

Alongside continual trial and vindication, the journey is the other great theme that Luke is tapping into as he tells his story. Particularly his story of Paul. Few people today spend most of their lives on the move, Paul did! And we do feel the pull and power of a story, which enables us to reflect on the journey through time which we are making. The journey of our lives has many twists and turns. We carry memories of “*where we have been*”, in the sense of what has happened to us. We carry hopes and fears for “*where we might go next*” in the sense of what may yet happen to us. Even if we live on the same street all our life long, we are on a journey whether we like it or not; and we greatly value stories that help us to see that. We see this in Luke’s narrative of the Acts of the Apostles. “*Where has he been and where might he go next.*”

Luke now runs through a great many destinations, giving each only a brief mention. Luke seems keen to move the story along to Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem. Before that, there is one more significant interaction between Paul and the church at Ephesus. It is most probable that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians before he left Ephesus. From there he travelled on to Macedonia and 2 Corinthians provides us with the period covered in Acts 20:1-6. It is highly likely two of Paul’s most powerful letters emerge from this period. He was writing 2 Corinthians; it seems while on the way around northern Greece (20:1-2) before ending up in Corinth. Then, while in Corinth he wrote his masterpiece, the letter to Rome. Perhaps part of the reason for the enlarged company representing so many churches (v.4) to give to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. He may also have wanted the safety of a larger group of travelling companions when carrying a substantial amount of money. And the clear accounting of several who could witness that the money had safely reached its destination.

Paul summons the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him at Miletus (v.17). As he speaks to them, Paul reflects on his time in Ephesus, the longest period he has ever spent with a church, and on his pattern of ministry and its significance. In Acts 20 (vv.18-35) Luke records how Paul’s “*saying goodbye*” to the Ephesian elders became a real challenge for them to faithfully fulfill their ministry. Paul was a man on a mission. He knew what direction God was leading him and he encouraged others to do the same. It is so important we seek God’s leading and set appropriate goals- something definite to aim toward in God’s mission.

In Paul’s “*saying goodbye*” we see a good outline for Christian leadership, using his own methods as an example (vv.19-21). Paul exhorts the leaders of the challenges that await, & the need to take care of the flock and then finally committing them to God. Paul had mentored the elders, now he entrusted them to God, confident that in the grace of Jesus Christ, they had all the resources they would need to go on in their spiritual life. In the “*saying goodbye*” we see proof of the deep feelings that existed between the great apostle & the followers of Jesus who had benefited from his leading.

1) As you read through this passage (Acts 20) what do you see and feel?

2) Acts 20:1-12; what are Paul’s movements after he leaves Ephesus?

What does Luke say are Paul’s purposes in his travels?

Which verse indicates that Luke had rejoined the team?

3) What was the practice of the disciples on the first day of the week?

How is that significant for us?

4) Why do you think we see such a detailed story of Eutychus?

Why does God heal some and not others?

5) Read Acts 20:13-38; what has been driving Paul forward in his journey?

What has been Paul's message to both Jews and Greeks?

What confident statement could Paul make about his ministry in Ephesus?

6) From Paul's farewell speech at Ephesus what charge did Paul give the church leaders?

What dangers would threaten the church at Ephesus, and what would protect them?

What dangers threaten your church and the church worldwide?

7) What example had Paul set for the Ephesian church?

In what ways might we apply his example today?

8) The reaction of the Ephesian leaders; what does this communicate about the character of Paul's ministry and the kind of person Paul was?

What was Paul's final act of farewell?

9) Who is in your spiritual care?

How are you preparing those that you nurture spiritually to be left with this same confidence?

10) How might your life be different if your chief goal was not to preserve your life, your security, or your convenience, but rather to be faithful to your calling to testify to the gospel?