

## Encourage One Another Acts 20:1-12

Watch out, brothers, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God. *But encourage each other daily*, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception (Heb 3:12-13, HCSB, my emphasis).

### Encouraging the Churches of Macedonia and Greece in Route to Jerusalem (20:1-6)

**20** After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. **2** When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. **3** There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. **4** Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. **5** These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, **6** but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days (20:1-6)

### Encouraging the Church in Troas in Corporate Worship (20:7-12)

On the first day of the week, we assembled to break bread. Paul spoke to them, and since he was about to depart the next day, he extended his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were assembled, and a young man named Eutychus was sitting on a window sill and sank into a deep sleep as Paul kept on speaking. When he was overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, fell on him, embraced him, and said, "Don't be alarmed, for his life is in him!" After going upstairs, breaking the bread, and eating, Paul conversed a considerable time until dawn. Then he left. They brought the boy home alive and were greatly comforted. (Acts 20:7-12)

*Gather weekly to celebrate the Lord's resurrection (20:7-12)*

And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our worship meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Heb 10:24-25).

*Gather weekly to experience the Lord's Supper (20:7, 11)*

For years we had toiled and prayed and taught for this. At the moment when I put the bread and wine into those dark hands, once stained with the blood of cannibalism but now stretched out to receive and partake the emblems and seals of the Redeemer's love, I had a foretaste of the joy of glory that well-nigh broke my heart to pieces. I shall never taste a deeper bliss till I gaze on the glorified face of Jesus himself (Paton, *John G. Paton*, Ch. LXXIII).

The breaking of bread is the term used especially in Acts for the celebration of the Lord's Supper (2:42; cf. 1 Cor. 10:16), and this passage is of particular interest in providing the first allusion to the Christian custom of meeting on the first day of the week for the purpose.... This passage need not mean the Lord's Supper was the only purpose of their gathering, but it certainly is one prominent purpose and the one emphasized here. The centrality of communion to the weekly gathering is stated casually without explanation or defense, suggesting this practice was common among those Luke expected to read his account. These early Christians met weekly to celebrate the Lord's Supper." (Ray Van Neste)

I would suggest that Acts 20:7 (with 1 Cor. 10:16, 11:23-24) indicates that the celebration of the Lord's Supper was central to the early Christian gatherings – look at it again: “On the first day of the week, when we gathered to break bread . . .” (Acts 20:7). They gathered to break bread (Paul also preached all night, so the gathering probably started in the evening, 20:7–11), and the gathering happened on the first day of the week.... Everywhere the apostles went to make disciples, they planted churches. They always baptized new disciples into membership in those churches, and those churches met on the first day of the week to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus, looking for his return, by partaking of the Lord's Supper. (James Hamilton)

This means, I think, that if we become convinced that the earliest church took the Lord's Supper every Lord's day – and if this was so widespread that when Paul and Luke are traveling from one place to another, they know that if they find a church gathered on the Lord's day that church will have gathered to break bread – if we become convinced that the earliest church in every place took the Lord's Supper every Lord's day, we will want to do the same. (Hamilton)

“From these passages, a clear pattern emerges of a weekly celebration of Communion in the NT.... [T]his is the pattern in the NT and therefore would be the best practice.” (Van Neste)

My witness is, and I think I speak the mind of many of God's people now present, that coming as some of us do, weekly, to the Lord's Table, we do not find the breaking of bread to have lost its significance – it is always fresh to us.... Shame on the church that should put it off to once a month, and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of its glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaking of bread, and showing forth the death of Christ till he come. They who once know the sweetness of each Lord's Day celebrating his Supper, will not be content, I am sure to put it off to less frequent seasons.” (Spurgeon, “Songs of Deliverance”)

At the end of the Civil War in Richmond, Virginia, on the Sunday after the Appomattox and the surrender, a worship service was held in the historic Episcopal church there. It was an old church that had a balcony where the slaves of the owners had sat for many years, with their masters and their families sitting downstairs. The practice in this church had been to have two calls for the Lord's Supper, one first for the whites downstairs, and then one for the slaves upstairs. But on this given Sunday at the first call to communion an older black man, a former slave, began down the central aisle, right after the call. Naturally enough there was surprise and shock downstairs, but what was even more of a shock was when an elderly, white, bearded gentleman got up, hooked his arm in the arm of the former slave, and they went forward and took communion together. That man was Robert E. Lee. There was forgiveness and healing and reunion at the Table that day, and thereafter there was no more segregated communion. This is indeed one of the functions of communion – the receiving and sharing of forgiveness. Jesus sacrificed himself so that our sins might be forgiven and so that we might be forgiving as well. (Ben Witherington III, *Making a Meal of It*, 132)

*Gather weekly to hear the Lord's Word (20:7-12)*

- Listen *humbly*.
- Listen *intently*.
- Listen *biblically*.
- Listen *personally*.
- Listen *communally*.
- Listen *missionally*.
- Listen *practically*.
- Listen *gratefully*.