Ministry of the Holy Spirit
Acts 20:1-12
Lesson 37 – In Church, but out of Touch

Acts 20:1-12 (NIV) [1] When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-by and set out for Macedonia. [2] He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, [3] where he stayed three months. Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. [4] He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. [5] These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. [6] But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days. [7] On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. [8] There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. [9] Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. [10] Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" [11] Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. [12] The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

Discussion Questions

1. **What does the gathering in Troas reveal about the importance of worship, fellowship, and receiving God's Word together?** How can these shared practices deepen our relationship with Christ?
   Scripture: Acts 20:7, 11; Hebrews 10:24–25.
2. **The sermon describes being physically present in worship while inwardly disconnected. What is the difference between participating in religious activity and abiding in Jesus?** What helps you recognize that difference in your own life?
   Scripture: John 15:4–5.
3. **How can we distinguish physical exhaustion, emotional weariness, and spiritual neglect?** How might Jesus' response to His disciples help us address these conditions with both compassion and honesty?
   Scripture: Acts 20:9; Matthew 26:40–41; Mark 6:31.
4. **When prayer seems unanswered and enthusiasm fades, what helps us continue seeking God?** What does faithful perseverance look like when we do not feel spiritually

energized?

Scripture: Psalm 63:1–8; Galatians 6:9.

5. **The sermon says, "We don't pray, worship, and study to make God love us." How does knowing we are already loved change our motivation for practicing these disciplines?**

   Scripture: Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:8–10.

6. **Using the lamps as an illustration, the sermon challenges every believer to shine. What makes us assume someone else will serve?** What gift or opportunity has God entrusted to you for the good of others?

   Scripture: Matthew 5:14–16; 1 Peter 4:10–11.

7. **The window becomes an illustration of vulnerability. What habits, environments, or influences make it harder for you to remain attentive to Christ?** What would a wiser position look like?

   Scripture: Colossians 3:1–2; Hebrews 12:1–2.

8. **How can small compromises gradually become accepted patterns?** What helps us receive God's correction before we begin defending something He is calling us to surrender?

   Scripture: James 1:14–15; Psalm 139:23–24.

9. **Jesus' warning about two masters specifically addresses serving God and money. How does that example expose the danger of divided loyalty?** What competing allegiance most challenges your obedience to Christ?

   Scripture: Matthew 6:19–24.

10. **What is the difference between hearing Scripture and allowing it to transform us?** Identify one teaching from this sermon that calls for a concrete change in how you live.

    Scripture: Matthew 4:4; James 1:22–25.

11. **What stands out about Paul interrupting the gathering to go down and embrace Eutychus?** How should his response shape the way our church notices and cares for

people in distress?

Scripture: Acts 20:9–10; Galatians 6:1–2.

12. **The passage ends with the community greatly comforted. What does this outcome reveal about God's power and His care for the gathered church?** How can we share testimonies of restoration while making room for people whose struggles are ongoing?

Scripture: Acts 20:11–12; 2 Corinthians 1:3–4.

Two Practical Takeaway Challenges

1. **Move from hearing to responding.** For the next seven days, set aside ten minutes daily to read John 15:1–11 and pray without beginning with requests. Ask, "Lord, how are You calling me to abide in You today?" Choose one specific act of obedience and share what you learned at the next study.
2. **Go toward someone who needs care.** This week, contact one person who is weary, isolated, or struggling. Listen before offering advice, ask what support would help, and take one practical step to encourage them. Follow up before the week ends.

Share your major takeaways from the Lesson/Sermon this week.

Commentary

1. (20:1) **Minister— Church, Care for**: the faithful minister considered the church above all. There had been a terrible uproar and riot in Ephesus, an attack launched primarily against Paul, but which had also involved the believers. It was a narrow escape (cp. Acts 19:21-41). The point is this: Paul sensed that if he continued in Ephesus, he would endanger the believers. He thought first and foremost of the church, not wishing to bring any harm whatsoever to the believers. Therefore, he called them together and embraced them and left to undertake a ministry in Europe.

Thought 1. Every minister, in fact every believer, must consider the church and its welfare above all. No doubt Paul desired to minister in Ephesus a while longer. But he knew he was the center of controversy, and it would be better for the church if he left. He put the welfare of the church before his own desires.

2. (20:1-2) **Exhortation— Minister— Faithfulness**: the faithful minister serves quietly, exhorting much. So much happened in Paul's life and ministry that will never be known. In fact, if it were not for Luke, the author of Acts, we would know very little about this extraordinary servant of God. He says little about himself in the letters to the churches which he wrote. Paul served quietly, without boasting and publicizing his own efforts for the Lord. He was interested in one thing: reaching people for Christ, not in promoting himself. In fact, this was the spirit of all the servants of the early church. Even Luke, when writing of Paul, does not glorify Paul because of his work but he glorifies the Lord as the source and power lying behind Paul's work. In other words, even Luke presents the service of Paul in a quiet way, symbolizing that Paul served the Lord quietly, glorifying the Lord's name and not lifting up his own weak efforts (weak efforts that were made strong in the Lord).

A good example of Paul serving quietly and exhorting much is in these two verses. Paul's ministry in Macedonia (Europe) lasted almost a year and involved some outstanding events. Yet we know nothing about them except what little we can glean from Paul's own writing.

⇒ There was Paul waiting in Troas for Titus. Titus had been sent from Ephesus to Corinth to work out the problems there and to deliver *The Letter of First Corinthians* from Paul. Titus was supposed to meet and report back to Paul in Troas. But he was not there when Paul arrived. Paul, therefore, began to "preach Christ's gospel" and to minister while waiting for Titus (2 Cor. 2:12-13).

⇒ There was Paul apparently suffering some serious illness or some awful burden while in Troas (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

⇒ There was Paul leaving Troas because he had "no rest in his spirit." This refers at least in part to his concern over the problems in the GALATIAn and Corinthian churches. Titus was running way behind schedule and Paul was concerned. So he travelled on into Macedonia (Europe) (2 Cor. 7:5-6).

⇒ There was Paul also meeting up with Timothy in Macedonia, probably at Thessalonica. He received reports on the welfare of all the churches Timothy had been visiting (Acts 19:22).

⇒ There was Paul finally meeting up with Titus in Macedonia, probably Philippi, and receiving news about the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 7:5-6).

⇒ There was Paul sitting down immediately to write *Second Corinthians* and sending Titus right back to Corinth to complete the work of straightening out the church (2 Cor. 8:16-24). Note that Timothy remained with Paul (1 Cor. 1:1), but someone else was sent with Titus, perhaps Luke (2 Cor. 8:18).

⇒ There was Paul refusing to visit Corinth, waiting until his letter and Titus had time to settle the problems in the church. While waiting he evangelized Illyricum (Romans 15:19; 2 Cor. 13:1-2, 10).

Now just imagine—all these events and many, many more took place in one year, yet they were never mentioned. All Luke said was that Paul went into Macedonia and exhorted much. The point is this: the faithful minister serves quietly and exhorts much. He does not blow his own horn. He honors Christ and Him alone. He does not serve by concentrating on building himself up, but by reaching and evangelizing people for Christ and exhorting them in the faith.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:11-15).

3. (20:3) **Persecution**: the faithful minister faced constant threats courageously, but intelligently. What happened to Paul was this: he had been ministering in Greece for three months and was about to sail for Antioch in Syria to visit his home church. Somehow he discovered a plot against his life. Apparently the Jews in Corinth had never gotten over the ruler's (Gallio's) judgment against them and had been waiting over the years for an

opportunity to get rid of Paul. They were either going to throw him overboard or else kill him someplace on the dock. Paul immediately changed his plans and fled back into Macedonia.

Thought 1. The faithful minister faces constant threat because of the gospel and God's will. The faithful minister is constantly pressing for the church and its believers to live for Christ. He is constantly carrying the Lord's message to his own neighborhood and to the world. Righteousness and evangelism disturb people, even carnal believers. They are always a constant threat to genuine believers. The believer must live courageously, but intelligently; he must always be ready to change his plans under God's direction, even as Paul did.

"But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues" (Matthew 10:17).

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

4. (20:4-6) **Discipleship**: the faithful minister grew disciples. These men were chosen by the various churches to help Paul deliver the relief offerings being sent to the Jerusalem church.

1. Sopater or Sosipater was from Berea. He may be the same person mentioned by Paul as being with him when he wrote Romans (Romans 16:21). He was a servant of the Lord who was held in high esteem by the church at Berea. He was the one trusted with their offerings to the church of Jerusalem.

2. Aristarchus

3. Secundus. This is the only reference to him. He was a disciple of Paul, a man highly esteemed by his church at Thessalonica, being entrusted with the offering to the poor.

4. Gaius was a common name, and there are several possibilities as to who he was. Note that he was accompanying Paul.

⇒ There was Gaius, a native of Macedonia and a disciple of Paul who was seized in the riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:29).

⇒ There was Gaius, a native of Derbe and a disciple of Paul (Acts 20:4). This Gaius is most likely the same as the Gaius of Corinth.

⇒ There was Gaius who was led to the Lord and baptized by Paul in Corinth (Romans 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14).

Trophimus was from Ephesus. There are only three references to him. He was the highly esteemed leader in the church at Ephesus who was entrusted with their offerings to the poor at Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-5). He was the reason why the Jews of Jerusalem rioted and arrested Paul. He was left sick by Paul in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). (Note Paul was unable to heal him. It is not always God's will to heal. But we must always remember: God does will to heal sometimes.)

Thought 1. Paul was constantly making disciples, attaching men to himself and growing them in the Lord

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching [making disciples] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Thought 2. Note that these men were chosen to handle the offerings of the church. They show us what kind of men (ushers) should be chosen to handle money for the church.

5. (20:7) **Worship**: the faithful minister worshipped with believers wherever he was. Note this: Paul was in Troas on the oceanfront for seven days, which means he was there for one Sunday. He was tired, exhausted, apparently having had no break for years. Instead of taking Sunday off and strolling out on the beach, praying and meditating, note where he was: worshipping with the believers. He was faithful...

- in worshipping on the first day of the week.
- in observing the day the Lord arose (the first day of the week).
- in observing the Lord's Supper, the breaking of bread weekly.
- in having fellowship with other believers no matter who they were or where they were nor how poor their facilities (note they had to meet in a house).
- in honoring the Lord with other believers on the Lord's Day.
- in being where the world expected him to be on the Lord's Day.

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:36-37).

"And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:52-53).

6. (20:7) **Preaching**: the faithful minister preached long and fervently. He grabbed every opportunity he could to preach despite tiredness and the need for rest. Note he preached until midnight.

Thought 1. There is a lesson here for us all. There is a place for long messages and the need for much learning, which means alert and rapt attention.

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7).

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

7. (20:8-12) **Minister**: the faithful minister served tenderly and warmly. The story speaks for itself. Note several points.

1. The boy's name was Eutychus.

2. The boy's accident was his own fault. He was sitting in a dangerous place, on a window sill three stories high. He went to sleep when he should have been listening and learning.

Thought 1. Too many miss too much by not staying awake and alert.

Thought 2. Note: there were many lights to help the people stay alert. Churches need to pay attention to the need for well lighted buildings.

3. Luke the physician says explicitly the boy "was taken up dead." The words "taken up" indicate the boy was examined and moved someplace, perhaps into a bedroom or the first floor of the house.

4. Paul "fell upon" and "embraced" the boy. This is a picture of...

• compassion• being determined to help the boy• being an instrument for the power of God's life to flow through him into the boy

Thought 1. Symbolically, every believer should throw himself upon the lost of the world to impart the life of God to them (John 20:21; cp. Luke 19:10).

5. Paul fellowshipped all night with the believers. Note they celebrated the Lord's Supper.

Thought 1. What a beautiful picture of sweet fellowship between believers and a visiting preacher! This scene says much to churches about the welcome and fellowship in the Lord that should be extended to visiting preachers.

6. The boy and his family and the church were all comforted by the wonderful restoration of the young boy. The scene is that of a most joyful occasion.

Thought 1. When the life of God is breathed into the life of a person, a great comfort results.

"I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).