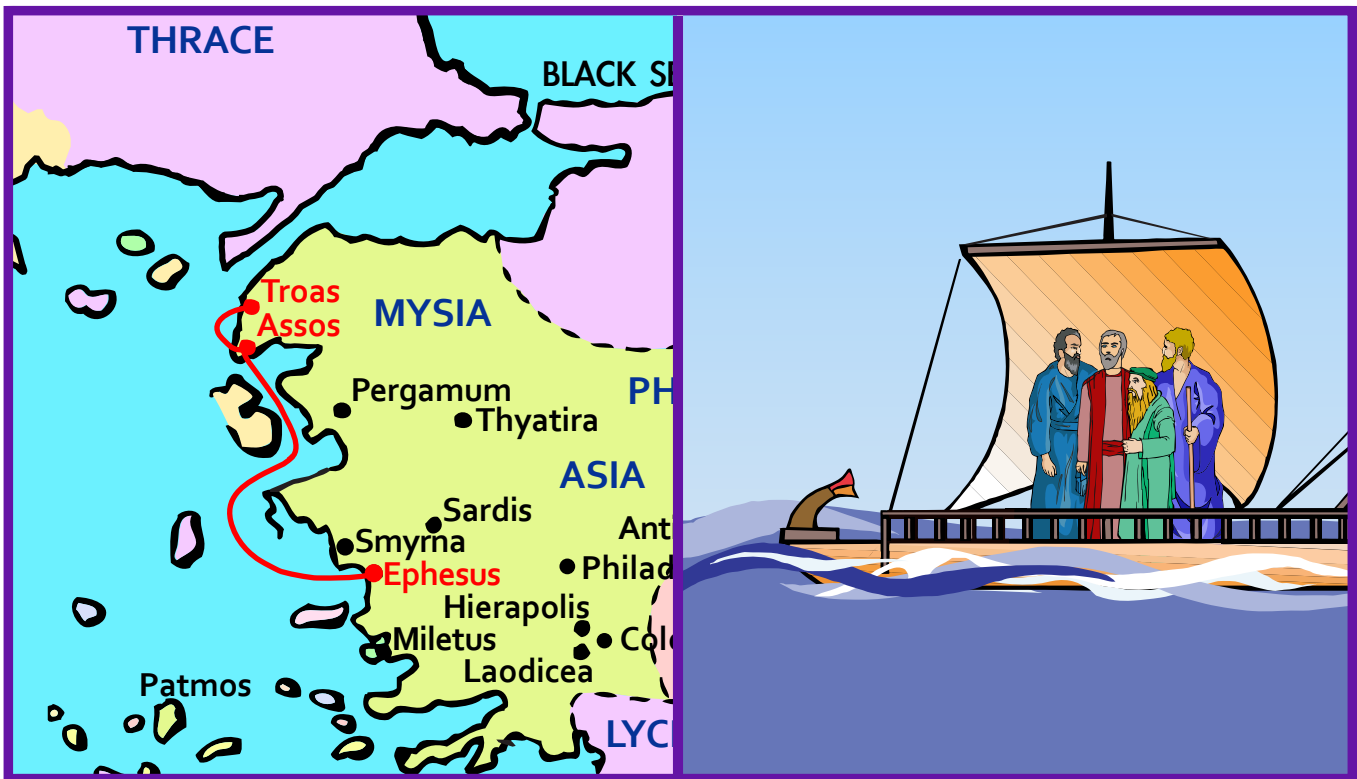


## Tour of the Holy Lands - Miletus



So, why do you think Paul chose a 20+ mile trek instead of a relaxed sail with his friends? He wasn't afraid of storms at sea, and he wasn't tired of his friends... Actually, in those days, it would have taken about the same amount of time for Paul to walk as it did for his friends to sail the distance. It's quite possible that Paul wanted to walk in order to have some time alone to pray -- just himself and God.

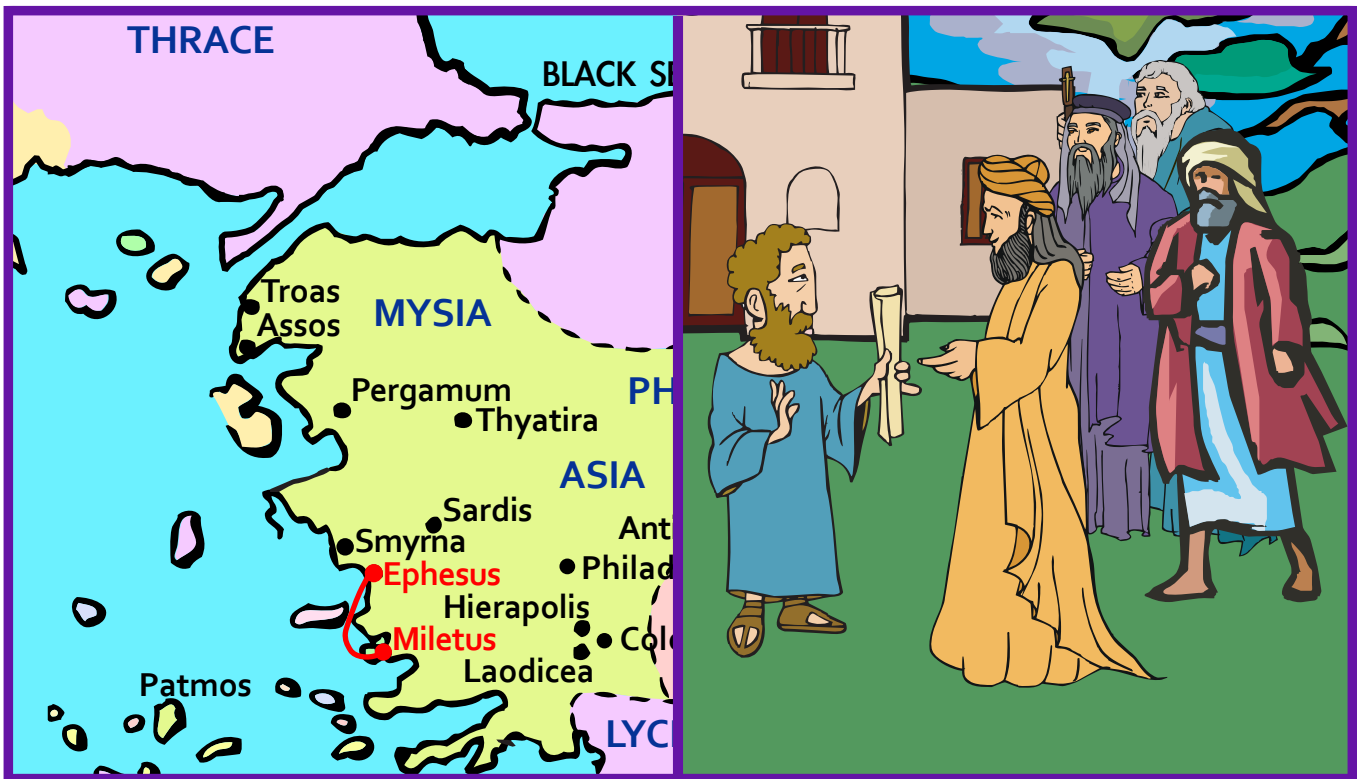
At the same time, think about what Paul likes to do more than anything else – preach and teach about Jesus Christ. Whenever he speaks, he inspires. He's always looking for new people and places to spread the word of Christianity. It's easy to imagine how many people he'll meet as he walks from village to village. It's quite likely that Paul enjoyed both time alone and the opportunity to meet new people. Of course, he'd choose to walk instead of to sail!



We'd better get going if we want to catch up to him in Assos! Remember, Paul is not stopping long anywhere because he wants to arrive in Jerusalem in time for the Festival of Pentecost.

Now that we're here in Assos, let's join Paul as he boards the little ship that his friends sailed from Alexandria Troas. The boat stops at a different city every day to unload and load people and cargo, and it's not long before we reach Ephesus. We were here just a short while ago with Paul. The Ephesus church is one of his favorites. He lived here for three years.

But today, he does something unexpected. He stays on board the ship, and doesn't visit his closest friends! How do we know this? Because Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, is traveling with us, and he says that Paul was in a hurry and knew that if he went into Ephesus, he would have a very hard time leaving. We can understand that decision, too.



Instead, Paul sails to the next port, Miletus (Mie-lee'tus). Now, what will he do? He sends an invitation to the church in Ephesus to join him – not the whole church, just the elders – the leaders of the church. Imagine the excitement in Ephesus when the message arrives. The elders came right away. It took about three days for the invitation to reach them and for them to arrive at Miletus. Once there, they gathered together with Paul, probably at some private spot near the shore, while the ship was unloading and reloading cargo.



Paul had been planning for this important meeting. We're glad Luke is taking notes. We're listening, too. It's the only speech Christians have of the Apostle Paul giving advice to church elders. Paul knows that Jews have been criticizing him since he left Ephesus, so he gives answers to the elders. He says, "You know from the very beginning I've done only good. I've served the Christ humbly and tenderly, even when my enemies were plotting mischief. I've taught you everything, even things for your own good. I've never held anything back. I've taught Jews and Greeks in synagogues and in homes.

"The Spirit has always moved me. Even now it's guiding me to Jerusalem, but I don't know what to expect. I do know there'll be hard times, and I'm ready for them. It doesn't scare me. I don't care about my own life. I only care about the mission given to me by the Christ who gives me strength to spread the Gospel, the good news about the Christ, the whole truth about Christianity. I've added nothing.

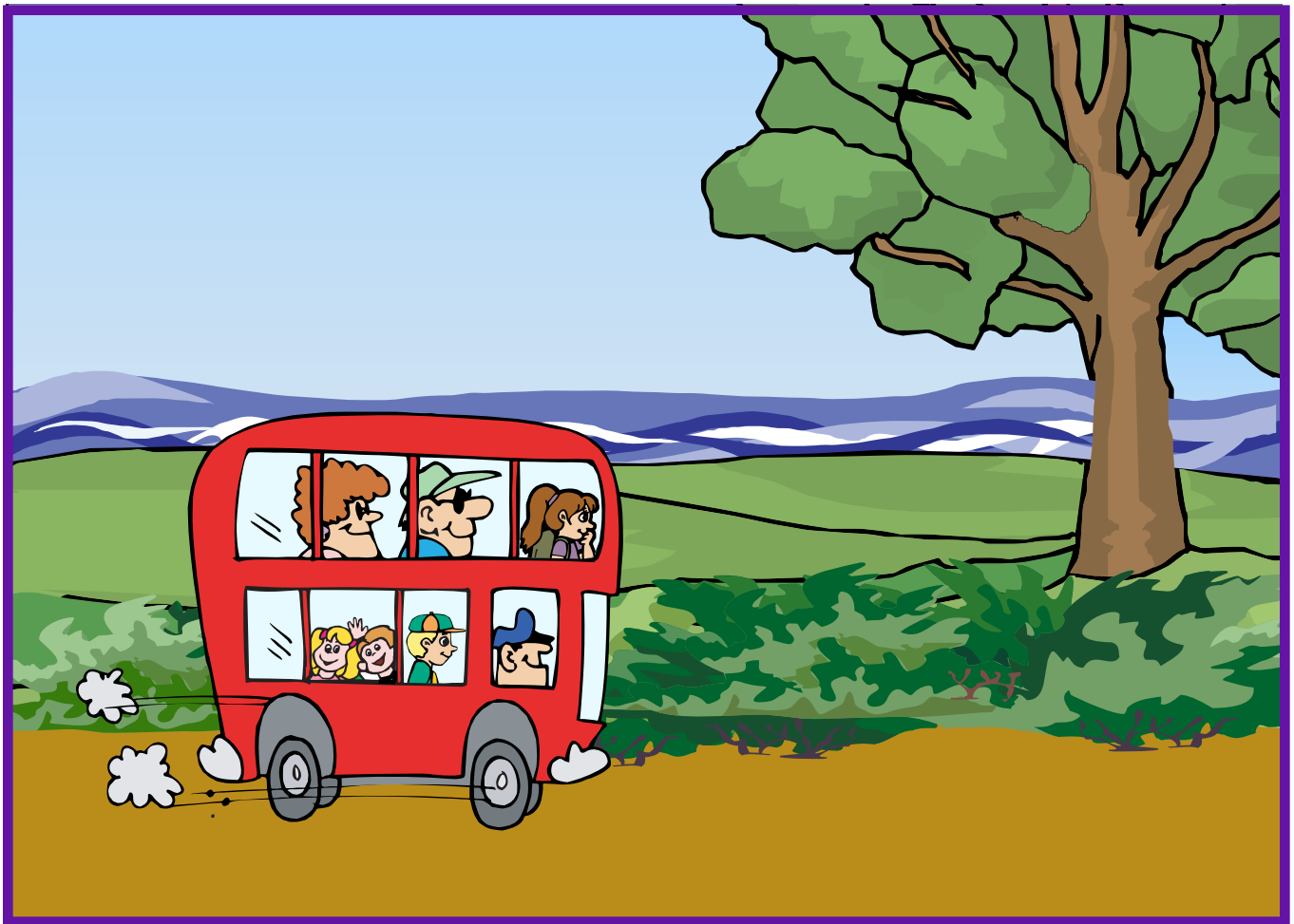


- **Be Alert, be faithful**
- **Guard the church**
- **Guard the flock**
- **Feed and teach the flock**
- **You won't need silver and gold**
- **Take care of the poor**
- **Focus on giving**

"You won't see me again. Follow my example, as shepherds. Be alert, be faithful. Trouble will try to sneak in. Guard the church. It was purchased in blood. Guard the flock, feed them, teach them. Don't let them wander. After I'm gone, savage wolves (false teachers) will try to come in and take the sheep. Members will try to pull others away. Remember how I warned you about this for three years. You have everything you need to grow spiritually. You won't need silver or gold. I didn't. I took care of my needs by tent-making. Take care of the poor. You won't go wrong if you remember Jesus' words: It's better to give than to receive."



Paul ends his message to the elders as the sun rises. The ship is waiting for wind. Paul is kneeling on the beach. The elders join him. He's praying that with God's help, the church will survive. All are weeping and clinging to one another. They are so sorry to part. Scenes like this occur again and again in the life of the Apostle Paul. We're grateful to have witnessed this one. Now let's join the church members as we walk our dear friend to his ship. He's ready to continue his journey to Jerusalem for the Festival.



Believe it or not, waving goodbye to Paul marks the end of our travels this summer. Our bus has arrived here in Miletus to pick us up and take us to the airport. As we fly home, we can think of Paul sailing south, continuing his journey to spread the word of God wherever he goes. And each of us can do the same in our own life and in our own way. Be well, and we'll see you next summer! There's a whole other country to explore with the Apostle Paul – Greece.