

# ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

## LI. Paul's Example Of Unwinding From Ministry Stress

(Acts 20:1-14)

### I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 20:1-14 records how Paul faced a number of humanly very stressful events in his missionary ministry, and how he productively responded to each one to edify other believers. However, he needed to unwind himself from the stress, and this passage reveals how he did so, offering invaluable insight for us today:

### II. Paul's Example Of Unwinding From Ministry Stress, Acts 20:1-14.

- A. In Acts 20:1-12, Paul faced several very stressful ministry events, and he reacted by edifying other believers:
  1. Paul faced and handled a city-wide hours-long riot against his teaching at Ephesus, Acts 20:1a,b:
    - a. The silversmith Demetrius had inflamed other craftsmen against Paul's opposition to worshiping man-made idols, what led to an hours-long, city-wide riot at Ephesus, Acts 19:21-34.
    - b. After the city's chief executive had stilled the crowd and dismissed it with the warning that they might rouse a fearful Roman reprisal, Paul edified the Ephesian Church by calling it together, encouraging them, and giving his farewell to them, he left for Macedonia to give the believers at Ephesus rest, Acts 20:1a,b.
  2. Paul faced and handled a plot against his life when he arrived and ministered in Greece, Acts 20:1c-3:
    - a. When he had gone through Macedonia encouraging the disciples, Paul came to Greece, Acts 20:1c-3a.
    - b. However, when he learned that unbelieving Hebrews had plotted to attack him as he was about to sail to Syria, the plot likely involving assassinating him on board ship and disposing of his body at sea (Ibid., p. 412), Paul decided not to travel directly to the eastern Mediterranean to be in Jerusalem by Passover, but to take a circuitous route involving land and short sea trips back through Macedonia to encourage believers there, hoping at best to make it to Jerusalem for Pentecost that came after Passover, Acts 20:3b; Ibid.
  3. Paul faced and handled a potential threat to the offering he was taking to Jerusalem believers, Acts 20:4-6:
    - a. The mention of Paul's traveling companions, three of whom were from Macedonia, and four from Asia Minor (Ibid.) in Acts 20:4 "implies what is stated elsewhere," that "Paul was concerned for the collection for the saints at Jerusalem," and these men who accompanied Paul "carried funds" from the churches, Ibid.
    - b. Paul was likely concerned about the focus of his foes on himself, so to guard the funds from theft, he briefly distanced himself from his companions who carried the funds, sending them ahead of him by ship over to Troas while he went by land through Macedonia before meeting them at Troas, Acts 20:5-6.
  4. Paul faced and handled the tragic death of a young believer during his ministry at Troas, Acts 20:7-12:
    - a. On the first day of the week when the believers at Troas met to break bread, Paul spoke with them, for he planned to leave the next day, thus prolonging his speech until midnight, Acts 20:7. ["This is the clearest verse in the New Testament that Sunday was the normal meeting day for the apostolic church," Ibid.]
    - b. The meeting occurred in a well-lit upper room, and a young man named Eutychus, sitting at a window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked long so that he fell down from the third story and died, Acts 20:8-9a.
    - c. Paul went down, bent over the young man's body, took him in his arms and said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him," obviously raising him from the dead Acts 20:9b-10 ESV.
    - d. After Paul had gone upstairs, broken bread and eaten, he spoke again until daybreak before departing from Troas, Acts 20:11. The believers were very comforted by Eutychus' restoration, Acts 20:12.
- B. All of this repeat ministry stress had taken a human toll on Paul, so he unwound from it in Acts 20:13-14:
  1. Luke and Paul's other travelling companions went by ship from Troas around Cape Lectum to Assos while Paul journeyed on foot 20 miles along the coastal road from Troas to Assos, planning to meet them at the port of Assos, Acts 20:13a (Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib., vol. One, p. 370) Paul had arranged for this journey so he could spend some time walking alone to unwind from his recent ministry stress, Acts 20:13b.
  2. Paul joined his companions at Assos where he continued his journey toward Jerusalem, Acts 20:14.

**Lesson:** *After facing several very stressful events in his ministry, responding to each by helping others, Paul sensed his own need mentally and emotionally to unwind from the stress, so he spent time doing so by walking to Assos.*

**Application:** *If we face a lot of stressful events in ministry, may we heed Paul's example and unwind as needed.*