



Message #46
“SLEEPING DURING SERMONS”
(Acts 20:1-16)

Paul had already decided to leave Ephesus (Acts 19:21) and the riot (recorded in Acts 19 and led by Demetrius the silversmith) must have confirmed that this was the right course of action, and the right time. So Paul gathered the believers together to say goodbye and to encourage them to stand firm in the Faith. We often think of Barnabas as the “personification of encouragement”, not Paul. After all, Barnabas was called the “son of encouragement” and it is true that this seems to have been a special gifting of his. But it is also true that every believer is called to exercise a ministry of encouragement (Romans 14:19). Paul exercised this ministry of encouragement well on many occasions (**Acts 14:22; 15:32; 16:40**). And, now, as he is about to leave Ephesus, he encourages the Ephesian believers before saying goodbye to them.

PAUL THE ENCOURAGER (Acts 20:1-2)

Paul had spent about three years in Ephesus and his ministry there had been hugely successful (and, often, controversial). Many people had come to the Lord during this time. He loved these people. To leave them was not an easy thing to do, though Paul knew that the Lord needed him to keep moving on.

Describe a time when you had to say a painful goodbye.

What experiences have you had of being encouraged....and being discouraged....by others?

Why does it seem so much more common for people to be discouragers, rather than encouragers?

How can we develop/foster the ministry of encouragement in the church?

Who can you be encouraging? How do you need to be encouraged?

After encouraging the believers, Paul left for Macedonia (going the long way round to return to Jerusalem). He travelled, preached and encouraged the churches on his journey up through Macedonia and then down through Achaia (Greece). After arriving in Greece, Luke tells us that Paul stayed there for three months. He does not go into detail about this time, but maybe it was an important time of rest and refreshing for Paul. (It is also quite likely that Paul penned his great work of theology, the Letter to the Romans, during this time.)

PAUL & HIS TEAM (Acts 20:3-6)

As we’ve seen through the missionary journeys of Paul, he rarely travelled on his own, usually being accompanied by at least one other person (sometimes several). Undoubtedly, there were many reasons for this....discipleship, fellowship, mentoring...but there would also have been the added advantage of protection. Paul was often a “marked Man” and it was safer for him to travel with others.

The team he had with him as he moved on from Greece (after a plot by Jews that prevented him from sailing direct for Syria) was a diverse group, with representatives from the various churches that had contributed to the special offering taken up for the church in Jerusalem:

Sopater (Berea), Aristarchus and Secundus (Thessalonica), Gaius (Derbe), Tychicus and Trophimus (Asia Province), and Timothy. However, in verses 5 and 6 we see another notable inclusion.....

Luke has once again rejoined the team or, at least, re-inserted himself into his narrative.

19:5 – Luke uses the pronoun “us” referring to himself and Paul (as the rest of the team went on ahead to Troas. And then in **19:6** Luke uses “we”, again referring to himself and Paul, as they sailed from Philippi to connect with the team in Troas.

Do you like working closely with other people, or are you more of a “lone ranger”?

A CHURCH SERVICE IN TROAS (Acts 20:7-12)

For hundreds of years, people thought Troy was just a mythological city immortalized in Homer’s *Iliad* and other writings and romanticised through the story of The Trojan War with Helen of Troy and The Trojan Horse. However, in the 1860s, archaeologists were able to verify the existence of Troy and, as they dug down, they discovered not just one level of Trojan civilization, but nine (9) different levels, or periods, of civilization at Troy. Biblical Troas was one of these 9 levels.



Paul and his companions stayed seven days in Troy and Luke records that “...**on the first day of the week we came together to break bread...**” (20:7).

This is a significant statement because it is the first clear indication of the growing emphasis on the Sunday as being the day of gathering for worship for the Christian community.

Why do you think the day of worship moved from the Sabbath of the Jews to the Sunday, the “first day of the week”? (see Matthew 28:1).

By the end of the first century, Sunday worship was the norm for the Christian church.

SLEEPING DURING THE SERMON (Acts 20:9-11)

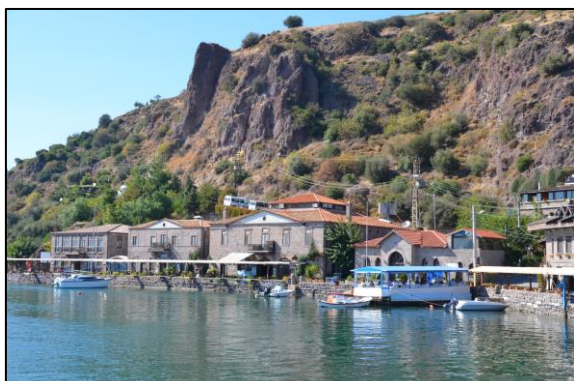
As there was no concept of “weekend” back then, the Sunday would have been a normal work day. Hence, the gathering of the church community together would have taken place in the evening. Luke tells us that, because Paul was leaving Troas the next day, he took full advantage of the opportunity and preached until midnight! This was in a stuffy room (lit by lamps and candles) on the third floor of a building. A young fellow, Eutychus, was listening from a windowsill. He grew drowsy, fell asleep and fell out of the window to his death below. The meeting stopped. Everyone rushed downstairs in horror at this terrible accident. But Paul came down, threw himself on the young man and he came back to life. then Paul went back upstairs, broke bread, ate, and launched into another long sermon, finishing at dawn!

DISCUSS:

“Though no Christian today should expect to experience what Eutychus did, every Christian will experience more than he did.”

How does the thought of death and eternity influence your life and perspective in the present?

Luke then records that he and the others went on ahead of Paul to Assos. Paul stayed behind briefly. Assos was the harbour from which Paul rejoined Luke and the team and they set sail for the journey back to Jerusalem. Paul was now keen to get moving so as to be in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost.



The end of the Third Missionary Journey was drawing near. Paul had, once again, covered a lot of territory and experienced many things in his passionate pursuit of fulfilling God’s will and calling. Nothing could hold him back.

Do you find it easy, or difficult, to be focused on your relationship with God and doing what you believe He has for you to do? What are some things that might distract you from such a commitment and focus?
