the people who hated him, like Jesus, who said "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do ..." Describe a time when you were "attacked" yet put aside your feelings of anger and were able to be compassionate toward or pray for those who were against you.

Jesus never said life would be easy, but he did say he'd send us a Helper - and he did! All we need do is ask. Read Hebrews 13:1-6 and record the verse or verses that are most encouraging for you today. Let these thoughts lead you into prayer.

After completing this lesson, read Chapters 20 and 21 (refer to pages 120-127 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 149-160 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.