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7-1-1983

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Recommended Citation

Vaught, W. O., "Paul Begins his Journey to Jerusalem" (1983). *Vaught Sermon Notes: A Study of the Book of Acts*. 94.

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PAUL BEGINS HIS JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 91
ACTS 20:13-19

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ACTS 20:13-19 "And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus. For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews"

From this point on to the end of Acts we have the story of how Paul sinned, how God punished him, how Paul rebounded and God turned cursing into blessing, and how Paul finally arrived in Rome. The last part of the Book of the Acts is not sensational, and for this reason many people avoid these last eight chapters of the Acts. But I believe this part of the book is very important, and from it we can learn many valuable lessons. For one thing, we will deal with "The geographic will of God" and "The operational will of God" as they relate to the life of Paul.

ACTS 20:13 "And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot." From Troas to Assos you could go by sea, which was about a two-day sailing journey, or you could go by land and walk through a mountain pass. Paul sent the other members of his traveling Seminary by ship and he went alone through the mountain pass on foot. Possibly Paul wanted to be alone, to do some thinking and to prepare his mind for the events just ahead for him. Later on Paul will get back to the boat and rejoin his traveling companions. In Miletus Paul will convene a Pastors' Conference and teach these pastors for a few days. Miletus was a journey of about 35 miles from Ephesus, and Paul called the Pastors in order to test their positive volition. If they were interested enough to make the journey to this conference in Miletus, then Paul knew they would be in a frame of mind so they could learn some doctrine.

Let us digress here for a moment and stress the importance of recreation and rest and quietness in the life of a pastor. It is just my personal opinion, but experience will back me up in this conclusion, that many of these pastors who are breaking down and leaving the ministry would not be doing so if they had been wise enough to have proper recreational habits. The pastor who does his work well, works on the average about fifteen or sixteen hours a day. If he keeps going in this kind of a schedule, he must have some time for recreation and relaxation. He must take out time to be alone and meditate and think over his work. In our study here we have come to the place where Paul realized he was facing one of the most important phases of his ministry. This is why he sent his companions by ship and he walked through the mountain pass alone. The pastor can survive only if he learns to lean on the power of God which is available to him and keep a strong physical body in the midst of a terrific schedule. Back in verse four of this chapter we saw the names of Paul's traveling Seminary companions--

Sopater of Berea
Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica
Gaius of Derbe
Timothy
Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia

Dr. Luke was doing the writing and he says "WE" so we know Luke was in the party. Thus we have nine in all, and probably there were some not named here. These eight or more went by ship and Paul went by land. By ship it was about sixty miles and would take two days, and by land about 35 miles. Paul used this time of quietness to prepare his mind for the Bible conference.

ACTS 20:14-15 "And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus." In these verses we have a little travelogue from Assos to Mitylene to Chios, to Samos, to Trogyllium and finally to Miletus. Following the conference Paul would move on to Tyre and then to Jerusalem. We will see how this trip will lead Paul out of the geographic will of God and eventually out of the operational will of God. A mob will almost be successful in taking his life, but the grace of God will save him.

A study of this area through which Paul's companions passed, being later joined by Paul, shows us that it was a pleasure resort area, an area where people came for relaxation and pleasure. It is a very famous playground area to this day, and a famous resort area. Please notice that they did not witness or preach while on this journey. Sometimes God expects us to let up from pressure and strenuous activity. God knows that relaxation and rest is absolutely necessary if we are to survive the hard days ahead. There is not one line about spiritual activity here. These were all great Christian men, men who knew the Lord and loved to witness. But these were days when God gave them a sunny interlude before the breaking of the stormy days which were ahead.

Ephesus was about 35 miles inland from Miletus. Miletus was one of the great commercial centers of the ancient world and was destroyed by the Persians. Here were the most famous woolen mills of the ancient world.

ACTS 20:16 "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." This is a transitional verse. It is a verse showing Paul on the move. "Had determined" is a word that means Paul had made up his mind, and he was bull-headed about it. He is in a hurry to get to Jerusalem. So the relaxed journey is over and here we find him hurrying to get to Jerusalem.

ACTS 20:17 "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." Paul called the pastors together for a short Bible conference. "Elders" comes from the word "Presbuteros" and refers to the office of pastor and refers to his rank as the leader of the church.

ACTS 20:18 "And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." The words "Come to him" really mean when they came face to face with him. This is a small conference, but Paul was close to them, could look them straight in the eye, and communicate to them Bible doctrine.

"What manner I have been with you" is a reference to the method Paul had used in his presentation. That pattern was something like this--

- 1st--He gave them Bible doctrine.
- 2nd--Doctrine was the basis for their maturity.
- 3rd--Having gained stability themselves, they were able to give stability to others.
- 4th--They were dependent on the Word of God and not upon Paul.
- 5th--This is the kind of ministry that produced divine good.

"At all seasons" is a reference to the fact that Paul didn't allow circumstances or outside disturbances to divert him from the important task of giving them the Word of God.

ACTS 20:19 "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews" This verse explains how Paul's ministry was motivated. "Serving" is a present, active, participle and refers to the fact that he was constantly serving. This is what every believer should be doing. "Humility of mind" is one word in the Greek and means "Thinking humility". This is a mental attitude of being oriented to the grace of God. This is the mental attitude one must have if his service is acceptable to God. This is impossible apart from being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is an amazing way to live. Any person who will serve in the spirit of mental humility renders service Christ can accept and bless. This is the secret of the amazing life of Paul. No one could put a hand on him and destroy him until his work was done. Here is the divine line between legalism and humility. Mental attitude humility is built on the right attitude of the grace of God and this was Paul's secret on all three successful missionary journeys.

Humility of mind is the story of 1 PETER 5:5-6 "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time"

It is the story of 1 CORINTHIANS 15:10 "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

ISAIAH 54:17 "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." This verse is spoken to the pastor for his protection.

Six Points On Humility Of Mind

1. Humility of mind is orientation to the grace of God and the plan of God.
2. Humility of mind is not self-effacement.
3. The grace of God is the only basis for service.
4. If God does not promote you, you are not worthy of promotion.
JOSHUA 3:7 "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."
5. When a pastor is promoted under grace, then Isaiah 54:17 applies to him.
6. Following the leadership of the pastor, as a principle, is required by scripture.
1 THESSALONIANS 5:12 "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you"
HEBREWS 13:7 "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."
HEBREWS 13:17 "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Following the pastor's leadership means this--As the Pastor is led by God, the people then follow his leadership. The Pastor must be taught by the scripture, and out of this scriptural doctrine his authority springs. This brings in the important policy of letting everybody mind his own business. It also involves the policy of letting everyone live his own life as unto the Lord.

My job as a minister is to give you Bible doctrine and not to try to tell you what you ought to do. The Pastor is to keep the sheep grazing on grace. He is not a boss or a dictator, he is a spiritual leader. He is not to form his program from what members tell him to do, but rather from divine direction that God gives him.

This is the conclusion we reach from Paul's example as given in this verse.

"With many tears" does not mean that Paul went around crying. He did not. Rather this is a technical phrase emphasizing the disappointments of the ministry, and the load the minister must carry. It is the load no one knows about, the silent burden. "Many tears" really refers to the fact that Paul had come to see the instability of people. These tears here do not mean that he wept as he preached.

"With many pressures" refer to the hardships, the pressures from people and weather and privation and the hostile Roman Empire.

"The lying in wait of the Jews" refers to the religious Jews, the Jews who were legalistic and never could understand the grace of God. These Jews were even a greater enemy than the hostile Roman Empire. But through it all Paul was faithful.