



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ◇ DEO ◇ GLORIA

## THE BOOK OF ACTS

### Sermon Notes

#### Paul's Third Missionary Journey, Part 4

##### *Paul's Journey Back to Jerusalem*

Acts 20:1-16

February 24, 2008

- I. **Paul and His Disciples Depart Ephesus**
- II. **Paul Resurrects Eutychus in Troas**
- III. **Paul Leaves Troas for Jerusalem**

- ❖ In my opinion, one of the greatest novels written in the past 300 years is *Les Miserables*, by Victor Hugo. It is a story, containing many subplots and characters; however, the common theme is one of redemption.
- ❖ The story centers on the life of Jean Valjean. At the beginning of the story, Valjean is released from nineteen years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread. The story, then, follows Valjean [prisoner numbers 24601] as he attempts to live a life of honesty and truth. Yet, his past continues to haunt him. Not only this, he is rejected by society and just about everyone he comes into contact with. He is continually pursued by Javert, a Police Inspector, who refuses to forgive Valjean. Throughout the story, Valjean breaks his parole, attempting, once again, to leave his past behind him and begin a new life. Yet, Javert continues to follow him. Finally, after living under an assumed name; yet, serving as an honest and merciful mayor, Valjean reveals that he is not the man that he claims to be, but is rather prisoner #24601. Then, the pursuit to capture him by Javert truly picks up. At one point in the novel, Valjean has the opportunity to kill Javert, but chooses not to and exercises mercy. Ultimately, Javert is consumed with hatred toward Valjean, and cannot “cope with” the mercy extended to him by Valjean. As a result, he ultimately jumps to his death.
- ❖ In my few short years as a pastor, I have realized that many Christians today are like Jean Valjean. Although they may not have a “dark past”, they are continually trying to move on from their past.
- ❖ I have come into contact with countless individuals who have wanted to simply “turn back time” and start over again. This way, they think, they could do things right. They

would not make the same mistakes over again. They would no longer feel guilty for the sins and mistakes of the past. For many, they would no longer be haunted by the things of the past.

- ❖ It may not be this. It may be that we, like Valjean, have experienced **painful rejection** by supposed loved ones or individuals who should “know better” [after all, Javert was a policeman].
  - **Quite possibly, the most painful experiences in life is not physical pain, but rather, rejection by those whom you thought cared for you.**
  - Yet, as we explore the biblical text, it is clear that if anyone had a “right” to feel rejected, it was Christ Himself. “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” John 1:11
  - Also, the Apostle Paul also understood rejection. In Romans 10-11, Paul writes of his desire for the Jews to be saved. He loves his fellow Jews. However, they rejected Christ, and they reject Paul. In fact, his own people, the Hebrew people, throughout the Book of Acts, often seek to even kill him.
- ❖ In fact, how many times have you thought to yourself, “Lord, I am just tired of living in a fallen world. I wish you would just return so that we could be with you forever.”

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- ❖ However, as we examine Chapter 21, we will do so in light of Paul’s words to the Philippians in **Philippians 3:13-14**, “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
- ❖ In this passage, Paul admonishes the people of God to do two things: (1) “forget what lies behind”; and (2) look forward to what lies ahead.

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- Yet, far too many of us are consumed with what lies behind and do not place our focus on what lies before us.
- Also, to make matters worse, people, as a general rule, do not like change. In fact, as we get older we become more and more resistant to any time of change. The reason? Change often involves the unknown. We fear that which we do not know. Yet, in Christ, we are continually be changed “from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Yet, in Acts 20:1-16, we will examine how Paul forgot what was behind him. Next week, we will see that he also looked forward to what was ahead.

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- This section includes the following journey of Paul, as his Third Missionary Journey comes to an end:
  - Ephesus
  - Macedonia [Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea]
  - Greece [Corinth and possible as far west as Illyricum]
  - *retraces back through* Macedonia [Philippi]
  - Troas [for 7 days]
  - Assos
  - Mitylene
  - Chios
  - Samos
  - Miletus

<b>I. Paul and His Disciples Depart Ephesus</b>
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- After the riot calmed down in Ephesus, Luke writes, in **Verses 1-3**, “Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. And there he spend three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.”
  - Just prior to his departure from Ephesus, Luke writes that Paul “exhorted them...” Likely, it was quite similar to the exhortation to the same Church in **Ephesians 4:1-3**:

“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

- As Paul leaves Ephesus, it was certainly his plan to link back up with Timothy and Erastus – men he had sent ahead of him to Macedonia while he remained a little longer in Ephesus [Acts 19:22].
- It was Paul’s plan, as Luke previously stated in Acts 19:21, to travel home to Jerusalem via the Greek districts of Macedonia (the northern section) and Achaia (the southern section).
- His purpose in doing this was to (a) maintain the unity of the universal Church [Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11]; and (b) collect financial support for the impoverished Church at Jerusalem.
- Paul refers to his efforts in three of his epistles: **1 Corinthians 16:5-8** [written just before he departed from Ephesus]; **2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:5-6; 8-9** [written from Macedonia]; **Romans 16:23** [written from Corinth in Achaia].

- As Paul traveled throughout Macedonia, it is likely that he visited the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.
- In Greece, Paul stayed in **Corinth**.
  - It was here that Paul remained for three months [**Verse 3**].
  - Paul writes of this in **Romans 15:17-33**.
  - From this passage, it appears that Paul may have continued traveling further west than he had before, arriving at Illyricum on the Adriatic Sea.
  - The three months that Paul spends in Corinth is likely during the winter. The reason for this is that he would have remained there, waiting for better weather upon which to travel by sea back to Jerusalem.
- However, as Paul was about to set sail to Syria from Corinth [at its port of Cenchrea], he learned of a plot against him by the Jews.
  - No doubt the Jews in Corinth remembered well Paul’s work in Corinth during his previous visit.
  - It was during this visit that the synagogue leaders Crispus (18:8) and Sosthenes (18:17; 1 Corinthians 1:1) had embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - Furthermore, the Jews had been rather humiliated before the Roman authorities and the proconsul Gallio (18:12-17).
  - Luke does not provide specifics concerning the plot against Paul, but certainly it must have involved a plan to take his life.

John Stott [quoting from scholar W. Ramsay], writes, “Paul’s intention must have been to take a pilgrim ship [from Corinth] carrying Achaian and Asian Jews to the Passover...With a shipload of hostile Jews, it would be easy to find opportunity to murder Paul’ and dump his body overboard.”

- **Luke almost mentions the plot against Paul in a passing manner. However, we must consider how painful this must have been on Paul. His own people – those with whom he shared a common heritage – rejected him. Again, this is possibly the most painful thing one can ever experience. Yet, Paul did not become consumed with this rejection.**
- Therefore, after learning of the plot [to kill him most likely], Paul decided to return *through Macedonia*. This would have involved retracing his steps, first through Achaia, and then to the north into and through Macedonia. Then, he would cross over the Aegean Sea and ultimately catch a ship in Asian Minor headed to Israel.

- Because of this delay, and new route, Paul would miss the celebration of Passover in Jerusalem; however, he hoped to arrive in Jerusalem in time for the feast of Pentecost, which occurred fifty days after Passover.
- At this point in the narrative, Luke lists Paul’s travel companions. In **Verse 4**, Luke writes, “And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.”
  - The detour back through Macedonia involved a visit to Philippi [**Verse 6**]. It is likely that, here, the group that accompanied Paul parted from him and went ahead to Troas.
  - In **Verse 5**, Luke writes, “But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.”
    - Luke, once again, uses “we” in **Verse 5**, indicating that he is now in the company of Paul again. It appears that Luke had remained in Philippi after Paul and Silas were forced out of the city in **Acts 17:1**.
    - The men in their group, according to Luke, depart the company of Paul [and Luke] and travel ahead and waiting for Paul and Luke in Troas.
  - The reason why Luke mentions these men is likely because they represent the various cities and regions that Paul has visited and ministered.
  - Furthermore, their purpose is likely that they serve as representatives from their respective regions to the Church at Jerusalem – to whom they are bringing financial aid.
  - Notice, **Sopater** [possibly the same as Sosipater in Romans 16:21 – one of Paul’s ‘relatives’] is from **Berea** in Macedonia;
  - **Aristarchus** [mentioned also in Acts 19:29] and **Secundus** are from **Thessalonica**, also in Macedonia;
  - **Gaius** is from **Derbe** and Timothy from **Lystra** [Acts 16:1]. Each of these two cities – Derbe and Lystra – are in the region of **Galatia**.
  - **Tychicus** and **Trophimus** represent are probably both from Ephesus, representing Asia.
  - Likely, **Luke** represents **Philippi**;
  - Whereas **Titus** represents **Achaia** [**Corinth**, 2 Corinthians 8:16-19].

- As these men travel to Jerusalem, carrying in the collection for the church there, they are a living testimony to the manner in which the words of Jesus Christ in Acts 1:8 have been fulfilled. The gospel has indeed gone, through the witness of the Apostles, to the “ends of the earth”; and it has united men and women of multiple races, languages, and cultures.
- As Paul and Luke remain in Philippi, the accompanying entourage goes ahead and waits for them in Troas.
- Then, Luke writes, in **Verse 6**, “We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.”
  - Although Paul could not make it to Jerusalem in time for Passover, he was able to celebrate it with the believers in Philippi. [Recall: Passover, the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits (Easter/Resurrection Sunday) all fall within one week.]
  - According to I. Howard Marshall, “It is probable that he [Paul] was celebrating the Christian Passover, i.e. Easter, with the church at Philippi.” He derives his assertion from **1 Corinthians 5:7**: “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.”
  - After this celebration, Paul and Luke arrived at Troas, where they remained for seven days.

## II. Paul Resurrects Eutychus in Troas

- We are not told exactly what Paul does in Troas, until the last night he was there. In **Verses 7-12**, Luke gives the fascinating account of the death and “resurrection” of Eutychus.
- The story is quite simple, yet with powerful implications.
  - On the final night of Paul’s week-long stay in Troas, he began “talking to them” and “prolonged his message until midnight.” It seems that Paul had a tendency to be long-winded!
  - Luke makes an interesting note in **Verse 8**, “There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.”
    - This bit of information gives the reader a insight into the setting. The oil-burning lamps may have made the air quality smoky and stuffy.
  - Then, Luke writes, in **Verse 9**, “And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking,

he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.”

- Possibly because of the poor air quality in the room, this young man, Eutychus, was “sitting on the window sill” trying to get some fresh air.
  - Furthermore, the Greek word for the phrase “young man” indicates that he was likely somewhere between 7 and 14.
  - Therefore, (a) it was late [probably past the young man’s bedtime!]; (b) Paul was long-winded!; (c) the air quality was poor; (d) and the boy was young. All of these factors contributed to the fact that he fell asleep.
  - Actually, it says that he was “sinking into a deep sleep.” He was likely trying to fight it, but eventually could not – for “he was overcome with sleep.”
  - Some commentators have suggested that Eutychus was actually not dead, but we must remember that **Luke was a doctor**. When he states he “was picked up dead” we must conclude that Eutychus was actually dead.
- Then, in **Verse 10**, Luke writes, “But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, ‘Do not be troubled, for his life is in him.’”
- This scene is reminiscent of Elijah (1 Kings 17:21) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:34).
  - Therefore, Eutychus is brought back to life.
  - After this, **Verse 12**, “They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.”

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□ **When we understand that, in Christ, we are to “forget what lies behind”; we should take comfort in the “newness” that comes from Christ alone.**

- In this particular context, this narrative gives a powerful illustration of the “newness” that comes only from a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- There are several truths that demonstrate this point: (1) It is a **New Week**; (2) it is a **New People**; (3) the people gather to celebrate a **New Covenant**; (4) the “resurrection” of Eutychus gives him **New Life**; and (5) Paul continues to preach as the sun rises on a **New Day**.

(1) It is a **NEW WEEK**

- Luke begins **Verse 7**, stating, “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together...”
  - Like so many things in our lives, we as Christians often “go through the motions” never considering why we do what we do. A good example of this is our day of worship. Why is it that we worship on Sunday, especially when the Sabbath in the Old Testament was on Saturday.
    - First of all, one of the reasons we worship on Sunday is that this is the apostolic model. Here, in Acts 20:7, we witness the early church gathering on “the first day of the week”, i.e. Sunday.
    - Yet, the question remains, “Why?” There are several reasons for this.
      - First of all, we must understand that the Sabbath was the Covenantal sign of the Old/Mosaic Covenant. It was this covenant that pointed to and was fulfilled in Christ Himself. In fact, Jesus Himself declared, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you *rest*. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND **REST** FOR YOUR SOULS.” Matthew 11:28-29 [emphasis added]
        - To the astute Hebrew reader, they would understand that what Jesus is declaring is that the Sabbath was to be a day of rest because it pointed to Christ Himself who **is our rest – He is our Sabbath!**
      - Secondly, however, one must understand that Adam was the head of the Old Creation; whereas Christ, the New Adam, is the head of the New Creation. The Old Creation, through the sin of Adam is fallen, corrupted. However, the New Covenant, ushered in the death, burial, and **resurrection** of Jesus Christ is NEW, RESTORED, REDEEMED!

2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

- Therefore, because the pivotal act of Christ, the head of the New Creation, was the resurrection, and the resurrection occurred on Sunday, the early church worshipped on Sunday [Note: ALL acts of Christ were pivotal and essential to our salvation; however, the resurrection is viewed as the ultimate testimony to the truth that Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Son of God].

- Thirdly, as Christ is the head of the New Creation, we worship Him at the “head” of a new week – which itself represents Creation [or, the days of Creation] – which is Sunday.
- Finally, the Holy Spirit descended on the Church at Pentecost – fifty days after Passover – and this was on a Sunday.

## (2) It is a **NEW PEOPLE**

- Next, although Paul was rejected by his own people, the Jews, he now worships with a **new people** – those redeemed by the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Therefore, the racial barriers, which had long separated the Jews from the Gentiles, are now abolished, creating a **NEW PEOPLE** – those who are *in Christ*.

“Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him - a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.”  
Colossians 3:9-11

## (3) The people gather to celebrate a **NEW COVENANT**

- Luke writes that they gathered on the first day of the week, gathering “together to break bread...”
  - This expression, no doubt, refers to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.
  - When we look at the words of Jesus, recorded by Paul, during His institution of the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, we read Him say, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” 1 Corinthians 11:25
  - It is only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ – the perfect and final sacrifice – that we can understand, celebrate, and enjoy the benefits of the New Covenant.
  - Christ fulfilled the Old and ushered in the New.
  - Yet, this is one of the places in Scripture where **we are called to look back**. Yet, we **look back to the work of Christ**. For only when we look back, in remembrance of what Christ did on the Cross, can we look forward to our eternal lives with Him when “He comes.” 1 Corinthians 11:26

## (4) The “resurrection” of Eutychus gives him **NEW LIFE**

- The miracle which Paul performs [through his unique apostolic authority] powerfully demonstrates our New Life in Christ.

- ❑ Paul’s clear statement in 2 Corinthians 5:17 states that **the old has gone, the new has come**.
- ❑ In Christ, we are new creatures, with new natures. Furthermore, since it is God who began the new work in us, He will carry it on to completion [Philippians 1:6].
- ❑ James Montgomery Boice also remarks:

“The significance of the incident may be this. Paul was not going to see these believers again. This is a farewell scene. Moreover, they were observing the Lord’s Supper, and it was clear that they would not do that together again until they were together in heaven. Before then they would all die, though they would be raised again. Maybe the story of Eutychus is a picture from which we can take heart. We are alive now and are with other believers, but death will come and with death a parting. If this life were all there is, that would be the end. But it is not the end, because there is a resurrection, and we will meet again.”

(5) Paul continues to preach as the sun rises on a <b>NEW DAY</b> .
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- ❑ After Paul raises Eutychus from the dead, He continued speaking with the gathered body “until daybreak.”
- ❑ One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is the truth that every day is a new day.
- ❑ We read in Lamentations [not the most uplifting Book in the Scriptures!]:

“The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,  
 For His compassions never fail.  
 They are new every morning;  
 Great is Your faithfulness.”                      Lamentations 3:22-23

<b>III. Paul Leaves Troas for Jerusalem</b>
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- ❑ The next morning, Luke and the others in the entourage went and caught a ship for Assos. Luke states, “[We were] intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land.” **Verse 13**
- ❑ We do not know why Paul did not travel by boat, but he did not. He made the twenty-mile journey by foot [and all of this after being up all night preaching, teaching, and fellowshiping – and raising Eutychus from the dead!]
- ❑ After Paul met his group in Assos, he boarded the ship with them and went to Mitylene [**Verse 14**].

- ❑ Luke concludes this section, writing in **Verses 15-16**, “Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.”
- ❑ Therefore, this section ends with Paul and his group in Miletus.

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- ❑ So, although Paul was rejected in nearly every city he came to, and was rejected by his own, he refused to dwell on the past and allow him to drag him down.
- ❑ He takes comfort and joy knowing that one day, Christ will make everything right, and make all things new.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’ And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’”

Revelation 21:1-5