

Tonight we continue through the book of Acts. It is a narrative report; it is written by the Holy Spirit, obviously, and given to Luke to give to us. It is a coverage of the first thirty years of the life in the church that began at Pentecost. It shows us how the gospel of Jesus was shared by His people, how God intended it to go forth by the power of God's Spirit.

We've said, as we've gone through this book, that the book of Acts is really a biblical blueprint for what God would desire for the church. I think if you ever wonder how the church should function or behave, or what it should pursue, I think your best bet is to go in here and read the very clear insight God gives us about His will being accomplished, His saving grace, and what He told us about. I keep saying - I know, we're saying the same things to you every week - this is God's report of the first thirty years of the church. So you go, "Well, this is what God wants me to know." And you'll run into things; you go, "I wonder why nothin' was said about that," and you go, "Well, I don't know, but He wants me to know this." I can't answer the quiet ones or the secret things; where the Bible is silent, I have to be silent. But at the same time, there's a lot to take away from the book itself. We mentioned to you as well, and I'll try to do it till the end of the book, that the book's first thirteen-fifteen years or so report the gospel going out to the Jews - to the Jews first; the gospel went to the Jews in Jerusalem. God's desire was always that all men would be saved, as He makes clear in His Word (1 Timothy 2:4). And, certainly, with the miraculous way that God led Peter to the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, where he encountered a room full of Gentiles and got 45 seconds into his sermon, and the whole room got saved, Peter went, "Well, this is amazing. That happened to us as well." And he saw them all turn to Christ. Eventually, the Jewish believing elders gathered to acknowledge God's grace (in Acts 15), and the Word was out. "We believe that the Gentiles don't need to join and become Jews first. They can just go right to Jesus. That's how grace works." And so, though they were hounded by what we call the Judaizers (in the first couple of centuries, especially) - those who wouldn't believe that the gospel would be given that way, and they tried to dog the steps of the evangelists, if you will, the church reaching out - they were irritating, but they certainly didn't stop the work of God.

Three missionary journeys are documented in the last fifteen years; most of them Paul's ministry - from chapter 13 through about the end of chapter 21 or so. It takes up a large portion of the book of Acts. God would like us to see how the Word of God went out. Paul went out in 46-47 A.D. - the first time with Barnabas, mainly to what was Galatia then (is Turkey today). The second time he went out, he went primarily to Europe although he, in each one of these trips, stopped and ministered to the churches that had been planted. And the third trip was basically to Ephesus, though he went to Greece (he went down and kind of around). He would end up in Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey, not going home to the Antioch church in Syria (300 miles to the north), which was his home church and which really is the missions center in the book of Acts. But God gives us this narrative so that we can learn from the reports themselves. There're not a lot of doctrinal directives in the book of Acts, although there are some supported by the epistles that you read afterwards. But we learn more from example and illustration and life experiences in the early church.

So, we are currently with Paul on his third missionary journey. If you don't have a map (like you probably see people having around you or up here), we have all three missionary journeys, as well as Paul's travels to Rome, on a couple of pages. I think you should have it in your Bible. It'll certainly help you to get hold of what the Lord did, and it'll give you a lot of insight into the sacrifices and all that went into this ministry.

But we are with Paul in Ephesus. He had gone through the old churches in Galatia, in Europe, and he now finds himself here in Ephesus where he would minister for three years (according to verse 31 of this chapter). Paul had come to Ephesus on the end of his second missionary journey. He had arrived there with a couple of friends who also made tents like he did - Aquila and Priscilla. He left them there because the ground looked promising. But he needed to get home. He went home. Even though he'd been on the road for six years, within six or eight months, he turned around, came back out again. He couldn't rest. His heart churned, really, for the gospel. So, in the meantime, when he gets back here he finds that Aquila and Priscilla have been grooming hearts, if you will. They even had trained a young man named Apollos, who they had sent off to Corinth, where he was ministering. And so Paul came to Ephesus. He spent, like I said, a total of three years here. Three months he was able to minister in the synagogues before they rejected him. He rented a school house, if you will, from a fellow named Tyrannus so that he could meet with the people during the siesta time. The culture shut down in the

afternoons. He taught and shared God's Word there day in and day out. The effect of God's Word being taught was amazing, cross-cultural. But this was a city that was bound in the occult. And we spent three weeks looking at chapter 19, which was his experience in Ephesus, looking at how God's Word (verse 20) prevailed there, how many were delivered from witchcraft and demonic possession and idolatry. We ended last week, if you were with us, with a riot that was led by a bunch of union workers who had made a lot of money making idols to the goddess Diana; and people quit shopping in their stores because Paul was leading them to Jesus. They were tired of these little things made with human hands. In desperation, in this riot, Paul was willing to face the crowds. His friends talked him out of it. The city clerk finally told him that was a really bad idea. Paul sent Timothy and Erastus ahead to Greece, if you look at your map, up there in the north. They went to Macedonia to gather money, and this was this last trip. Paul gathered a lot of money for the poor saints in Jerusalem from basically Gentile fellowships, and then they sent representatives from these churches with Paul to deliver it to James and those in Jerusalem. So, it is easy to quickly read over where Paul went; it's easy to get lost in the names and wonder - just skip it over. But to think it through and how far Paul went - the difficulty he faced, the sacrifices he made - we will learn, as Paul goes to Jerusalem, of every place that he stopped someone was going, "I wouldn't go to Jerusalem if I were you," and then they'd give him one of these (Pastor Jack crosses his index fingers and holds them up), you know? "Don't go there. The prophets....." Everybody warned them about how tough things were going to be, but Paul really felt like the Lord wanted him there by Pentecost, and so he was pushing to get there. But the riot, I think, got Paul moving, and he just felt like maybe it's time to move on. So, Paul would take off.

If you begin reading in chapter 20:1, where we begin tonight, and you go at least halfway through chapter 21, you find that Luke narrates just bits and pieces of this long journey that would bring Paul to Jerusalem. He doesn't tell us a lot. Sometimes he covers hundreds of miles and months of time without any comment whatsoever. So, again, when things are quiet, we're quiet. But it does say that sometimes ministry is just waiting upon God; not necessarily reaping all of the time as you might suspect when you read some of these fantastic stories. So Paul had an uncertain future. There were prophetic utterances, and he was overwhelmed. If you go to Israel with us, we have on our trip to Israel about 85 people going this year. We would love for you to go with us if you ever can go. It's a pretty small country, I think, by comparison. However, if you read in your New Testament that

Jesus and His boys walked from Galilee to Jerusalem, on the Roman road it was 95 miles of walking. That's a lot of walking. These were tough guys. Paul, in our verses tonight, for example, traveled to Macedonia, over to Greece - over 600 miles - spent three months. He wanted to sail from there to go to Jerusalem. He uncovered a plot. He goes back 600 more miles. He travels another 250 miles from Troas to Miletus, where he will meet with the Ephesian elders for the last time. He'll travel 200 more miles to a place called Patara, then get in a boat and sail 400 more miles to Tyre on the mainland, and then walk another 125 miles down to Jerusalem. This guy was nuts in goin'. I mean, he was a traveler. So we read in the epistle that Paul, after getting to Jerusalem, hoped to go to Rome and to Spain (Romans 15:24). And I'll tell you what - it left marks on.....I'll bet this guy died old. I know they cut his head off, but I think that he probably was worn out; the way that he went - it leaves marks on you. But, anyway, Paul hits the road; he's been here for three years. Tonight we catch up with him as he goes to catch up with the disciples.

Verse 1, "After the uproar had ceased," (the riot) "Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia." Paul had a tremendous love for the church, and I don't doubt that when he came over to Europe again and over to Macedonia, that he got to spend time with people that he had left behind; he'd spent eighteen months in Corinth, as well, planting that church. So he's leaving a church of three years to go and visit a couple of folks again who he spent a year and a half with. But it seems like Paul just knew when the Lord wanted him to move. I wonder if Paul ever stopped to consider how many places he's been chased out of or forced to leave. And now he goes back again - to places of trouble.

Greece, in the 1st century (from what you're reading in your Bible) was divided into three regions. There was Macedonia, there was Achaia, and then there was just the province of Greece which covered (usually) most of the lower half, if you will, of what today is really Greece in total. Paul, we read, spent three months in Greece. We don't know what happened there. The only information we get from the Lord is that after three months Paul was going to get on a boat and go to Jerusalem. But instead of getting on the boat, outside there in Cenchrea (on your map, which is the port city of Corinth), he found out about a plot to throw him overboard, and he went, "Yeah, that's not a good idea;" and the better part of valor

for him was, "I don't think I'm gonna go that way." And so he refused to get on the boat. For three months, he spent with a Corinthian church who was weak and infighting, divided a lot of times (if you read the Corinthian letters, they're not the greatest words of encouragement). Paul, from here, you might remember wrote the letter to the Romans. He wrote it as an introduction for a young woman named Phoebe. It started off just being, "Hey, would you accept her into your church; she's a faithful servant in our church," and ended up in this amazing kind of theological masterpiece about salvation by grace.

Each year, according to what we know historically, a boat would leave with a pilgrim ship, really, from Cenchrea, the port city, to take Jews back to Jerusalem for the feasts - for Passover, for Pentecost. Paul planned to get on it. If you remember, and you would have had to pay attention, back in chapter 18:18, Paul had gotten on this ship to go that way; this was something he was aware of. He had taken a vow back then. This time, though, he figured out that they wanted to kill him; the Lord made it known. You know, sometimes the Lord delivers you miraculously. Here's how the miracle with Paul worked; in this case, he found out they were going to kill him. God's protection for Paul, in this case, was revelation of their plans, and Paul just decided not to get on the boat. So, instead of getting on the boat (which would have saved him a lot of time), he goes back up north, around the way that he came (the 600 miles, again), making a travel with more and more guys in tow from Gentile churches who had offerings to bring to the poor in Jerusalem. He crosses the Aegean Sea again. He goes down the west side of Turkey again. He sails down to Miletus again. He gets on a boat, which takes him to Tyre eventually. Then he can work his way down through Sidon to Jerusalem.

We read, in verse 4, "And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia - also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days join them at Troas, where we stayed seven days." So, all you're getting is this broad picture. Right? Meeting up with Paul, traveling with him, like I said, lots of guys bringing money to the poor in Jerusalem - from Asia, from Macedonia, from Greece, from Galatia. They were from everywhere, and they were coming together to bless, and it was a real work of ministry. They were, like I said, almost predominantly Gentile churches. You have to appreciate, I think, Paul's above-reproach handling of finances. He didn't take the money himself. He had the guys bring it on behalf of their churches. He was a good administrator. I think I

mentioned to you one time (because this is narrative, and you want to learn from narrative) in our culture, usually big churches support little churches. Right? We were in Brazil, helping to start a church maybe ten or fifteen years ago, and the pastor there said, "Would you buy this for us, and would you buy that for us?" And I said, "No." He said, "Why not?" I go, "You don't need that," and he said this, "You're the big church. You owe it to us." So I was happy to go, "Well, here's my Bible. Show me one place in the book of Acts where the big church helped the little church. Because at least by example, it flows the other way; it goes from the little church back to the mother church, which is interesting." Not sure I needed to argue with him; he wasn't gettin' the money. But anyway, we laid it out for him. We are not told why, at Philippi, as you read here, Paul sent the group ahead to wait for him at Troas while he stayed behind with Luke. Maybe it was fear over the money being robbed, maybe they needed to break up, maybe he was sick, maybe he needed some rest. I don't know. We can't say. The Bible doesn't say. We are told here that he and Luke stayed in Philippi through the Passover Feast. Remember, if you will, that Luke was left here by Paul on his second missionary journey, and he has been here ever since. So now, years later, years later, Luke meets with Paul again, and now they're gonna travel together. You can gain from your Bible the change of pronouns. Luke the writer now says "we" traveled and "us," not "they" and "them." It's "we" and "us," and you can always find where Luke is a part by the pronouns, obviously, that he uses. We are told that they sailed (he and Luke did) to Troas, that it took them five days. You might remember, when they came to Europe the first time (in Acts 16), they got there in two days; it's a 150-mile sail - winds were with them. Apparently the winds were not so welcoming this time. They were still in God's will. And I only mention that because sometimes if it's easy, we think the Lord was with us. If it's hard, "God was against us." But in both directions, they were right where God wanted them to be. And I know I've mentioned to you before, but Paul, in his sixteen years of travel, roughly, covered 1500 square miles of land with the gospel. Amazing. No wonder his best friend was a doctor. That's all I'm saying. So, he stayed with Dr. Luke from, according to history, 57 A.D. (from the 7th through the 14th of April would have been these days), and then he set off for Troas to meet the rest of the team. He wanted to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, fifty days later. So that was his mindset. "I gotta get there in fifty days." So he stayed a week with the team in Troas.

The only incident that takes place in Troas - of all of these hours of travels and days and all - is the one we're about to read, down through the end of our study for tonight, so that this is what the Lord wanted us to know down through verse 17.

So we'll start in verse 7, where we read this, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples" (now remember verse 6 - he was there for seven days) "came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day," (so this is at the end of that week) "spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." The early church began to meet on Sundays after the resurrection. Sometimes people will say, "Why do you have to go to church on Sunday?" Now my answer is usually, "Well, you don't have to go to church at all. But you should. God would require it of you. And I don't care what day you go. You should go!" But as far as specifics go, Matthew 28:1, "Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn," Jesus rose on the first day of the week. So the church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, began to meet on Sundays as well. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians (in chapter 16:2 of 1 Corinthians), he talked about offerings, and he said, "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside" - what you plan to give so that you might give and not be coerced into giving more; decide before you show up. In other words, between you and the Lord, work it out - as the Lord would guide you. Paul would write to the Colossians (2:16) about the legalities of religion, and he would say to them, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." But the church practiced meeting every Sunday.

So, a week after Paul arrived, at night before he was to leave in the next morning to sail away, or as his case would be to walk away while everyone else sailed away, he gathers the church in Troas, and he begins to speak to them on a Sunday night Bible study. Believing it is his last visit, he made the most of it. He just began to talk, and verse 7 says he talked right to midnight. That's a long time. How would you like that if that happened to you tonight? I would suspect you'll never come back. "He went to midnight. He's nuts! Said the Lord was speakin' to him. That's ridiculous! Speakin' to me to go home!" I shared with you, I think, last week about our experience as young Christians with Pastor Chuck on Sunday nights and how he'd go for 2½ hours, and we'd always cheer, "One more chapter!" There was a hunger. Right? And there was a hunger in Troas. These were hungry people for the Word of God. This is the work that God was doing in Paul's day. It comes back to how hungry are you for the Scriptures. I've been in two-hour Bible studies that seemed to go by in ten minutes, and I was upset when they stopped. And I've been in Bible studies for ten minutes that just felt like two hours. "And please, God, may he just go hoarse right now, in Jesus' name." You can't deal with it, you know? It just drives you nuts. It's like watchin' a movie or watchin' something on TV. If

it's absorbing to you, man, time flies; but if it's boring, it's just boring. Well, God was moving. Things were not boring. Their hearts were open, the people were hungry. Paul was anointed. He was driven and passionate. And he'd been at this a long time - he was a vet. He was good at what he did.

When we went, as the church began, one of our first missionary outreaches from us as Morningstar, as a young church, was we helped plant a church in Dumaguete City in the Philippines. And we took 19 people with us for a week to the island of Dumaguete; it's in Negros and kind of the side and middle of the country. And they hadn't seen this many Americans, I think, since MacArthur landed there, you know? We just came marchin' into town. And it was an amazing work. We saw 6,000-7,000 people every night showing up at the park, standing arm in arm and shoulder to shoulder waiting for, sometimes, three or four hours for the service to begin, in really sweltering, hot Filipino kind of humidity. And then I got a chance to go speak to them. We had thousands of people make commitments to Christ. It was amazing. You just shook your head and said, "God, what are You doing?!" Over the next year and a half after we left, the 5,000 people that came up and filled out cards and made dedications to the Lord, the church in Dumaguete personally went to everyone's house to be sure they were doing well. All 5,000 homes. Can you imagine? It was an amazing time. But, again, you found people that were just hungry. We don't always find that today, unfortunately. We pray for that. But what we find are Christians with very short attention spans, very little spiritual hunger, and just, "Come on, get it over with, I'm doin' my part bein' here. You just do your part, and hurry up." Different than it used to be.

No matter how hungry you are, there's always the flesh to contend with. No matter what. And certainly that sets the stage for what happened next because we read, in verse 8, "There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep, and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead." It was an evening service that had now become a night service. Paul had gone long; he's gone really long. There are lots of oil lamps and candles and torches to light up the room. It was crowded, it was the third floor. Smoke was filling the room. It was getting late. You get the picture. Not exactly your ideal situation for the flesh. We, in our design of our new sanctuary, are getting rid of pews; we're getting chairs. Comfortable chairs. Somebody said to me, "Are we gettin' those reclining movie chairs?" and I thought (Laughing), "Heck no! I'm not gonna shoot myself in

the foot. What's wrong with you?! We're gonna make you sit up really straight, and it's gonna be uncomfortable." No, it's not. But you certainly don't want to get people reclining Wednesday night. That's not smart. One young man who came to this meeting, obviously hungry for the things of God, was being influenced by the lateness of the time and the climate, the atmosphere, the environment. He thought moving to the window might work, but by the window is where all the smoke was, and he was a goner. I'm sure you've done one of those things, and I'm sure he bounced a lot trying to strain to keep his attention. But invariably, he fell into a deep sleep, and then he fell thirty feet to the ground, and it killed him. Talk about messin' up your sermon. We have people that come to our church who work nights. And especially on Sunday mornings, we'll see them coming off their shift; they've been up all Saturday night. And the guy (he won't mind if I tell) sits in the front row, on the corner, been there for years. But he fights....he's been up sixteen, eighteen hours. He feels like he's gotta come to church. He's got his Bible. But poor guy, one morning he went out, and then he falls right into the..... (Laughing) and everybody went, "Ohhh!!!" and then he's embarrassed. And I thought of this guy. I mean, praise the Lord - this is two feet, not thirty feet. So, I admire guys who bobble-head their way through church just to be there. There are some of you who will, if it looks like rain, you're gonna miss three weeks. (Laughing) But these guys commit to it, and they're there every week.

So, Eutychus - and by the way, just so you know, the name Eutychus means "lucky." (Laughing) Great name. Yeah, he's "lucky" all right. With luck like that So, verse 10 says, "But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him, said, (to everyone else) " 'Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.' " Imagine the commotion, the thud. "Where did 'Lucky' go?" (Laughing) Everyone runs outside. And Paul gets there first. And like the Old Testament prophets like Elijah and Elisha, God used Paul, I guess, in the same manner. He embraced this young man, and then he downplayed it to the crowds. "He's all right. He's gonna be all right." The verse two verses away said he was dead, but Paul said, "He's gonna be all right." So God worked.

We read, in verse 11, "Now when he had come up," (and the 'he' there is Paul) "had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while," (now he says it's a 'long while') "even till daybreak, he departed." So, "Lucky" went home to get some sleep. (Laughing) Everyone else who dared went upstairs to finish the sermon; the word is "homiletics" right here - it means just that. And they had communion like we're gonna have tonight. And Paul did not take this as some sign from the Lord that

he'd gone too long, he should wrap it up. No. He went upstairs and went six more hours - until morning. There was a hunger in Troas. That's all I can tell you. If you can convince people to stay up all night while someone just dropped out of the window dead, you got something.

We read, in verse 12, when Paul got ready to leave, "They brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted." So Paul checked on "Lucky," with the rest of the church. And he was lucky - he fell asleep in a Bible study, fell thirty feet and lived to tell about it. That should be a warning to all of you who might want to go to sleep. You might not be so "lucky."

And then we read, in verse 13, "Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium." (They should get easier names.) "The next day we came to Miletus," which was the port city of Ephesus, which was about 12 miles or so inland, down the Meander River. So, Paul would meet with the Ephesian elders here. Paul, we read in verse 13, did something interesting. He told his group (and if you have a map, you can see it) to sail from Troas to Assos. On your map, there are just two dots. It doesn't really show the sailing, if you will. But everyone got on a boat (that was with him), including Luke, and they left Paul alone because Paul decided that he wanted to walk. It is 20 miles, literally all uphill, from here to there. So Paul, after a night up, decides to take a walk by himself 20 miles to clear his head. The team boarded a 30-mile boat trip around Cape Lectum (on your maps, I don't even know if it's even on this map). But Paul went out on foot after a night without sleep to just, I don't know, clear his head; he needed some time to pray, he needed to get away from the group. He sent everyone..... "I'll meet you at the next town. We'll all catch the boat from there. But just leave me alone." And he took a walk. Interesting picture. I don't know why. I assume that a guy just fell out the window. I don't know. Lots going on. Lots of warnings to Paul about what waited for him. When he wrote to the Romans in chapter 15:30, he said, "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem" (his bringing of the financial help) "may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you" (to the Romans) "with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you." So he had

some concerns about where he was going, and I suspect that's why he needed to get away and pray. I don't know how many of you go out for walks. One of the things they told me to do after my stroke was start walking, so I walk 5 or 6 miles in the morning. By myself. And it's nice and quiet usually, unless dogs come after you.....but.....then it's not so much fun. But it's a great way to pray. I mean, you just can't do anything else. Unless you put a headset on, you're pretty much walkin'. So Paul walked. I don't know why. I'm just guessing that what lay ahead seemed troublesome to him; he did mention it in one of his writings to the Romans later.

Notice in verses 14, 15, 16, 17 - all Luke does is give to us, again, no insights but just a bunch of one-day boat rides through the inner sea lanes around the western coast of Turkey, heading south. It would have been a great time to sit out on a boat in the spring time, in the Aegean. We were there last year, sailing to Ephesus. It's a beautiful place. There're lots of islands. The sea tends to be very calm there. But he went from Assos to Mitylene - that's 40 miles. He went from Mitylene to Chios - that's 70 more miles. He went from Chios to Samos - 70 more miles. From Samos to Miletus - 50 more miles. And then he sent for these elders. And he wanted to meet with them. He couldn't stay long. He had them travel half a marathon, I guess, 12 miles or so, just to come see him at the port so he could get back on the boat. But he wanted to meet with these guys.

And beginning in verse 18, and then going forward to the end of the chapter, we are given one of Paul's, I think, most important messages, and it is given to the church leadership from Ephesus, where he had spent three years. It was given to men that he loved, to men that he had trained, to guys that he had left in charge when he left (back in verse 1). It was given to men who were given the responsibility of overseeing this church in Ephesus. This church would be around a long time. Timothy would come back here and be the pastor. John, the apostle, would be the pastor. And so it would go....into the 2nd century. So it is a church Jesus will write a letter in Revelation 2, the first seven verses. So Polycarp, if you know anything about church history, followed John into the pulpit in Ephesus. So this was an important message. Paul wanted to give them one last cheering on, if you will. And the reason it's so important is it is the only recorded sermon of any length in the book of Acts that Paul gave to believers. Most of the other ones were preaching to the lost or to the contenders or the arguers. But this is Paul just sittin' with the saints, and he wants these men to know his heart towards church and church planting and church life. And so I think it has such great value

because if you want to know how Paul felt or how the Lord feels about church and leadership and ministry, read these. So, Lord be willing, I would like to (after next week - we have the Block Party next week, so we're just comin' to eat hot dogs and talk to people about the Lord) spend three weeks with you in these eighteen verses. I know it's a long time, but I think there's a lot there to learn and, really, why are we in a hurry to finish, anyway? And then Paul will get done, and he doesn't want to stay because he's in a hurry. He's got to get to Jerusalem by the Pentecost. So time's clicking off. He's already spent a week over there in Troas. There's at least eight or ten days in here where he just makes these one-day, 70-80-mile sails, or two days. So I'm sure that he's kind of tying himself up, but his intention is to get these words out to these men.

And I just remember with great fondness - when we were a young church, we took all of our elders and their wives out to Newport Beach to a hotel there to have a retreat just with the leadership folks. And we spent the weekend there. So I called Pastor Chuck, and I said, "Would you come by and just talk to our guys, just for a little while?" (He lives down that way.) "So would you just come and give us some words of encouragement? (The church was just getting started.) And he said to me, "Well, I'm in San Antonio, but I'm flying in Friday night at 8:00, and I'll stop by on my way home. I've been there all week doin' a conference." I said, "Oh, that'd be great!" So I'm thinkin' Chuck's gonna roll in for two minutes and bail. So he comes over to the hotel.....what's the name of that hotel? Do you remember what it is? Debbie? (Pastor Jack's wife) It's that hotel over there. The Ayres Hotel. It's along the 55 (freeway). But, anyway, so he's goin' home, and we're all there, and Chuck comes in with his suitcase.....little guy, puts his suitcase down, sits on the edge of the table, opened up the Bible, and taught this passage for an hour. No Bible notes. He just pours.....and I still have a copy of it, and all of our guys have it. It was the best study ever in my life. But I was a big Chuck fan because that's where I grew up. So he just emptied this out for us. So I want you to have the same enthusiasm I had, having read it. So we're going to just spend a few weeks there, if that's okay with you, when we get back. All right? Let's pray for communion tonight and take some time to enjoy what Paul did here, having communion with the saints and enjoying what the Lord has done and what He is going to do. We've got a lot looking forward to next year - got a new building coming, a new church planting, lots of things going on. God's doing good things. So we are excited for all of that.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

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