

Acts 20:7-16 (NIV)

⁷On 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. ⁸There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. ⁹Seated 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. ¹⁰Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” ¹¹Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. ¹²The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted. ¹³We 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. ¹⁴When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. ¹⁵The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Kios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus. ¹⁶Paul 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.

44-20-01-The Gospel Burden

Gospel, church, worship, reflection, calling, burden
Acts 20:7-19

Christians are called to carry and deliver a “weighty” message.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as the Scripture Reading)

–Stories in Scripture aren’t for *entertainment*, but for *instruction*. Paul’s life is *showcased* in Acts to exemplify *our own calling*: **HOM.idea**.

The Gospel message is “weighty” because: 1) it’s **packed** with all that’s *important* in life; 2) it’s **profound**, with *heavy* matters to *consider*; 3) it’s **potent** with *revolutionary* power to transform the status quo.

–**The Gospel burden** is *weighty*, but not *burdensome*, unless it remains **unreleased** [**OT prophets** often called *prophecy* a “**massa**” (**Heb.**, “burden”): “*The burden of the word of the Lord...*” The message *weighed* on them until *delivered*, like the pressure felt, when you *know you need to speak up about a conviction*.]

–Jesus said in **Mat 11:30**, “For my **yoke** is easy and my **burden** is light.” **Yoking to Jesus** means carrying God’s packed, profound and potent message. He once carried it alone. Now, *His presence in us* gives us the same job: *To carry and deliver that weighty message to others*. It means...

I. Unpacking the Gospel’s PACKED Message– v.7, *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.*

A. *The Gospel brings all of life under the Lordship of our Savior!*

1. They met on Sunday, symbolizing the *epic shift* from worship on the Sabbath to the day celebrating His resurrected life, *and ours!*
2. Paul himself was a living example of a zealous Jewish Pharisee totally transformed with new attitudes and actions in Christ.

B. So, Paul “kept on talking until midnight” about an inexhaustible subject: the Gospel’s impact on all of life! (He didn’t even stop after the young man Eutychus had a NDE, but kept “talking until daylight.”)

1. It wasn’t a sermon! [**Gk.** *dialogomai* = *dialoguing*, the Synagogue way to teach Scripture: teacher & congregation mutually ask and answer questions.]
2. Don’t blame Eutychus for dozing off! (He might have been on *information-overload*, after a day’s work, with eyes irritated by oily smoke from “many lamps in the upstairs room.” [**NDEs** tell about reviewing a lifetime in a moment, which is *impossible while in the body*.] Brains need breaks between input as bodies do between meals!)

TRANS: *Unpacking a packed message about all aspects of life can be too much to take in at one sitting.* [Even **20-min. messages** can be so heavily packed that brains get drowsy.] The *Eutychus-event* probably aroused other nodding heads, but that *crisis* didn't stop Paul. His "**weighty**" message—the **Gospel burden**—needed *release!* Trying to unpack it in a single night might have drained him spiritually, because, afterwards, he took a big break from people for prayer, for renewal, and perhaps for...

II. Reviewing the Gospel's PROFOUND Possibilities— v.13. *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.*

- A. Ever since "Enoch **walked** with God" and left earth, walking is seen as a *heavenly get-a-way*—a time to *remember, to plan, to pray.* (Paul didn't need a 21-mile hike for exercise. He needed a *retreat.*)
- B. [Peter Kreeft lists 3 essentials for spiritual depth: *solitude, silence and slowing down*]. Leaving the *busyness, noise, and speed of normal life* gives time to *think beyond daily routines or comfortable interests.*
 1. Routines are useful, but [like blinders for horses], they steer us clear of new paths of interest or activity that could *bless us personally, or might bless others, if we took a walk on those new paths.*
 2. Growth is always a *stretch, an expansion.* (It comes by exploring totally unfamiliar territory or by plunging deeper into already familiar areas, where we need to learn or do more than we have.)
- C. We can only guess at what occupied Paul's thoughts on that walk:
 1. *Was he meditating on what else he needed to record in writing to leave as a legacy for future Christians? (He'd already written some letters to the churches, giving guidance that would outlast his life, but what else did he need to set down in writing?)*
 2. Perhaps he still wrestled with his *ongoing bodily affliction, not yet healed by God— 2 Cor 12:8-9*. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (Our quiet times are never rendered unspiritual by similar wrestlings.)
 3. He may have been recalling past trials and anticipating future ones, pondering them in the context of Christ's admonition— John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that **in me** you may have **peace**. In this world you will have **trouble**. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

TRANS: That *verse's profound message* is that Christ's "**peace**" grows deeper the more we meditate on it. Because the Jews hated Paul, he already knew that in "this world... trouble" awaited him. *Was he pondering what suffering he might face at Jerusalem? It didn't matter!— v.16, 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.* He was *determined to go*, especially for this coming Pentecost festival, when the city would be packed with potential Jewish converts. After all, it was *the anniversary of and the place where the Holy Spirit began....*

III. Releasing the Gospel's POTENT Impact

- A. After Pentecost, the Gospel spread with powerful results, but it also drew harsh persecution, imprisonment, and even death.
 1. Jesus had predicted this— John 15:20, "Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also."
 2. Paul knew this by direct revelation— Acts 20:22-24, "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me." (*The Holy Spirit was right!*)
- B. *But if the possibility of more persecution weighed heavily on Paul's mind, he felt another heavier weight: the Gospel burden — Acts 20:24.* However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

CONCLUSION:

—The "gospel of God's grace" is a *heavy message* because it came to us at a *heavy price: first* by the *blood of Christ* on the Cross, **then** spread to us by the *blood of witnesses*, like Stephen. He died with the *testimony of the Gospel on his lips* and *in the ears* of Saul of Tarsus, who later also died for delivering that Gospel burden to the Gentile world.

—For the heart sold out to Jesus, the burden of the Gospel's message is of greater weight than the possibility of suffering for delivering it— 2 Cor 4:17. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that **far outweighs** them all. Paul's story is an exhortation to us because we **carry** in us *the same "weighty" message that must be delivered.* Let's join *him, the early church believers, and so many others throughout history, in paying the price to deliver the Gospel burden!*