

“The Lord’s Day”
Acts 20:1-12
(Preached at Trinity, October 24, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we enter into **Chapter 20** we enter into a new section in the ministry of Paul. Up to this point Paul has been involved in pioneer work. His ministry has focused upon going into new areas with the Gospel of Christ. Now Paul begins visiting some of the churches he had founded for the last time that he might give them some final exhortation and encouragement.
2. He begins by taking a trip through Macedonia which would include Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. After traveling through Macedonia he continued on to Greece. After spending three months in Greece it became dangerous for him to remain so he returned to Macedonia.
3. We’ve often seen that Acts is primarily a historical book focusing upon the establishment and growth of the early church. Luke, the historian, records for us the church in transition. It was a period of great change for the Church.
 1. It records the transition from the synagogue to the church
 2. It records the transition from Jews and Gentiles as separate groups to a unity of the body of Christ
 3. It records the transition from the law to grace – Old Covenant passing away to New Covenant coming to its fulness.
 4. It records the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those who had received Christ
4. While Luke’s primary purpose is to record for us the history of the early church, this doesn’t mean that the Book of Acts is totally void of theology. We have seen much theology as we’ve covered this book. In this passage Luke tells us some important things about the worship of the early church, particularly, how the Lord’s Day was spent.
5. After leaving Philippi, Paul arrived at Troas where he spent a week teaching and encouraging these brethren. It is very instructive for us to observe how they spent the Lord’s Day.
 - I. The first thing we observe is the day of worship – **Verse 7**
 - A. The early church began first with the Jews. They kept the law. Obeyed the Sabbath
 1. Immediately after the Resurrection they began to worship on the first day of the week.

John 20:19 – “Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.”

This became the pattern for the early church and for every Christian church.

2. Pentecost in Acts 2 occurred on the first day of the week - the day God chose for the great outpouring of His Spirit - (See Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9)
3. In Paul’s letter to the Church of Corinth he told them to take a collection for the Church of Jerusalem when they gathered for worship on the Lord’s Day.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 – “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

4. We should not be surprised to find the Church of Troas worshipping on the Lord’s Day and we should not be surprised to find Paul gathering with them.

Acts 20:7 – “And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

B. This was the consistent practice of the early church

1. Notice it says, “when the disciples came together”
 - a. The indication is this was the normal practice
 - b. It was also perfectly normal for Paul to gather with them for this time of corporate worship.
2. This is yet another evidence of the resurrection of Christ. Why would these Jews give up centuries of practice to change from the seventh to the first day of the week?

C. This day became known as the Lord’s Day

Revelation 1:10 – “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day”

1. It is a day consistent with the principles of the 4th Commandment but it is a day commemorating our Lord’s Resurrection.
2. Matthew Henry says of this day, “Surely this can be no other than the Christian sabbath, the first day of the week, to be observed in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. Let us who call him *our Lord* honour him on his own day, the day which the Lord hath made and in which we ought to rejoice.”

II. The second thing we observe is the emphasis upon the Preaching of the Word

A. Paul began a discourse that stretched into the night

1. The word implies strong persuasive reasoning

Acts 18:4 – “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.”

2. Paul felt a concern for the souls of men – he saw preaching as a compulsion.
1 Corinthians 9:16 – “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”
 3. Paul saw the preached Word as something God committed to him.
Titus 1:1-3 – “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; ² In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; ³ But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;”
 4. Paul's life was centered upon the Word of God. At every opportunity he preached the Word, applied it, and pressed it upon the souls of men.
He charged Timothy
2 Timothy 4:2 – “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”
- B. Paul knew the power of preaching
1. He had confidence in the Word of God. He knew its power.
 2. He preached with authority – thus saith the Lord
1 Timothy 4:11 – “These things command and teach.”
 3. And he let nothing usurp its primacy.
- C. Obviously, this church was used to preaching
1. Paul preached long and the people listened, long into the night
 2. Preaching was a central part of their Lord's Day.
 - a. When preaching becomes secondary other things will soon fill the void: Music, drama, testimonies or whatever new fad that tickles the hearts of men.
 - b. Whenever this happens the church is always weakened. This is because there is power in the preaching.
 3. The threefold mission of the church is all included in the task of preaching – worship, edification of the saints, and evangelism.
 - a. Worship – As God's Word is opened and expounded He is declared in all His excellence and glory.
 - b. The Edification of the saints – God's people are drawn nearer to God through His Word and strengthened in their relationship with Him. God uses His Word in their sanctification.
 - c. Evangelism – The lost are saved through the preaching of the Word.
1 Corinthians 1:21 – “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”
 4. Every period of great revival in the church was characterized by powerful preaching.
 - a. The Apostles were characterized by powerful preaching
 - b. The Reformation was charged with powerful preaching from preachers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox.

- c. The Puritan revival in England was characterized by the powerful preaching of men like John Bunyan, John Owen, and Richard Baxter.
- d. The Great Awakening in America was promoted by the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and George Whitefield.
- e. The church today must return to a high focus upon preaching

III. The third thing we observe is the Breaking of Bread

Acts 20:7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

- A. The early church often came together for fellowship meals often called love feasts
 - 1. Each brought food as they were able as a sign of mutual caring and love
 - 2. The Lord's Supper was originally celebrated in the context of this meal as we can see with the Church of Corinth
- B. The Lord's Table is a place of communion with Christ and with each other
 - 1. The Lord's Supper is a unique fellowship with Christ
 - a. Christ is present spiritually as we partake of the Lord's Supper
1 Corinthians 10:16 – "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"
 - b. We are actually spiritually meeting with our risen Lord
 - c. It is a communion in the body and blood of Christ
 - 2. The Lord's Supper is also a unique fellowship with other believers
1 Corinthians 10:17 – "For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."
 - a. It is to be shared by believers – members of the body of Christ
The Lord's Supper is a reminder to us that we are members one of another The Lord's Supper is a corporate observance – a feast celebrated in the company of others.
 - b. The word for "Communion" is κοινωνία - fellowship
 - c. At the first Lord's Supper meal they drank from a single cup
Matthew 26:27-28 – "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; ²⁸ For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - (1) The original literally says, "Drink from it all of you"
 - (2) This focuses upon the unity of all believers and the communion of fellowship in partaking of the cup

- d. The early church shared this special unity and fellowship
Acts 2:44-47 – “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
- C. The Lord’s Supper is a special time of worship to be celebrate on the Lord’s Day
1. The early church met on the first day of the week to break bread, fellowship and worship
 2. But notice the Lord’s Supper was connected with the preaching. The Reformers emphasized this saying there was to be no observance of the Lord’s Supper without preaching.
- IV. The final thing we can observe here is the teaching of the Word
- A. Paul preached all evening until after midnight
1. Paul’s preaching was interrupted when a young man named Eutychus grew weary and fell out of the upper window.
 2. Whether or not he was dead, Paul went down and miraculously healed him
 3. Upon restoring the young man Paul resumed preaching the word until dawn.
Acts 20:11 – “When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.”
The word here is **ὁμιλέω** which is where we get the word homiletics or homily
 4. Paul was now engaged in less formal conversation designed to further teach and edify this church—more what we would equate with fellowship. But it was not simply idle talk. Paul was always teaching.
- B. Paul’s chief concern for all of the churches was that they might grow and mature in their faith
Acts 20:26-27 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. ²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.
Acts 20:31-32 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. ³² And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.
1. His motive was that they mature to the honor and glory of Christ
2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ.
 2. Each of us should strive to edify and strengthen one another
This is one of the purposes of our fellowship meals.

Conclusion:

1. We can see in this passage the Lord's Day as it was observed by the early church.
They came together in fellowship and the breaking of bread.
They came together in worship and hearing the Word preached.
They came together in fellowship as they strengthened and edified one another.
2. It was a day that they spent joyously celebrating our Lord's resurrection.
They spent the whole day in celebration, worship, and fellowship.
3. This gives us clear standards for our own celebrating of the Sabbath.