

Lesson 26 – Acts 20:1-38

Paul's Heart Revealed

Determination can be a wonderful characteristic to help us in many circumstances. But determination was not enough to face the challenges and troubles that awaited the Apostle Paul.

As Paul left Ephesus, his final church plant, he was able to stop in many places. His travel plans included returning to Jerusalem, though he expected obstacles and hardships would result.

Paul was committed to the mission God called him to do. His toughness and courage did not come from a special personality trait or his own resolve. When Paul wrote to the church in Philippi from a Roman prison, he acknowledged his source: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). As you study this lesson, look for examples illustrating Paul's determination and Christ's power sustaining him.

Paul's Companions

Throughout the Book of Acts, a network of Paul's fellow travelers and friends is introduced. The list of names in Acts 20:4-5 such as Sopater, Secundus, and Trophimus are only mentioned once or twice. Other men were regular travelers with Paul and made it possible for him to do his work and communicate with congregations spread across the region.

- Aristarchus was hauled into the theater in Ephesus (Acts 19:29). Later on Aristarchus worked closely with Paul, and he was a "fellow *prisoner*" with Paul (Colossians 4:10).
- *Tychicus* (Ephesians 6:21-22) carried messages to keep Paul and the churches informed and encouraged.
- Luke, the author of the book of Acts, is not named in Acts, but we know he was there because of one little word "we" (Acts 20:6). Luke was also "the beloved *physician*" (Colossians 4:14) traveling with and caring for Paul.
- Timothy was Paul's right hand man. Paul wrote him two letters bearing his name and mentions Timothy in ten other books in the New Testament. Paul called him "my true *child* in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2).

Into the Word: Acts 20:1-38

Remember the riot at Ephesus in Acts 19? Now in Acts 20:1, "the uproar had ceased." With the crowd dismissed, Paul met with the disciples before leaving town. As he continued his third missionary journey, he traveled through Macedonia and on to Greece.

After three months in Greece, the Jews plotted against him as he planned to sail on to Syria. He changed his plans and returned through Macedonia.

1. While in the city of Troas, Paul conducted a service that lasted until midnight. Why do you think Paul felt the need to preach such a long time? v.7 *He knew he was leaving the next day.*
2. Think about the environment in that room. With many lamps burning, the room was likely smoky with limited oxygen. Describe the scene in verses 8-12. *The church had gathered together, and Paul kept on preaching. A young man named Eutychus was sitting on the sill of an open window. He fell asleep and fell down three floors to his death. Paul went down to him and healed him, much to everyone's joy. Paul ate a lunch and returned to preaching till the sun came up.*
3. Paul was hurrying to get to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost (v.16). Considering his previous adventure in Ephesus, why might he want to deliberately avoid going there? *He wanted to get to Jerusalem as quickly as possible, and going through Ephesus would have taken more time.*

Instead of going to Ephesus, Paul sent for the leaders of the Ephesian church to come to him. His farewell message can be divided into three parts.

Past

Paul reminded the Ephesians that he had served them with humility, tears, and trials (vv.18-19). He had taught both Jews and Gentiles in public and in private homes (vv.20-21). He also had provided for himself and his companions (vv.33-35).

4. Paul emphasized that his main message was:
 - Repentance toward *God* and faith in *Jesus Christ* (v.21).
 - In other words, “the whole *purpose* of God” (v.27).

Present

Paul is compelled to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and travel on to Jerusalem even though he knows that “bonds and afflictions await me” (vv.22-23).

5. What value does Paul put on his own life? What is his priority? v.24 *Preaching the Gospel is far more important for him than preserving his own well-being.*

Future

Paul warns them to be on guard against the “savage wolves” that will try to draw believers away from the faith (vv.28-30).

6. Read Matthew 7:15. The “wolves” Paul refers to are *false prophets*. Paul calls the leaders to action in Acts 20:28 and 31: be on *guard* and be on the *alert*.
7. He was deeply concerned that these young Christians should be built up in the faith. This building power is found in “*God and the word of His grace*” (v.32).

Paul had worked with these people for three years and had become close to them. The congregation had come to love Paul in return. Knowing they would not see him again, the people began to weep and threw their arms around him and kissed him repeatedly (vv.36–38).

New Ideas: Paul the Pastor

Much of our study in Acts has shown Paul ministering as a traveling evangelist—one who travels from city to city preaching the Gospel. In his farewell message to the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:18-35), Paul painted a picture of his pastor’s heart—his love for the congregation. His life was an example of one following Jesus. Though not a complete list, he did:

- vv.20,27 declare *all Scripture – whole purpose*
- v.21 reach out to all people, both *Jews and Gentiles*
- vv.22-23 willingly face *bonds and afflictions*
- v.28 admonish the people to beware of *false teachers*
- vv.33-35 work hard and demonstrate the truth of Jesus’ words, “It is more blessed to *give than receive.*”

Paul’s tearful farewell after serving the congregation in Ephesus for nearly three years infers he was a kind, gracious pastor who loved his people. They responded with great love for him.

Memory Verse

And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace,
which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
Acts 20:32

Extra Memory Challenge

Acts 20:24

*But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course,
and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.*

Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. In our lesson we have seen Paul's heart revealed. In light of I Samuel 16:7 where God says, "man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart," discuss the following verses and how they show that Paul's "heart" was more important to God than his gifts, abilities, or appearance to man: II Corinthians 4:7, 10:10, 12:9–10.

Paul referred to himself as an earthen vessel whose public presence was unimpressive. He was not a polished speaker. Yet he boasted in his weaknesses showing that he was completely dependent on and trusting in the power of God in his work. This is in stark contrast with the messages we get from friends, media, music, etc.

2. Last week we talked about how easy it is to allow things to displace our fear, love, and trust in God. Having Paul's firm warning to guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28–30), the church members at Ephesus stood their ground doctrinally—but eventually left their "first love" of Jesus (Revelation 2:1–3).

- Discuss why it is important to not just know and defend the right teachings of the Bible but to allow those teachings to create and maintain a loving relationship with God in our hearts.

While knowing the Bible is very important, the purpose of God's Word is to bring us into a relationship with God where we love Him with all of our hearts.

- How is Paul's desire for the Corinthians to have a heart for God seen in II Corinthians 11:3?

Paul was concerned that they not "be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

[TM Note: Paul's heart had been drawn to love Jesus according to Philippians 3:8, Paul came to the point where he viewed all things as "loss" and "rubbish" in order that he could know Christ.]

Daily Devotions

Sunday: II Timothy 1:1-11
Monday: II Timothy 1:12-18
Tuesday: II Timothy 2:1-14
Wednesday: II Timothy 2:15-26
Thursday: II Timothy 3:1-9
Friday: II Timothy 3:10-17
Saturday: II Timothy 4:1-22

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CHURCH YEAR

* How does the Church Year encourage true worship?

The Church Year follows an annual calendar divided into two parts:

1. The Life of Christ – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost
2. Living in Christ (Trinity or Pentecost season) – the rest of the year

The *Ambassador Hymnal* states that “the first part is Christ *for us*, while the second part is Christ *in us*” (p.70). In this way we are encouraged to worship God because of what He has done in His grace, and by means of what we do in our gratitude. That is the true purpose for worship.

1. How does Romans 12:1 describe our response to God’s grace?

We respond to God’s mercy by offering ourselves in worship as living sacrifices to God.