

Compelled by the Spirit

Scripture Reading — Acts 20

“Now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.” — Acts 20:22

As Paul moves along to return to Macedonia, he can look back and remember the churches that now exist in that area. The list of his current companions shows the breadth and depth of the impact the good news has made: “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.”

As he reflects on all that God has done in these travels, which included bringing a dead young man back to life in Troas, Paul feels a tug from the Holy Spirit. The future does not look pleasant for Paul. The Spirit warns him that prison and hardships loom ahead, and yet Paul knows that the Spirit is also leading him to travel again to Jerusalem.

Before leaving, Paul calls for the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him in Miletus. Paul teaches them one more time about what it means to be shepherds of the church, urging them to be on their guard for wolfish leaders who will try to draw disciples away.

Paul’s testimony calls for commitment even as he makes clear that persevering is never easy. And before he says goodbye with tears and words of prayer, Paul provides a parting memory from Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Prayer

Father God, guide and compel our lives by the power of your Spirit. May we give with generosity. May we take steps with courage. May we know tears of love. Keep us faithful. In Jesus, Amen.

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Printed on June 24, 2021

