

Acts 20:1-16
What will you do now?
20190127

Be resolved in the Spirit and live for Christ because he lives!

Introduction

Did you realize that this year, 2019, marks the 50th year since the United States of America put a man on the moon with the Apollo 11 mission? The feat was repeated by the Apollo 12 mission before the end of 1969. Then when the Apollo 13 mission was sent into space in April 1970 to follow the previous two successful lunar missions; it was expected to go, well flawlessly. Instead, Apollo 13 was met with a series of challenges that could have easily ended in a disaster.

Two days into the mission, the three astronauts onboard Odyssey spacecraft were already three quarters of the way to the moon, and traveling away from the earth at 2,000 miles per hour. It was then the radio transmission was received in Houston: "Houston, we've had a problem."

The problem, although not fully known at the time, was of massive proportions. An explosion had taken place on board the spacecraft rendering it incapable of returning to earth, let alone sustaining the astronauts on board with enough oxygen to survive such a trip. As the magnitude of the problem was unfolding in the Houston Space Control Center some of the specialist, based off of what they saw, were giving up hope. In fact, if the individuals who were reviewing the reports that were being generated from their various systems were left to draw their own conclusions, they would have deemed the mission a loss, they would have given up all hope of ever recovering the three souls on board.

However, over the whole mission was the Flight Director Eugene Kranz. This man was not on-board Odyssey, he was in the Houston Command Center. As the Flight Director, his mindset was different, he was receiving data from all his reports, and yet his focus remained steadfast on the recovery of the three brave astronauts onboard the Odyssey spacecraft. It is fair to say **he was even resolved to make his focus a reality**. He wasn't sure how, but he knew with the amount of talent, brainpower, and with the remaining operable systems to work with; the focus of effort needed to be on bringing the three NASA astronauts safely back to earth. By staying focused on his mission Eugene Kranz effectively led his team to solve problem after problem which in the end resulted in the safe recovery of all three astronauts from the Apollo 13 mission.

The way those three men came back to earth was not part of the original plan, the way they came back wasn't even a contingency plan! Without a doubt everyone desired to have the mission end in their safe return, but how the safe arrival actually came about was beyond what anyone had foreseen. Their return was the result of a focused resolve on the part of Eugene Kranz, his team in Houston, and the careful execution of every instruction transmitted via radio to the three astronauts on the spacecraft.

This space mission is an example of what occurs in so much of life. The Apollo 13 mission received so much focus that it captures our imaginations, but just look at the basic elements of it. The plan was set, something happened that altered the plan, yet hope was not lost. The original goal of having the astronauts return to earth was not abandoned. Indeed, something unexpected happened. *Life is such that is just doesn't always go as we think it should. How we react to the reality of a situation tells a great deal about our faith in God. How we react to the reality of a situation tells whether we are attempting to control our life or if we are allowing our life to be controlled by the Spirit.*

The early Christians that we have been studying in Acts had their plans impacted by riots, by plots against their lives, by imprisonments, and even as we will see today by tragedies. Yet they reacted in ways that we might find hard to believe. They carried on. They didn't abandon their hope. They even made a point, actually going out of their way, to be encouraging to others. They lived with a resolve that seemed to overcome the frustrations that typically come with the experience of hardship. Friends, we can all relate to experiencing frustrations in this life. So, I know we can learn much from seeing how the Spirit filled believers reacted to the circumstances they faced, circumstances that seemed to be changing all around them, circumstances that were out of their control. But they had resolve. We saw in the text last week how Paul was resolved in the Spirit to travel to Jerusalem and then to Rome (19:21). This resolve is at the heart of the truth we will be learning from today's selected passage. The truth that we are to: **Be resolved in the Spirit and live for Christ because he lives!**

Staying Focused vv1-2, 13-16

1.v1 *"After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell..."*

a. Paul was ready to go out into the uproar, but was not allowed to by the other believers (19:30). Now that it has ceased, he gathers the disciples, the followers of Christ, and he does what he has been so often seen doing in the book of Acts, he encourages them.

i. Paul is not willing to change his focus due to hostilities. He is focused rightly on Christ. The author of Hebrews says, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"* (Heb 13:8).

ii. Here, Paul's Christ-likeness comes through in his ministry.

b. Upon encouraging the believers, he says farewell to them. Luke, the author, is giving us a historical account of what happened. As we will see next week when we look at Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, this farewell described in the text today is in no way a wave and dash kind of farewell. From the heart Paul pours out his love for the Ephesian elders in the last half of this chapter, and this farewell (I have no doubt) would have been a significant event.

i. Nonetheless, Paul says farewell and departs as he had planned. Remember, he had already sent his companions, his helpers Timothy and Erastus ahead into Macedonia (19:22), and now he also departs.

ii.v2 *"When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece."*

c. Paul goes through the regions where he has previously ministered and he once again encourages the believers. He does this in places such as Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Some Bible scholars even believe this trip included a trip out to Illyricum based off of what Paul writes in **Romans 15:19-21**

d. What exactly does Paul do to give much encouragement? We will look more at that when we look at Paul's time in Troas. But the encouragement undoubtedly included the preaching of God's word, the sharing in fellowship, and joining in the corporate worship of God.

i. Along with these things would have been Paul's exhortation to the believers to stay focused upon the truth of the gospel and to be on guard against false teachers.

e. Verse 2 ends with Paul in Greece, most likely Corinth where Paul had already invested so much time in the body there (18:11).

f.v3 "There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to..." These three months were most likely over the winter waiting for the season to open for traveling by sea so he could continue on his way to Jerusalem.

g. Even while Paul was waiting for the three months in Corinth, he was staying focused. He would have been encouraging believers, just as he had been all along the way.

h. Additionally, it is widely believed that it is during this time that Paul wrote the book of Romans. It takes me a great amount of focus to read and study Romans, imagine the focus required to write it!

i. Luke wrote in Acts 19:21 that Paul had resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem. Here Paul is being guided by that resolve. Because of his resolve, his life has focus, and as he goes along the way he ministers the truth of the gospel.

j. Although from Corinth he was planning to sail over to the region of Syria, which was where Jerusalem was located, he recognizes he cannot due to a plot that was discovered that has been formed against him.

k. Jump forward with me to vv13-16 "But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take..."

l. In this portion of the historical narrative Luke inserts these words: Paul had arranged, Paul had decided, Paul was hastening to be at Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost.

i. Do you see how Paul's resolve in the Spirit was allowing him to stay focused? Think of the wonderful reunion Paul might have had in Ephesus with all the believers, yet he was setting himself to be in Jerusalem. He was staying focused.

m. All throughout these verses that we have covered during this point of Staying Focused Paul has been seen carrying out his plan. He was encouraging believers along the way, he was writing epistles to churches to provide encouragement and instruction, all while moving forward to make it to Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost.

n. How focused are you? Do you find you are just floating from one thing to the next with no real sense of purpose with no resolve? Paul had a relationship with Jesus Christ, he was resolved in the Spirit to live for Christ. As a direct result of Paul's resolve, he stayed focused, even while traveling from place to place he never lost his focus. You see he was living for something beyond himself, beyond the temporal, he was living for the eternal. So often we fill our day with so many things that we don't focus on anything or anybody. Other times, we don't know really what we should focus on or what our purpose is and we waste enormous amounts of time doing nothing!

i. Turn with me to Philippians 1:21-26

ii. At this point you might expect me to say be focused on your schooling, or be focused on a trade, apply yourself at your job, those things go without saying. I believe that the truth from our passage of **Be resolved in the Spirit and live for Christ because he lives** will manifest itself as God has uniquely gifted you as a member of the church. **Therefore, a more universal application is the need to be exercising your gifts in the body of Christ, that is in the church. Maybe you have already noticed this, that when you are in regular fellowship with other believers your life seems to take on a more meaningful character, you understand your value.**

iii. This is similar to how the successful recovery of the three astronauts from Apollo 13 came about. The recovery did not happen because one focused person solved all the problems, but rather when the whole team worked together towards the good and right goal of saving them from certain death, it was then all the proper solutions were found.

Transition: Our fellowship with other believers is vital to our spiritual health and is vital to the mission of the church. Paul was nearly always in the company of other believers. When he wasn't, we have in his writings or the writings that are about him that he would summon believers to where he was. We saw that in Athens (17:15). Fellowship is an important part of our text even here in Acts 20, our next point is Seeking Fellowship.

Seeking Fellowship vv4-12

i.v4 *"Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus..."*

o. All of these travel companions labored alongside of Paul in ministry and endured through countless hardships with him. They knew what it meant to labor in ministry together and because of their common bond in Christ they did not forsake their fellowship.

p.vv5-6 *"These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, but we sailed away from Philippi after..."*

q. Luke mentions those who are traveling with Paul in v4 and then quickly lets his readers know that they go ahead to Troas.

r. The verse indicates that Luke and Paul stayed in Philippi until after the days of Unleavened Bread, or Passover. Paul had previously been through Philippi and saw the Spirit at work in the households of Lydia and of the jailer.

i. Although the days of Unleavened Bread would be a helpful indication of when on the annual calendar Paul was in Philippi it could also be inserted here as to some indication of a Christian celebration, perhaps recognizing Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor 5:7-8).

ii.v7 *"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them..."*

f. Here in this verse, now in the 20th chapter of Acts, we see that Christians had a day when they were gathered together to break bread. This is an important contribution to our understanding of Christian practice and tradition. This dates back to the first century and here we are in 2019, similarly gathering on the first day of the week.

i. Realize that the luxury we have of taking days off from work has not always been the norm. This gathering probably began in the late afternoon or early evening hours.

g. Here we see that they were gathered together to break bread. To participate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, just as Jesus commanded his followers to do the night of his betrayal (1 Cor 11:17-34).

h. Additionally, we read that Paul was taking time to share from God's word with the believers.

i.v8 *"There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered."*

j. A great deal of effort had gone into making this place ready for this gathering of believers. Luke takes note of this detail which helps us understand the atmosphere of this room.

k.v9 *"And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still..."*

l. Most of us at some point have struggled with fatigue. This poor young man, later in v12 described as a youth, was likely 8-14 years of age, and his struggle with fatigue ended in his death.

m. Doctor Luke records that he was taken up dead. This was a tragedy of the worst kind. Yet God used it to bring glory to himself by providing an opportunity for a miracle.

n.v10 *"But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life..."*

o. Paul rushed down along with all the others who had gathered in the upper room and much like Elijah in the raising back to life the widow's son (1 Kings 17:17-24) Paul is recorded by Luke as being the agent through which God conducts a miracle.

i. I read a handful of commentaries on this passage and all of the commentators that I referenced said no ambiguity exists regarding Eutychus' death.

ii. The plain rendering of the text is that he was dead as a result of this fall.

iii. God allowed a miracle to be worked for him to be brought back to life.

iv.vv11-12 *"And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while..."*

p. These Christians are so enamored with the Lord, so excited to be spending time together, so pleased to have Paul and his companions there with them that the only thing they can think to do is continue with their corporate worship of the Lord!

q. Eutychus fell out of the window and died! Paul was used by God to raise Eutychus back to life! Yet, the importance of what is being conveyed in this passage seems to be their worship and dedication to Jesus Christ. Just let that sink in a minute.

i. We can hardly gather here and sit still for one hour. These believers sat up all night soaking up the Spiritual nourishment brought about by Christian fellowship. As

Paul departed at daybreak to continue his travels, the locals there in Troas would have headed back to work!

ii. This record from Scripture has really made me think church that we are missing out in some way. I recently listened to Francis Chan via a podcast, and he shared a conversation he had with a Chinese Christian Pastor, and I thought that it was a perfect example of this dichotomy I'm experiencing as I see this account of the Christians gathering in Troas and compare it to what I have always known as Christianity in my lifetime.

1. You see this Chinese pastor was relating that they were able to come out from being an underground church for awhile because they were experiencing some more religious freedom, but when they did, they stopped functioning as a church.

2. People stopped using their gifts, people stopped fully participating in discipleship, he said he couldn't get people to do anything.

3. Yes, they had some huge corporate worship gatherings but it was flavorless Christianity.

4. Then he said they were forced to go back underground and it was the best thing that could have ever happened to them.

5. Because everyone in the underground church embraced five aspects of their identify with Christ. First, they were devoted to the Word of God. Second, they were deeply devoted to prayer. Third, they expected everyone to share the gospel. Fourth, they expected miracles. Fifth, they each embraced suffering for the glory of Christ.

iii. I see these five things in the brief accounts we have of Christians who gathered together to worship the Lord and to break bread together in the book of Acts.

1. They were devoted to the word of God, they were hungry to hear it explained and preached to them.

2. We know from many of the accounts we have studied in the book of Acts that when the early church was together, they would be devoted to prayer and fasting (2:42,13:3).

3. The church throughout Asia, Macedonia, Achaia, really everywhere we have seen listed was growing, last week we saw in Ephesus that Christianity was growing to the point of threatening the economy that was set up around the false worship of the goddess Artemis. Growth such as this only occurs by living out the gospel everyday life and sharing the good news whenever the opportunity is given.

4. Then miracles, expecting miracles, Eutychus died, and was miraculously brought back to life, and went back upstairs to find a safer place to sit. Miracles were expected. Hey everyone Paul is here, bring your handkerchiefs and aprons (19:12)!

5. We know the early church suffered and did so praising God to be counted worthy of the honor (5:41). Have you ever tried going to work after staying up from the previous day, working all day, going to an all-night worship gathering, and then joyfully going straight back to work?

iv. How do we begin to change our understanding of being part of the church so that it more closely resembles what I just described? Church we have to be together, we have to live our lives side by side, in encouragement and in discipleship – embracing our core value of Experiencing Biblical Fellowship. The team from this church who went up to Alaska in June of 2017 I know had a taste of this. I see it expressed on their faces whenever they tell of the labor, the love, the laughter, and the fellowship that was experienced together.

Transition: Paul went about seeking fellowship. It was important to him, it was important to the believers he interacted with. Gaius and Aristarchus were dragged to the Ephesian theater because they were close companions of Paul's, yet that didn't diminish their desire to stay near to him, their hardships didn't change their resolve.

Conclusion

When the countdown reached 0 on April 11, 1970, and Odyssey lifted off, no one envisioned the explosion that would take place two days later as the space craft hurtled towards the moon. When the reports began to come in to mission control and the gravity of the situation was hitting each of the respective monitors painting a picture that made it seem like all was to be lost. But by design these individuals were not operating autonomously they were part of a team. Flight Director Eugene Kranz had the job of keeping everyone focused on bringing the three astronauts safely back to earth. He was able to bring unity to the whole mission control staff and focus efforts where they needed to be focused to solve seemingly unsolvable problems. That was his resolve from the beginning. Church, the Apollo 13 mission has captured our minds and our imaginations for nearly 50 years. But from the beginning of creation, yes, from the beginning, God has had a resolve and a design to carry his plan of salvation to all those who he has designated to be his children, all whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life, and he has entrusted his church to carry out this mission. We are to see this truth as we study our Bibles, etched into the inspired word of God, we are to see the evidence of it in our lives, and we are to be changed to such a degree by the magnitude of God's plan that we have no choice but to **Be resolved in the Spirit and live for Christ because he lives!**

Family

Table Talk



January 27, 2019



GOD'S TRUTH

Be resolved in the Spirit and live for Christ because he lives!



Key Verse

"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 (ESV)

Family Discussion ?s

1. Think about the last time you had to pack a bag for a trip, maybe it was for an overnight stay or for a more extended time of travel. When you eventually left on your trip was it on accident or had much of the trip been planned?
2. Did you ever experience a delay in your travels? Maybe the car didn't start or a tire went flat? Sometimes in air travel planes are unable to take off on time or flights even get cancelled. How did you and those with you respond to the change in plans?
3. Did you ever become tense or frustrated during an unexpected change to your travel plan? If you were with others, did they add to the frustration or help solve the problem? Being closely joined together with others is one of God's great gifts in life!

TABLE READING

Lead your kids further into God's Word...

1. Acts 19:21-22, Romans 15:30-33, Proverbs 12:20, Proverbs 3:5-6
2. Acts 20:1-3, 7-12, Romans 1:11-15, Acts 16:6-10, 1 Thessalonians 1:11-12
3. Acts 20:4, Hebrews 13:6, 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, 1 Peter 2:9



"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." - Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)

Scripture Memory: Acts 20:32