

Hasten and Stop

Acts 20:1-16

Each day, it's important to take your bearings. Where are you today? In the Easter season, in the scriptures, in your daily life, in your very self? Spend a few minutes getting your bearings for the day.

Let's briefly examine where we are in the Book of Acts and then begin our day with a prayer for deliverance—for ourselves, our fraternity brothers, and all Exodus Men.

You are heading back to Jerusalem. We are heading back to where the story began. Paul set out from Jerusalem to persecute the Church, but his journey took an unexpected course. Things are coming to a head. We are now ready to look back and see if we are making progress and take stock of our mission.

Pray that the Lord grants deliverance to you, your family, and your fraternity.

Pray for freedom for all men in Exodus, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Reading from the Book of Acts

After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and having exhorted them took leave of them and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through these parts and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. 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 determined to return through Macedonia. Sopater of Beroea, the son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. These went on and were waiting for us at Troas, 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.

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day; and he prolonged his speech until midnight. There were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered. And a young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window. He sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer; and being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down and bent over him, and embracing him said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until

daybreak, and so departed. And they took the lad away alive, and were not a little comforted. But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there; for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we came to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

Reflection

If you struggle to keep up the disciplines, you are not alone. One of the ancient practices of prayer and penance was called a vigil, entailing staying up into the night. Christians in the early Church would often gather for prayer during the night preceding Sunday, with the Eucharist occurring during the rising sun as a sign of the resurrection. Poor Eutyches couldn't handle it. Paul's healing is a sign that God understands our weakness and upholds us within it. This is not an excuse to be lax but rather a source of consolation. God patiently draws us out of ourselves and calls us to more.

You may have noticed that Luke begins to use "we" in the narrative at a certain point, indicating that he was part of the company traveling with Paul. Paul's energy is hard to fathom. He is hastening from town to town, not even wanting to sail by boat despite his urgency to reach Jerusalem. Somehow he is still there to meet the group when the boat arrives. He is not simply looking for the fastest way to travel, as he wants to evangelize along the way and encourage converts. He hastens on but is still willing to talk all through the night. Paul models both great urgency and also patience. He knows what he is about but can also slow down when time is needed to invest in the people right before him.

Like Paul, we need to focus on the mission God has given us and not allow this to remove us from those right before us. Actually, we generally find our mission there embodied in our immediate relationships. We not only need to witness but find ways of living the faith together in community. This local community life has been a focus of our Easter reflections, as we try to imitate the early community we see in Acts.

Pray about how you can embrace your mission to serve within your relationships and work.

Week 6 Action Items

1. Evaluate your Plan of Life.

We have been holding strong to a baseline of disciplines, with your own additions entering into your Plan of Life. How has this been working? Are there things you would like to change as we enter the Summer Exercise, which is focused on King David in 2 Samuel? Like David, we want to be men after God's own heart and live in a way pleasing to him. Pray about what is working and what can be improved.

2. Plan a final Easter celebration.

Alongside our asceticism, we have been celebrating! We focused on a celebratory drink, a game night, a hike, and a good movie. If you missed any of these, now would be a great time to pick them up. Think about how your celebration of Easter will culminate in the next two weeks. Plan one last celebratory event.

3. Check-in with your anchor.

Fraternity forms an essential part of the Christian life, as we have seen in Acts. Paul needed Barnabas to draw him into his mission. He always traveled with companions, such as Luke.

Check-in with your anchor and see how he is doing. Share how you are doing. Commit to growing in brotherhood together with your fraternity.