



WEEKLY STUDY

Firm Foundation for the Future - Week Four

This is the first full week in the season of Lent. Many people choose to refrain from or to take on something during this 40 day season that serves as soul-preparation for Easter. The goal of this practice is to focus more purely on our need for God. Even during Lent, Sundays are a celebration of resurrection and a feast day (depending on your particular discipline, you may choose to feast instead of fast on Sunday). At Providence, we celebrated on Sunday. God has been faithful and will be again. This week, you will notice a bit more reading as we approach the end of Acts. Spend time with the story of the spread of the Gospel in the early days of the church. How is this mission still being lived out today?

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Join us for 28 days of prayer as we lay a firm foundation for our future. Text 'provchurch' to 855-615-7768 to receive daily prayer prompts.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 19.35-20.6 (NIV)

The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Fellow Ephesians, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven?"³⁶ Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash.³⁷ You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess.³⁸ If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges.³⁹ If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly.⁴⁰ As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it."⁴¹ After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye 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 some Jews had plotted 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 Festival of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

- The "city clerk" was really more like the CEO of the city. He was deeply respected and held considerable sway. In response to the great uprising, the unnamed man settled things down by claiming that indeed, their goddess Artemis was a god and not made by human hands. So why let Paul's words trouble them so much? The clerk's real motivation showed in verse 40. He was concerned that deeper trouble would come to the city when Rome found out about the riots. This was his way of keeping the peace and preserving his own position. The result was Paul getting out of town. There are seasons when we should dive into the conflict and times when we should move on for the sake of the Gospel. Have you ever faced such a decision? How do you discern which arguments are worth having and which are not?

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- **Prayer Prompt: But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5.24)**
 - *Guide me O Great God, give me wisdom and humility in the face of disagreements and distractions. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 20.7-12 (NIV)

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.

- The church was gathered on Sunday, and the sermon went long. There wasn’t much oxygen in the crowded room where they met, and a young man (whose name means “lucky”) fell out of a window and died. Paul threw his arms around him and he was raised to life. It’s almost funny how this seems like a side note in the account of Acts. For Eutychus, it literally changed his life! Do you have an account of God saving or restoring you that has become just a normal part of your past? How do you draw comfort from miracles?
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- **Prayer Prompt: He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. (Deuteronomy 10.21)**
- *God, I have seen you work in my life and in the lives of others. May I draw comfort from your faithfulness. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 20.13-15 (NIV)

We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot.¹⁴ When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene.¹⁵ The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Chios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus.

- Paul picks up the pace of travels with the hope of returning to Jerusalem for the holy festivals (if not by Passover, then at least by Pentecost). He is making travel decisions based on speed and not relationships. His sights have been set on Rome (by way of Jerusalem) and there seems to be a building urgency. Have you ever had a leg of a trip take you in the wrong direction? Like a trip from Tennessee to Texas involves a layover in North Carolina. It can be frustrating unless you know the importance of your destination. Paul knew the importance of both Jerusalem and Rome to his life’s mission. Have you ever been so clearly driven to a destination?
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- **Prayer Prompt: May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance. (2 Thessalonians 3.5)**

- *Holy Spirit, guide me in the path that I should go. Compel me to move at your speed and in your direction for my life. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 20.16-21 (NIV)

Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

¹⁷From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

- Paul gives a quick account of all he has done on the missionary journey. Even in the face of plots and resistance, Paul preached repentance in every place and among all people. Paul says that he never hesitated to preach and teach what was right and true. When have you faced resistance to doing what God asks of you? Are you able to say that you never hesitated to say or do what was right?

- **Prayer Prompt: Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings! (Acts 5.29)**
- *Jesus, I want to be obedient to your Gospel. I am not always as bold as Paul was, but give me courage to point to you with every breath and every step. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 20.22-31 (NIV)

“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

²⁵“Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.

²⁶Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

- Paul is sensing what lies ahead for him and for all the believers. The path would not be easy, but the mission was clear. Paul was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, and with all of the unknown that lay ahead, he was determined to finish the race and complete what Jesus had asked of him. Are there any signs of urgency in your response to the Good News of Jesus Christ?
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- **Prayer Prompt: understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. (Romans 13.11)**
- *God, when I am most tuned into your Spirit, I experience both peace and the immediacy of your Kingdom. Hold me in that tension today. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 20.32-35 (NIV)

³² “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

- God and the word of his grace will give us an inheritance. We are a part of that inheritance! It’s not about gold, silver, or the finest clothing, but about the spiritual “wealth” of those who believe and are restored to God through Jesus Christ. The phrase “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” are not recorded in the gospels, but they are attributed to Jesus and tradition carried them forward. Where have you seen evidence that it is more blessed to give than to receive?
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- **Prayer Prompt: And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13.16)**
- *God, if I am known for anything, let it be a generous spirit. I want to be generous with all that you have given me, especially the Good News of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

All of the journeys of Paul that we have read about are compelled by a single calling. Paul knew that he had been given new life through Jesus and that the rest of his redeemed life was meant to tell others.

Every follower of Jesus is called to be a part of the spread of the Gospel. But that doesn't look the same in each of our lives.

- What do you think God is calling you to do with your life? What is the mission that has been handed to you?

In our passage this week, Paul was giving a farewell address. He is recapping all that has happened and identifying how God used him in it all.

- Can you imagine your farewell address after a season of locked-in ministry? What would you say?