Encouraging the Church of Troas
Acts 20:1-16

Up to this point in Paul's ministry, much of his work has focused on pioneering efforts. He has traveled into new territories, proclaimed the gospel, and established churches. In Acts 20, we see a shift in emphasis. Paul is returning to places where he has already planted churches, encouraging believers, strengthening congregations, and preparing them to remain faithful after his departure.

Paul's ministry was not simply about starting churches. It was about establishing healthy churches that would continue to grow in their understanding of Christ and their commitment to His kingdom. Paul knew that the work of the gospel required continued teaching, correction, encouragement, and spiritual maturity. He also knew the dangers lurking within the church that would cause the church to become ineffective.

Another important concern during this period was Paul's desire to strengthen the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers. He was collecting an offering from the Gentile churches to assist the church in Jerusalem. This offering was more than financial assistance. It demonstrated that believers from different backgrounds belonged to the same family under one Shepherd. The gospel had brought them together, and their generosity demonstrated the reality of that unity and their desire to carry one anothers' burden.

Paul's ministry reminds us that Christ builds His church through faithful ministry, a united people, and the hope of resurrection.

I. Strengthen the Church Through Faithful Ministry
Acts 20:1–3

Paul's ministry involved more than entering new cities and preaching the gospel. He also returned to encourage the believers and strengthen the churches he had established.

The work of ministry does not end when people first believe. That is only the beginning. Churches need continued instruction, correction, encouragement, and leadership. Believers must continue growing in their understanding of Christ and learning to live according to His Word, his way of being human in a fallen world.

Paul's letters reveal the kinds of problems he encountered as he sought to establish healthy churches. The Corinthian church struggled with divisions, sexual immorality, disorder in the use of spiritual gifts, and a lack of consideration for poorer believers. These problems affected their unity and their reverence for the Lord's Table. Paul challenged them to address these issues and to bring their lives into alignment with the Kingdom of God.

In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul also encouraged the wealthier Corinthian church by pointing to the generosity of the poorer churches in Macedonia. Their giving demonstrated that Christian

generosity is not determined by the amount of money a person possesses but by the grace of God at work in the heart.

Paul understood that the spiritual health of a church affects its witness to the world. When believers live in disunity, tolerate sin, or become preoccupied with their own comfort, their witness suffers. When they grow in holiness, love one another, and care for those in need, they demonstrate the transforming power of the gospel. Paul's concern for the churches was not simply that they would survive after he left. He wanted them to mature in Christ and continue the work of the kingdom.

Application: The work of ministry is not finished when people come to faith. We must continue encouraging, teaching, correcting, and strengthening one another so that our churches remain faithful to Christ.

II. Build the Church Through United Ministry
Acts 20:4–6

One important detail in this passage is the number of people who accompanied Paul. Paul was not a one-man ministry. He was surrounded by gifted and committed believers who participated in the work of planting and strengthening churches.

Acts 20:4–6 gives us a glimpse of this diverse group. These men came from different places and represented a broader network of congregations connected by the gospel. Their presence reminds us that the work of Christ is larger than any one person or local church.

The church is made up of people from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. They do not necessarily share the same personalities, preferences, or strengths. Yet the gospel brings them together under the lordship of Jesus Christ. What unites believers is not that they are alike in every respect or agree on every matter. Their unity rests in their common salvation, their commitment to Christ and His Word, and their shared mission to proclaim the gospel and establish healthy churches.

The collection for Jerusalem provides another example of this unity. Gentile believers were demonstrating their concern for Jewish believers through practical generosity. They were showing that the divisions of the past did not define their relationships in Christ. Biblical ministry is a shared responsibility. Christ gives different gifts to His people, and those gifts are intended to build up His church. Healthy churches recognize the value of serving together rather than expecting one person to carry the entire burden of ministry.

The goal of church health and growth is not to find people who are just like us. It is to serve alongside those who belong to Christ and share a commitment to His kingdom. As believers walk in the Spirit and use their gifts to serve others, the church is strengthened and the gospel advances.

Application: A healthy church does not require everyone to be alike. It requires believers to be united in Christ, committed to His truth, and willing to work together for His glory.

III. Find Comfort in the Hope of Resurrection
Acts 20:7–12

Acts 20:7 tells us that the believers gathered on the first day of the week to break bread, and Paul spoke to them. The first day of the week became an important day for Christian gathering, reflecting the significance of the resurrection of Jesus and the new life believers have in Him.

The church at Troas gathered in the evening, and Paul continued teaching until midnight. He was preparing to leave the following day, so he made the most of his time with these believers. Their gathering provided an opportunity for instruction, fellowship, and encouragement. But during this gathering, a tragic event occurred.

A young man named Eutychus was sitting in a window. As Paul continued speaking, Eutychus fell asleep and fell from the third story of the building. When he was picked up, he was dead. Paul went down, threw himself upon the young man, and embraced him. He then told the people not to be troubled because Eutychus was alive. Paul returned to the upper room, broke bread, ate with the believers, and continued speaking until daybreak. Eutychus was restored to life, and the believers were greatly comforted.

Why does Luke include this account in his record of the early church? The event reminds us that the kingdom of God is not merely a message about how to live in the present. It is the announcement that God has acted in Jesus Christ to defeat sin and death and bring His people into everlasting life. This Kingdom in some ways is present in the fallen world. Light does shine in the darkness. Jesus gives his Spirit to dwell with us here on earth. The power of God is the presence of the Kingdom. And without that power present, no one will believe.

Tragedy Is Real: We live in a fallen world where suffering, accidents, sickness, and death are part of the human experience. Some tragedies seem senseless, and some losses leave us with questions we cannot answer. The death of someone we love can shake us deeply and test our faith. The Christian faith does not require us to pretend that these things are insignificant. Death is a real enemy, and grief is a real expression of our loss. Yet the gospel tells us that death will not have the final word.

Resurrection Is Our Hope: The restoration of Eutychus was a remarkable demonstration of God's power over death. The miracle brought immediate comfort to the believers gathered at Troas. But the ultimate hope of the church rests on something greater than the temporary restoration of physical life. Our hope rests in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus entered our world, bore our sins, died on the cross, and rose bodily from the grave. His resurrection establishes that death has been defeated and that those who belong to Him will one day be raised to everlasting life. The miracle at Troas gives us a glimpse of that greater reality. The church was encouraged because a young man who had fallen to his death was restored to life. Yet the hope of the church extends far beyond one miraculous event.

We are not promised that God will prevent every tragedy or restore every life in the present. We are promised that those who belong to Christ will share in His victory over death. For the Christian, suffering does not have the final word. Death does not have the final word. The risen Christ has the final word. Our life ends not in death but goes from life to life.

Resurrection Hope Gives Us Comfort and Purpose: Luke tells us that the believers were greatly comforted by what happened to Eutychus. Their comfort was grounded in God's demonstrated power over death. The resurrection hope of the gospel provides the same enduring foundation for believers today. We can grieve without surrendering to despair. We can face suffering without believing that God has abandoned us. We can continue serving Christ even when life is difficult because our future rests in His hands.

This hope also gives us a reason to share the gospel. If eternal life is found in Jesus Christ, then the message of His death and resurrection must be proclaimed. We invite others to believe in Christ because He alone reconciles sinners to God and gives life that death cannot destroy. To be saved is to receive new life in Christ now and to look forward to the day when He raises His people from the dead. To be saved is to enter the Kingdom now and become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession so that we may proclaim the praises of the one who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pt. 2:9).

Application: Our hope is not that Christians will escape every tragedy. Our hope is that Jesus Christ has conquered death and will raise His people to everlasting life.

IV. Continue the Mission With Purpose
Acts 20:13–16

Following the events at Troas, Paul continued his journey toward Jerusalem. Luke briefly records the details of their travels, including Paul's decision to travel ahead of his companions and his determination to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost.

These details remind us that Paul remained focused on the mission God had given him. He continued moving forward despite the demands of travel and the uncertainty surrounding what awaited him.

Paul's ministry involved encouraging believers, strengthening churches, working alongside others, and proclaiming the gospel. His confidence did not rest in favorable circumstances. He continued because he was committed to the work of Christ.

The church today shares that same calling. We encourage one another not simply to make life more comfortable but to strengthen one another for faithful service. We work together because the mission belongs to the whole church. And we persevere because our hope rests in the risen Christ.

Application: Christian encouragement should strengthen us to continue serving Christ faithfully, even when the road ahead is difficult.

Conclusion: Encouraged by the Risen Christ

Acts 20:1–16 reminds us that Christ encourages His church through faithful ministry, a united people, and the hope of resurrection.

Paul strengthened the churches because believers needed continued instruction and encouragement. His ministry team demonstrated that the work of the gospel requires people from different backgrounds serving together for a common purpose. And the restoration of Eutychus provided a powerful reminder that death does not have the final word.

The church's strength does not rest on one gifted leader, the absence of difficulty, or the promise of an easy life. The church is strengthened as believers serve one another, work together in the gospel, and live in the hope of Christ's resurrection.

The church at Troas was greatly comforted when Eutychus was restored to life. But our hope extends beyond one miraculous event. Our hope rests in Jesus Christ, who conquered death through His resurrection. Because Christ is risen, we can encourage one another in sorrow, serve one another in love, and continue the mission of the gospel with confidence.

Encouraging the Church of Troas (Outline)

Acts 20:1–16

Big Idea: Christ strengthens His church through faithful ministry, a united people, and the hope of resurrection.

I. Strengthen the Church Through Faithful Ministry
Acts 20:1–3

Paul's ministry was not limited to preaching the gospel in new places. He also returned to encourage and strengthen the churches he had planted.

A. Paul encouraged the believers.

- He exhorted the disciples and said farewell.
- His ministry involved personal encouragement as well as public proclamation.
- Healthy churches need continued instruction, correction, and encouragement.

B. Paul prepared the churches for continued faithfulness.

- The gospel had to take root in the lives of believers.
- Churches needed to grow in spiritual maturity.
- The work of ministry had to continue even when Paul was no longer present.

C. Paul pursued the unity of the church.

- His collection for Jerusalem expressed the fellowship of Jewish and Gentile believers.
- Christian unity was demonstrated through practical generosity.

- The gospel creates a family that reaches beyond ethnic, cultural, and economic divisions.

Application: The work of ministry is not finished when people first believe. We must continue encouraging, teaching, correcting, and strengthening one another in Christ.

II. Build the Church Through United Ministry
Acts 20:4–6

Paul did not work alone. A diverse group of believers participated in the mission of the gospel.

A. The gospel brings different people together.

- Paul's companions came from different regions.
- They represented a broader network of churches and Christian fellowship.
- Their diversity did not prevent them from serving a common mission.

B. The gospel gives believers a common purpose.

- They were united in their service to Christ.
- Their work extended beyond the interests of any one congregation.
- They participated in a mission that crossed geographical and cultural boundaries.

C. The gospel calls believers to work together.

- Paul was not a one-man ministry.
- Church planting and church health require the participation of many people.
- The gifts of different believers contribute to the strength of the church.

Application: A healthy church does not require everyone to be alike. It requires believers to be united in Christ, committed to His Word, and willing to work together for His glory.

Pastoral emphasis: Unity is not built by finding people who agree with us about everything. It is built around a shared commitment to Christ and His truth.

III. Find Comfort in the Hope of Resurrection
Acts 20:7–12

The gathering at Troas was interrupted by a tragic accident, but the Lord demonstrated His power over death.

A. The church gathered around the Word and the breaking of bread.

- The believers met on the first day of the week.
- Paul taught them and prepared to depart.
- Their gathering provided an opportunity for instruction and fellowship.

B. Tragedy interrupted the gathering.

- Eutychus fell asleep during Paul's lengthy teaching.
- He fell from the third-story window and was picked up dead.
- What began as a gathering for encouragement suddenly became a moment of crisis.

C. God demonstrated His power over death.

- Paul went down to Eutychus and embraced him.
- Eutychus was restored to life.
- The believers were greatly comforted.

D. The miracle points us toward our greater hope.

- Death is a real consequence of living in a fallen world.
- The resurrection of Jesus establishes that death will not have the final word.
- Those who belong to Christ have the promise of resurrection and eternal life.

Application: Our hope is not that Christians will escape every tragedy or tribulation. Our hope is that Jesus Christ has conquered death and will raise His people to life.

Conclusion: A Church Encouraged by Christ

Acts 20:1–12 presents three dimensions of encouragement:

1. **Faithful ministry strengthens the church.**
2. **United ministry builds up the church.**
3. **Resurrection hope comforts the church.**

The passage reminds us that the church's strength does not rest on one gifted leader, the absence of difficulty, or the promise of an easy life. The church is strengthened as believers serve one another, work together in the gospel, and live in the hope of Christ's resurrection.