

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

E. Christ's Use Of The Apostle Paul To Spearhead Worldwide Outreach, Acts 14:4-28:31

24. Christ's Use Of Paul To Rest To Prolong His Ministry

(Acts 20:13-17)

I. Introduction

- A. One who serves God in time becomes aware of the wear of that ministry on his limited human resources.
- B. In view of this wear, not only did Jesus direct His disciples to rest a while from the ministry to renew their limited human resources (cf. Mark 6:31), but Paul saw his need to do the same in Acts 20:13-17:

II. Christ's Use Of Paul To Rest To Prolong His Ministry, Acts 20:13-17.

- A. In both the cases of Jesus' disciples in Mark 6:31 and of Paul in Acts 20:13-17, these servants of God had paid a great price in physical, mental, spiritual and emotional resources in performing God's ministry:
 1. In Mark 6, the disciples had just returned to report to Jesus on their ministries of exorcising demons (Mark 6:7), preaching the kingdom with mixed responses (Mark 6:10-12) and healing the sick (Mark 6:13) with the result that crowds kept them from eating some of their meals, Mark 6:31b.
 2. In Acts 20, the Apostle Paul faced much the same wear and tear on his own human resources:
 - a. His life had been threatened against sailing from Greece to Syria (Acts 20:2-3a), so Paul had decided to retrace his steps back through Macedonia where he had just ministered, Acts 20:3b, 1-2a.
 - b. This trip was accompanied by prophecies that bonds and afflictions awaited him if Paul entered Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23). This implied he would then soon be martyred, Acts 20:25, so believers realized they would not see Paul again, causing them stress that in turn stressed him, Acts 21:12-13.
 - c. Then, Paul had stayed up ministering the whole previous night with the death and his raising of Eutychus in Acts 20:7-12, a physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting event!
 - d. Spiritually, Eutychus' death had also produced tension between Paul and some of his listeners: they would in part have blamed him for Eutychus' death due to his long sermon (Acts 20:7, 9), so Paul had followed Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elishah to raise Eutychus similar to how those men had raised youths in their ministries to reverse negative feelings of them from their associates, cf. 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:20-37. Paul was thus spiritually fatigued from Eutychus' experience.
- B. In response to this drain on his human resources, like Jesus had taught His disciples, Paul sought to *limit* his **exposure even to fellow believers** to renew his limited human resources for better future ministry:
 1. Acts 20:13-14 with 20:6 reveals Paul walked alone on foot around ten miles from Troas to Assos while his companions took a ship from Troas around the peninsula to Assos, a distance of over 20 miles by sea, cf. The Cambridge Ancient History, vol. X, Map 9, "Asia Minor and Armenia."
 2. This would have given Paul a much-needed isolation from others coupled with exercise and an impressive view of the landscape that would have given time for reflection, prayer and human renewal.
 3. Having taken this walk, Paul must have realized the great emotional toll he had experienced in his exposure to fellow believers who were upset at seeing him for the last time, so he purposed to meet only with the elders of the Church at Ephesus in stopping at the port city, Miletus, Acts 20:14-16. Paul claimed he wanted to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost as just reason for visiting only with the Church's elders (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., fn. to Acts 20:16), but this choice to limit his exposure even to beloved fellow believers also worked to give Paul greater opportunity for rest in preparation for the arduous crises he knew from prophecy awaited him when he arrived at Jerusalem, Acts 20:22-23!

Lesson: *Though the ministries both the disciples in Jesus' earthly life and Paul were greatly needed by God's people, BOTH SETS of GOD'S SERVANTS had to LIMIT their EXPOSURE EVEN to GOD'S PEOPLE to RENEW their HUMAN RESOURCES so as BETTER to SERVE God's people!*

Application: *May we who serve Christ "come apart . . . and rest a while" lest we fall apart in fatigue! Of necessity, this will at times include isolating ourselves even from other believers, a necessary step of rest, that we might be renewed for more effective service to the flock of God!*