

APPLICATION— (1) It would have been unwise and difficult to take Mark along on the trip if Paul didn't trust him and expected him to bolt at any time. (2) Mark was not commended by the church. (3) God used this to have two teams, instead of one—it was great for Silas and it was a time to mature Mark. Later he became one of Paul's valued co-workers (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11). He also became close to Peter (1 Peter 5:13) and wrote one of the four Gospels. Paul later wrote well of Barnabas' ministry (1 Corinthians 9:6). While the manner of this split doesn't seem good, the fact of the split evidently had good results. Splits aren't always bad.

Verse 41—*And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia*—on the first journey, he went through Cyprus, but with Barnabas and Mark already there, he evidently skipped that place this time.

- *strengthening the churches*—of course, he means churches = believers (Ephesians 1:19, 22-23).

Chapter 16

Verse 1—*Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra* (14:6f)—on the first journey, they went to Lystra last. But this time he went there first.

- *And a disciple was there, named Timothy*—evidently, he became a believer on Paul's first visit (see 14:1).
- *the son of a Jewish woman [Eunice] who was a believer* [also his grandmother Lois was a believer—2 Timothy 1:5], *but his father was a Greek*—"The use of an imperfect tense verb, instead of present tense, ... suggests he was dead" (MacArthur, *Acts*).

Verse 2—*and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium*—As Paul later wrote to Timothy, a leader should be *above reproach* (1 Timothy 3:2, 10).

Verse 3—*Paul wanted this man to go with him*—As Silas replaced Barnabas, Timothy replaced John Mark in traveling with Paul.

APPLICATION—I imagine this would be a hard decision for Timothy's mother and grandmother, remembering when Paul had been in their area before, he was beaten and left for dead. It is possible that a similar thing might happen to Timothy. But it seems like the believers here in Lystra laid hands on him and sent him with Paul (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

- *and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek*—There is nothing here that implies Paul was circumcising Timothy as a requirement for salvation, which the Judaizers in 15:1 were teaching (in fact, Timothy was already a believer—v. 1). Paul wanted Timothy to be circumcised to avoid placing an unnecessary stumbling block in the way of Jewish evangelism. Timothy's circumcision would allow him full access to the synagogues he would visit with Paul and Silas. Later Paul wrote, *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews...I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some* (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

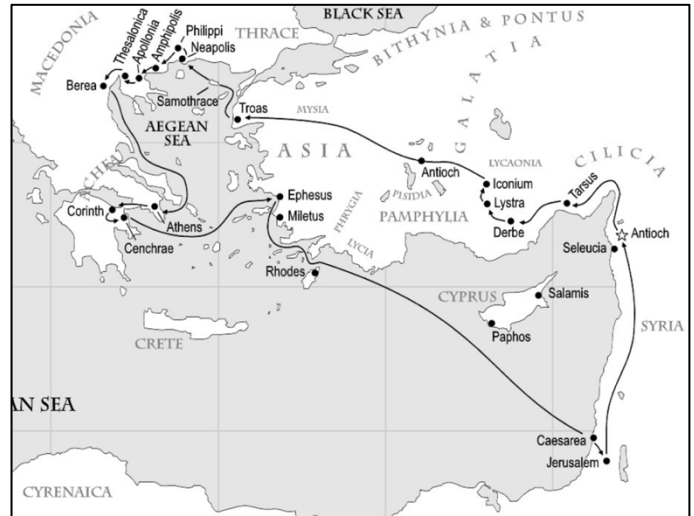
APPLICATION—Obviously, this has to be applied carefully. You must determine if the action is sin or against God's Word. Is it truly a stumbling block issue? Perhaps get advice about it. Paul's circumcising Timothy was avoiding giving any unnecessary offense. Paul's refusal to circumcise Titus was because there it was an issue of legalism (Galatians 2:3).

Verse 4—*Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe*—It states specifically that they were teaching what the Jerusalem Council decided—which, for sure, was that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. Again, stressing that Timothy's circumcision had nothing to do with salvation.

Verse 5—*So the churches [believers] were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily*—two things believers are to do: grow in their faith and do evangelism.

Verse 6-8—*They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia [to the West], and after they came to Mysia [going north], they were trying to go into Bithynia [further north], and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas*—We don't know how the Spirit of God directed them, but He specifically sent them in the direction of Troas. It was probably not a vision, because he says when he has a vision, such as the next verse.

APPLICATION—In wisdom and prayer, move ahead in what seems like the right direction. If God doesn't want you there, He is able to re-direct your path.



Verse 9—*A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us”*—Macedonia was mainland Greece, across the Aegean Sea from Troas. The important cities of Thessalonica, Philippi, Berea were there, and it was crossing out of Asia and into Europe.

Verse 10—*When he had seen the vision, immediately [evidently, not doing any ministry in Troas] we [first of the “we” passages in Acts, indicating that Luke, the writer of Acts, has somehow joined the team with Paul, Silas, and Timothy] sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them*—what was the meaning of the vision, their conclusion

Verse 11—*So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace [an island half way across the Aegean], and on the day following [spent the night, evidently so they would not have to sail in the dark] to Neapolis [the port city of Philippi].* When Paul stepped on land in Neapolis, he entered Europe.

Verse 12—*and from there [not doing any ministry in Neapolis] to Philippi [about 10 miles inland], which is [1] a leading city of the district of Macedonia, [2] a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.*

- Philippi was named after Philip II of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great). It was the eastern end of the Roman highway known as the Egnatian Way. It was named a Roman colony by Octavian following the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. As a Roman colony, it had the right of freedom, i.e., they were self-governing, had exemption from tax, the right to hold land in full ownership, and use of Italian legal procedures (such as in 16:16-40) [Williams, “New International Biblical Commentary: Acts”].

Verse 13—*And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer*—To form a synagogue required ten men who were heads of households. Paul usually went to the synagogues on the Sabbath to evangelize, so there must not have been one in Philippi, indicating a very small Jewish community. That may be why they were meeting outside by the river.

- *we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled*—The first people Paul spoke to in Europe were women.

Verse 14—*A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira* [Site of one of the seven churches of Revelation 2:18-29—it was in the Roman province of Lydia. It is possible that Lydia was not her personal name and she was known as “the Lydian lady.”]

- **a seller of purple fabrics**—Thyatira was known for its purple dye and dyed goods. The dye was made either from the glands of Murex shellfish or from the roots of the madder plant. It was extremely expensive. Purple garments were worn by royalty and the wealthy, providing a profitable business for Lydia. She had a house big enough for the whole missionary team to stay there (v. 15).
- **a worshiper of God**—similar to Cornelius (10:2), she had turned from pagan idolatry to worship the one true God, yet had not converted to Judaism.
- **was listening**—People can know about God from His general revelation (creation—Romans 1 and conscience—Romans 2), but they can only know about Jesus by listening (hearing words or reading words—Romans 10). It’s called special revelation.
- **the Lord opened her heart**—Jesus said, *No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him* (John 6:44) and *all that the Father gives Me shall come to Me...* (John 6:37). If God did not do that, none of us would be saved. For those *dead in trespasses and sin* (Ephesians 2:1) are unable to respond to spiritual truth—they’re dead.
- **to respond to**—here is free will
- **the things spoken by Paul**—Romans 10:14-15, *How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things.*

Verse 15—*And when she and her household had been baptized*—Baptism is the outward sign of a redeemed person’s identification with Jesus Christ. It is an act of obedience by the believer but plays no role in salvation. [See the *Concepts’* brochure called “Water Baptism.”]

- **she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us**—Hospitality is required of all Christians (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9), especially women (1 Timothy 5:10).

Verse 16—*It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer*—the riverside (v. 13)

- **a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling**—demon possessed

Verse 17—*Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation”*—notice the demons told the truth and even used biblical terms—*Most High God* (Psalm 78:35; Daniel 5:18). Agreeing with the Christian preachers, she would be considered part of the group, an infiltrator, someone disguised as angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-14).

APPLICATION—Some of the most effective and evil work done by Satan is in the name of Jesus Christ. He often uses a little truth to ensnare people into a false religion—as he did with the temptations of Eve and Jesus.

Verse 18—*She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed*—Paul didn’t want this publicity. It was an offensive way to present the Gospel and would turn people away without getting to hear the real truth from Paul.

- **and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment**—The miraculous ability to cast out demons was an authority given by Christ to the apostles (Mark 3:15; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

These two women typify all humanity—everyone is either freed by Jesus Christ or enslaved by Satan.

Verse 19—*But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone*—Rather than being glad of the girl’s deliverance from the demon, they were angry. Their love of money blurred their spiritual perception (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

- *they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities*—The marketplace was the center of town where all the business was carried out.

Verse 20—*and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates*—Each Roman colony was governed by two men such as these.

- *they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews*—There was an anti-Semitism in Rome (Acts 18:2). That might explain why just Paul and Silas were “arrested” because Luke was a Gentile and Timothy was a half-Gentile.

Verse 21—*and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans*—There was a Roman law forbidding Roman citizens from practicing any foreign religion that had not been sanctioned by the state, although it seems this law was rarely enforced. But here it was advantageous for them to claim this law. The truth was, they lost money.

Verse 22—*The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods*—Evidently without an opportunity to defend themselves, the crowd was stirred up to beat illegally Paul and Silas (v. 37). Paul endured this punishment three times (2 Corinthians 11:25).

Verse 23—*When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely*—to the illegal beating, they added unjust imprisonment.

Verse 24—*and he, having received such a command (to guard them security—v. 23), threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks*—But like Herod (Acts 12:6-11) and the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:19-25) learned, no prison can hold those whom God wants released!

Verse 25—*But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them*—This did not intimidate Paul and Silas, it encouraged them to even more boldness. Paul wrote, *After we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition* (1 Thessalonians 2:2). Writing to the Philippians from prison in Rome, he said his *circumstances turned out for the greater progress of the gospel* (Philippians 1:12).

APPLICATION—(1) Praising God does not depend on circumstances. We are to *rejoice in the Lord always* (Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18). We don’t rejoice in circumstances, Paul didn’t do that. But he rejoiced in the Lord because He knew the Lord controlled the circumstances, and he trusted Him, that He loves us and it will work out for His glory (Romans 8:28, 38; 2 Corinthians 4:16-17; 12:9-10; 1 Peter 5:10). (2) Also, Paul and Silas did not base their theology on their circumstances. Instead, they evaluated their circumstances in light of what they knew to be true about God. (3) Paul was a Spirit-filled Christian. The trouble with many miserable Christians is not their circumstances, it’s that they are not Spirit-filled!

Verse 26—*and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened*—God used both the supernatural and the natural, taking their chains off—He is in control of both.

Verse 27—*When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped*—A Roman soldier who allowed a prisoner to escape (especially after his strict orders in verse 23) would expect to be killed (Acts 12:19).

Verse 28—*But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!”*—We are not told why the other prisoners did not try to escape.

Verse 29—*And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas*—He had been hearing their singing as the prisoners had (v. 25). Now he experienced a miracle, which substantiated what Paul and Silas were saying.

Verse 30—*and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*—Some say he was asking to be saved from being killed, but no prisoners had escaped, so he was not in any danger from that punishment. He was responding to what he had been hearing from Paul and Silas.

Verse 31—*They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus—There is salvation in no one else* (Acts 4:12).

- *you will be saved, you and your household*—i.e., have eternal life.

Verse 32—*And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house*—His family, his servants, his guests, everyone in his house heard the salvation message and responded (v. 34).

Verse 33—*And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household*—We see immediate evidence of his conversion: (1) he had compassion on Paul and Silas and tended their wounds. (2) He was baptized (there may have been people outside because of the earthquake, but whether anyone saw or not—because it was night—the word would still get around that he was publicly identifying with Jesus.

Verse 34—*And he brought them into his house and set food before them*—(3) He showed hospitality (like Lydia in v. 15).

- (4) *rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household*—compared to his despair a short time before when he wanted to commit suicide (v. 27).
- Evidently, before dawn, Paul and Silas went back into the prison (verses 35, 39).

Verse 35—*Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, “Release those men”*—hoping the chastised men would quietly leave town.

Verse 36—*And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace”*—The jailor probably thought he was bringing good news to Paul and Silas.

Verse 37—*But Paul said to them, “(1) They have beaten us in public without trial, (2) men who are Romans, and (3) have thrown us into prison; and (4) now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out”*—Paul was not seeking revenge, but if he let them get away with this mistreatment, what would they do to the believers after Paul left town?

Verse 38—*The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans*—To inflict this punishment, especially without a trial, was a violation of Roman law. There could be serious consequences. The magistrates could be removed from office and the emperor could revoke Philippi’s privileges as a Roman colony.

Verse 39—*and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city*—They did leave the city, but on their own terms.

Verse 40—*They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed*—Not only were the believers encouraged by Paul’s freedom, but they rejoiced that another household joined them. And now they had somewhat of a protection from the city’s rulers.

Chapter 17

Verse 1—*Now when they* [Luke apparently is not now accompanying them because he uses “they” instead of “we.”] *had traveled through Amphipolis* [about 30 miles from Philippi] *and Apollonia* [another 30 miles], *they came to Thessalonica* [about 40 miles]—Very difficult after their beating in Philippi, *where there was a synagogue of the Jews*—this implies there was no synagogue in Amphipolis and Apollonia. And obviously, there was a larger group of Jews here than in Philippi, where it seems there was also no synagogue.

- Thessalonica was the capital and most important city of Macedonia, having an estimated population of 200,000. It was named after Alexander the Great’s stepsister. It was a major port and an important commercial center. Today it is known as Thessaloniki, still a significant city in Greece.



Verse 2—*And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures*—Acts 1:8 prescribed that the Gospel go to the Jews first in these first years of the church age. Also, with Paul’s credentials, he would have immediate access to the synagogues to speak, and they were an open forum for him to teach from the Scriptures.

Verse 3—*explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ”*—The Jewish idea of the Messiah was someone who would defeat their enemies and bring in the kingdom. It was hard for them to understand that the Messiah came and died and rose again

(see 1 Corinthians 1:23).

APPLICATION—Notice the words used: *reasoned* [Gk. “dialogue”] *with them from the Scriptures, explaining, and giving evidence*. Tests for truth are not based on faithism, mysticism, pragmatism or experientialism. Rather, it’s built on reason, applied to evidence, and undeniability—Jesus’ grave is empty. Today, there is a growing movement in Christianity away from reason and toward mysticism and experientialism.

Verse 4—*And some of them [Jews] were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.*

APPLICATION—In Acts, it is mentioned a number of times about the women, especially leading or prominent women, who came to Christ. In Israel, the emphasis was on the men and very little mention of the women. But now, in Christ, *there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28).

Verse 5—*But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place* (“hired” bad guys, not people who were actually upset with what Paul said), *formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason* [where they thought Paul and Silas were], *they were seeking to bring them out to the people.*

Verses 6-7—*When they did not find them* [hidden by the believers?], *they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus”*—A very serious crime in the Roman Empire. It was their charge against Jesus (John 19:12) to get Him crucified.

Verse 8—*They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.*

Verse 9—*And when they had received a pledge* [Gk. amount of money paid to be released from arrest] *from Jason and the others, they released them.*

Verse 10—*The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night* [because of the danger to Paul and Silas, as well as to the other believers]

- *to Berea*—about 50 miles from Thessalonica, an inland town, that the Roman writer Cicero described as “off the beaten track.”
- *when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews*—as was their custom (v. 2).

Verse 11—*Now these were* (1) *more noble-minded* [Gk. “willingness to learn and evaluate something fairly”] *than those in Thessalonica, for* (2) *they received the word with great eagerness* (i.e., were very eager), (3) *examining* [Gk. “to try to learn the nature or truth of something by the process of careful study, evaluation and judgment”] *the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*

APPLICATION—There’s three things we should also be and do: (1) have a willingness to learn and evaluate something fairly, (2) not only a willingness but an eagerness, and (3) we should evaluate everything (*he who is spiritual appraises all things...*—1 Corinthians 2:15). Do we have the love and eagerness to come to God’s Word as Psalm 119 describes?

Verse 12—*Therefore many of them* [Jews] *believed*—Because when examined and evaluated by the Scriptures, the Gospel will be believed. It’s when the Gospel is evaluated by the world’s standards and beliefs that it is rejected.

- *along with a number of prominent Greek women and men*—

Verse 13—*But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating* [to shake up] *and stirring up* [Gk. “to cause movement, usually as the result of shaking or stirring,” figuratively used as “to cause acute emotional or mental distress”] *the crowds*

APPLICATION—A “crowd” mentality reacts emotionally—for example, a football crowd booing a referee or crowds overseas when some person is killed—the people in the crowd are stirred up emotionally, and there is no reasoning with “them” or even with individuals in the crowd. When a crowd gathers, it’s quite easy for someone to stir them up emotionally. It’s like a fire that spreads. Understand this when you watch a crowd or are part of a crowd.

Verse 14—*Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea*—Perhaps because Paul was the spokesperson

- *Silas and Timothy remained there*

Verse 15—*Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens*—we’re not told whether it was by land or by sea

- *receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left*—It sounds to me like perhaps there was not enough room to take all three of them, and the immediate danger was to Paul, so they got him safely out, and the other two would follow when they could.

Verse 16—*Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens*—Athens was the center of the Greek culture during the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great (300s B.C.). In Paul’s day, Corinth had replaced Athens as the most important political and commercial center in Greece.

- *his spirit was being provoked* [Gk. “strong emotional concern”] *within him as he was observing the city full of idols*—Athens continued to be the cultural and religious center of Greece. The pagan writer Petronius sarcastically said that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man. Every public building was dedicated to a god, and statues of gods filled the city (Lenski, *Acts*).

Verse 17—*So*—he put his emotional concern into action

- *he was reasoning* [Gk. “dialogue”] *in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles*—on the Sabbath
- *and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present*—during the rest of the week.

Verse 18—*And also some of the Epicurean*—the philosophy that pleasure and avoidance of pain are the chief end of man. They were materialists. They did not deny the existence of the gods, but they believed they did not intervene in the affairs of men. They taught that at death, the body and soul (both composed of atoms) disintegrate and there is no afterlife. They were atheists (MacArthur, *Acts*).

- *and Stoic philosophers*—They saw self-mastery as the greatest virtue. Self-mastery comes from being indifferent to both pleasure and pain, reaching the place where one feels nothing. They were pantheists (Ibid.).
- *were conversing with him. Some were saying, “What would this idle babbler*—lit. “one who picks up seed,” originally a reference to birds picking up seed, but figuratively applied to a person who is an information scavenger, one who is not able to say anything worthwhile in view of his miscellaneous collection of tidbits of information.
- *wish to say?” Others, “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,”*—because he was preaching *Jesus and the resurrection*—so different from the typical mythical Greek gods who never were human, never died, and never rose from the dead.

Verse 19—*And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus*—a court, named for the hill on which it had once met. During Roman times, Athens was a free city and self-governing.

- *saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?”*— Paul was not tried before this court but was informally required to give an account of his teaching.

Verse 20—*“For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean”*—Luke’s opinion as to why they wanted to know these things is in verse 21.

Verse 21—*(Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)*—So it wasn’t out of a desire to hear the Gospel but out of a desire to just hear something new. However, Paul uses his opportunity to give them the Gospel.

APPLICATION—We may perceive that someone’s motives are not genuine or whatever, but if it is an opportunity to give the Gospel, do it.

Verse 22—*So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects*—This is a true statement, and it opens doors for dialogue rather than start by being offensive and closing doors.

Verse 23—*“For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’*—Some find significance in this statement, thinking the Athenians are making a statement about the true God. However, it seems to me that they were just covering all the bases, i.e., they had altars to all the gods they knew and one to any god they didn’t know about.

- *Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you*—God can be known (Deuteronomy 4:35; 1 Kings 8:43; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 9:10; Jeremiah 9:24; 24:7; 31:34; John 17:3).

Verse 24—*“The God who made the world and all things in it*—To the Epicureans, who believed matter was eternal, and the Stoics who believed everything was part of God, so He couldn’t create Himself, this was a upsetting truth. The Bible begins with a statement to this fact, and it is found on many pages throughout the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments.

- *since He is Lord of heaven and earth*—Because He created them, He is the supreme ruler over the entire earth and heavens (Genesis 14:19; Psalm 24:1; 103:19; Daniel 4:34-35).
- *does not dwell in temples made with hands*—Solomon said the same thing the very day he dedicated the Temple (2 Chronicles 2:6; 6:18; see Isaiah 66:1-2; Psalm 139:1-12). You cannot contain God in a box, no matter how beautiful the box is.

Verse 25—*nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything*—Job 22:2-3 asks, *Can a vigorous man be of use to God...Is there any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous, or profit if you make your ways perfect?*” God said to Israel, *“For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all it contains”* (Psalm 50:9-12).

- ***since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things***—Rather than needing anything from man, God gives life to people and all living things. Psalm 104:14-15 says, *God causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the labor of man, so that he may bring forth food from the earth.* Grass would not even grow if God didn’t cause it to grow. *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever* (Romans 11:36). And it’s for *all* people, not just believers. Matthew 5:45 says, *God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.* Job 34:14-15 says, *If He [God] should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself... His breath, all flesh would perish together and man would return to dust.*

APPLICATION—Don’t think it’s your hard work and effort or your wisdom or money that causes anything. You could work hard and accomplish nothing. Don’t think you “deserve” something. We deserve nothing but condemnation. It’s God’s gift of grace and mercy that we aren’t condemned. It’s God’s gift that our grass grows!! Give thanks and give God the glory (credit) (James 1:17). [Even a mother’s nurturing of her children is a gift from God—Job 39:13-18.]

Verse 26—*and He made from one man [Adam] every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth*—This was a shock to the national pride of the Greeks, who scornfully referred to non-Greeks as “barbarians.” All men are equal because all men were created by God. One nation is not better than any other nation. God made them all (at Babel—Genesis 11).

- ***having determined their appointed times***—The rise and fall of nations, empires, and kings are in God’s hands (see Daniel 2:36ff; Luke 21:24; Romans 13:1-4).
- ***and the boundaries of their habitation***—God placed certain nations in specific geographical locations (Deuteronomy 32:8) and determines the extent of their conquests (Isaiah 10:12-19).

Verse 27—*that they would seek God*—Paul also wrote, *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse* (Romans 1:20).

APPLICATION—This is natural or general revelation. All people, in all places, in all of time are held accountable for understanding natural revelation in nature and to understand that God made it, and to, therefore, seek Him (see Romans 1:18-32). To those who are elect (Acts 13:48), God brings special revelation—the message of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:13-15).

- ***if perhaps they might grope for Him***—Gk. “to make an effort, despite difficulties, to come to know something, when the chances of success in such an enterprise are not particularly great—to feel around for, to grope for, to try to find.”
- ***and find Him***—*For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His* (2 Chronicles 16:9).
- ***though He is not far from each one of us***—God is available to every single human being.

Verse 28—*for in Him we live and move and exist*—Colossians 1:15-17 says, *...all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together...*

- ***as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children’***—“children” (NASB) or “offspring” (KJV)—Gk *genos* meaning “to become, offspring, family, lineage, kind, sort, species. It’s the idea that humans originated from God. In contrast, John 1:12 says, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.* The Greek word for “children” here is *teknon*, meaning “son or daughter, as one who is the object of parental love and care, a tender term of address”—i.e., a relationship.

Verse 29—“*Being then the children* [same word as v. 28, i.e., we originated from God] *of God*—Since God created man, God must be more than a mere man-made idol.

- *we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone*—No matter how valuable the substance is
- *an image formed by the art*—no matter how skillfully or creatively made
- *and thought of man*—no matter what has been imagined in the thoughts of man

APPLICATION—Evolution cuts off the path of reason that leads to God. It’s a thought of man. The Creator God is beyond and above man, not a result of what man thought or made.

Verse 30—“*Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance*—that is, in the past, God didn’t always intervene with special judgment against the nations who did not know Him.

- *God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent*—Now there is a change in God’s dealing with humanity. Special revelation, that is, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is now available to everyone everywhere. To the elect person anywhere in the world who is seeking God (from general revelation), God will bring the Gospel (special revelation).

APPLICATION—I heard an interesting example. A Christian woman in Albania had a certain kind of email server. An unbeliever man in Denmark had the same kind of server and was emailing his uncle and did the address wrong and “accidentally” came into contact with the Albanian woman. In emailing, he said he and his uncle were trying to learn more about God. She mentioned she was a believer. Not only did both men become believers, the Albanian woman and Danish man were married. God can get the Gospel to those who are searching for Him.

Verse 31—*because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed*—In John 5:22-27, Jesus said, *For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son...* Revelation 19:11 says, *...heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges ...* Romans 14:11-12 says, “*As I live,*” *says the Lord, “every knee shall bow to Me...each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”*

- *having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead*—With Christ’s resurrection, God showed His approval of Him and qualified Him as judge.

APPLICATION—Now there are no excuses. We have all the proof that Jesus is God and is the only way to God, and is appointed by God as judge of mankind. There is no other proof. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the ultimate proof. It’s the message we’ve read over and over in Acts.

Verses 32-33—*Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer* [contemptuous, cruel smile], *but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this”*—but they did not get another opportunity because *Paul went out of their midst*, never to return to Athens.

APPLICATION—You cannot count on a second opportunity to believe. Hebrews 4:7 says, *Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.*

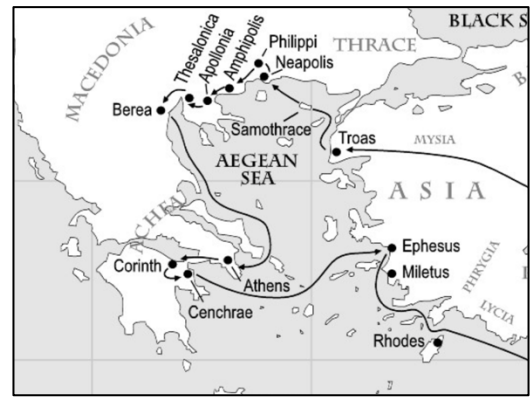
Verse 34—*But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite* [a member of the Areopagus court] *and a woman named Damaris and others with them*—A few did believe. Jesus said, *...the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it* (Matthew 7:13-14).

Chapter 18

Verse 1—*After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth*—Paul later wrote of his coming to Corinth as *I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling* (1 Corinthians 2:3). He arrived alone (Silas and Timothy were still in Macedonia—v. 5).



Corinth was strategically located on a narrow strip of land between Central Greece and the Peloponnesus Peninsula. The city thus controlled the traffic between Greece and the Peninsula. But more significant is the fact that this narrow strip of land was a shortcut for ships traveling from the southern Aegean Sea to the Adriatic Sea. Today, there is a canal through there (built between 1881 and 1893). It is almost 4 miles long, but it is only 68 feet wide, so it is too narrow for today's ocean freighters, and its water depth is only 26 feet. About 11,000, mostly tourist, ships pass through the canal each year. But in the ancient world, smaller ships were dragged across the isthmus on rollers to avoid the hazardous 250-mile trip around the peninsula. Larger ships would often unload their cargo and pick it up again on the other side, to make the dangerous journey safer. This, of course, brought a lot of commerce, jobs, and material goods to the Corinthians.



Corinth was also known for religion and sexual immorality—and the two often went together. Towering over the city was a mountain called the Acrocorinth. It was covered with temples to the gods, very similar to the Acropolis above Athens. Actually, Corinth competed with Athens in sports, gods, and commerce. The two cities were only 45 miles apart, and the Acropolis of Athens could be easily seen from the Acrocorinth on a clear day.

Greek scholars have linked Corinth to materialism, wealth (Homer, *Iliad* 2, 569-70), and sexual immorality. Plato referred to a prostitute as a “Corinthian girl” (*Republic* 404d). Aristophanes coined the term “korinthiazomai” (“Corinthianizing”) to refer to fornication (*Fragment* 354).

Historically, the Corinth Paul visited was a fairly new city—about 100 years old. There was an ancient city-state established in the 8th century B.C., but it was destroyed in 146 B.C. because of its rebellion against Rome. The site lay in ruins for 100 years until 46 B.C., when Julius Caesar decreed that it should be rebuilt.

The population was made up of local Greeks, Jews, freedmen from Italy, and a number of Roman officials and businessmen. Population estimates vary from 100,000 to 600,000 people (i.e., approximately the size of Greater Grand Rapids).

[Today, Greeks recognize the original (12?) Greek mythological gods as an official religion in Greece.]

Verse 2—*And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus* [located in Asia Minor on the south shore of the Black Sea] *having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla*—they became two of his closest friends, eventually risking their lives for him (Romans 16:3-4). The Bible does not record their conversion. Possibly they were part of the believers in Rome.

- *because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome*—

Verse 3—*He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers*—Alone, and evidently without funds, Paul worked for money to support himself.

Verse 4—*And he was reasoning* [Gk. *dialogomai*, “to discuss”] *in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks*—i.e. proselytes to Judaism, worshipping in the synagogue.

Verse 5—*But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia*—bringing generous gifts (2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:15), specifically from Philippi, it allowed him to stop his tent-making. An example even today of one group of believers financially supporting a missionary to go to another location.

- **Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ**—Using the Old Testament [the Word that was available at that time, the Word the Jews used], Paul showed that Jesus was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament.

Verse 6—*But when they resisted* [Gk *antitasso*, “to arrange in battle array,” i.e. they organized themselves to fight Paul’s teaching] *and blasphemed* [the name of Christ—Luke 22:64-65]

- **he shook out his garments**—It was the Jewish gesture of rejection. When they returned from Gentile lands, they shook the Gentile dust off their sandals (see Luke 9:5; Acts 13:51). This symbolized Paul’s rejection of his fellow Jews. He did not want any of the dust from the synagogue where the blasphemy had taken place to cling to his clothes.
- **and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean”**—Paul had told them the Gospel. When they rejected it, he absolved himself from any guilt connected with their rejection. (See Joshua 2:19; 2 Samuel 1:16; 1 Kings 2:37; Ezekiel 18:13; 33:2-5; Matthew 27:25.)

APPLICATION—At some point, quit giving the Gospel to a person who continually rejects it. All you do is make them more accountable in eternity for rejecting Christ over and over (see Hebrews 10:29-31). Instead, keep praying for them and for wisdom and an open door to share Christ in smaller concepts—for example, do they even believe in God? Do they have some idea of life after death? Paul said, *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person* (Colossians 4:2-4).

- **From now on I will go to the Gentiles**—i.e., he moved outside the synagogue to Justus’ house.

Verse 7—*Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue*—Paul didn’t go far. The Jews could still see and hear him.

Verse 8—*Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized*—This news would certainly cause an uproar in the Jewish synagogue. (Crispus was one of the two men Paul baptized in Corinth—1 Corinthians 1:14).

Verses 9-10—*And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision*—This is one of six visions Paul received in Acts (9:12; 16:9-10; 22:17-18; 23:11; 27:23-24), all coming at crucial points in his ministry. God gave four reasons for Paul to continue proclaiming the Gospel in Corinth:

- **“Do not be afraid any longer, but (1) go on speaking and do not be silent**—God commanded him to do it, (2) **for I am with you**—as God told Joshua (Joshua 1:5, 9) and us (Matthew 28:20) **and (3) no man will attack you in order to harm you**—Paul is under God’s protection, (4) **for I have many people in this city**”—those who *had been appointed to eternal life* had not yet *believed* (Acts 13:48), and they will not be saved without Paul’s preaching the Gospel (Romans 10:13-15).

Verse 11—*And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them*—confident in God’s promise to him, Paul obeyed God. However, that doesn’t mean there were no trials during that time, as the next verses describe.

Verse 12—*But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia*—Gallio was the brother of Seneca, the Roman philosopher and tutor of Nero. Seneca described his brother as “an intelligent person who hated flattery, and was blessed with an ‘unaffectedly pleasant personality’” (Kistemaker, *Acts*). Gallio was proconsul of Achaia from July A.D. 51 to June A.D. 52.

That Luke distinguishes correctly between senatorial and imperial provinces and has the former governed by a proconsul on behalf of the senate and the latter governed by a praetor representing the emperor says much for his accuracy, for the status of provinces changed with the times. Achaia was a senatorial province from 27 B.C. to A.D. 15 and then again from A.D. 44 onwards ... It was therefore governed by a proconsul. ... Macedonia, however, was an imperial province, and therefore Luke rightly called the magistrates at Philippi praetors. (“The Acts of the Apostles,” Frank Gaebelin, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Zondervan, 1981, 9:485)

- ***the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat*** [*bema seat*]**—**The Jews tried to use Roman authority to stop Paul’s proclaiming the Gospel. The *judgment seat* was a raised stone platform in the marketplace in front of the residence of the proconsul, used as a public court where he tried cases.

APPLICATION—As believers, we will not appear before the Great White Throne Judgment because our names are written in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:11-15). But we will appear before the Bema Judgment, where our works will be judged. Those things Jesus considers “gold” will be rewarded, and those things He considers “wood” or “hay” will be burned up (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Salvation is by faith in Christ, but works will be judged, whether you are a believer or an unbeliever.

Verse 13—*saying, “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law”* [i.e., the Mosaic Law—v. 15]**—**up to now, Rome officially tolerated Judaism and viewed Christianity as a sect of Judaism. But these Jews charged that what Paul was teaching was outside the boundary of Judaism, and therefore, would not be officially tolerated by Rome.

Verse 14—*But when Paul was about to open his mouth* [to defend himself], ***Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you—*** i.e., there was no actual crime in what Paul did.

Verses 15-16—*but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters”*—Gallio said the issue was merely one of semantics within Judaism, so he threw the case out. ***And he drove them away from the judgment seat.***

Verse 17—*And they* [the angry Jews] ***all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue***—whether he is a Christian at this point or not, he is in 1 Corinthians 1:1.

- ***began beating him in front of the judgment seat***—As the leader of the synagogue (as was Crispus in v. 8), the Jews may have been angry with him for bungling their case before Gallio.
- ***But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things***—Consistent with his comment, he refused to meddle in the internal affairs of the Jews, and considered this a religious issue for them.

Verse 18—*Paul, having remained many days longer*—because of Gallio’s favorable ruling

- ***took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria***—i.e., to go home to Antioch
- ***and with him were Priscilla and Aquila***—that they would leave their business to accompany Paul shows their loyalty and devotion to him.
- ***In Cenchrea***—the eastern port of Corinth, where there would be a ship heading east
- ***he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow***—not sure what this vow entailed, except it was most likely a vow which he observed as a Jew. He rejected legalistic Judaism and its system of works-right-

eousness, but he still was a Jew (see 1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Vows were to God and very binding (Matthew 5:33). Jesus said now to not make vows (Matthew 5:33-37). [Of course, Paul would not have a copy of Matthew to read, so he would be going by the Old Testament, which said to keep your vow.]

APPLICATION—We are not to make promises. Making promises is of evil. Jesus said, *let your statement be, “Yes, yes” or “No, no;” anything beyond these is of evil* (Matthew 5:37; see also James 5:12). Jesus said the reason is because we cannot control circumstances, so basically breaking a vow or promise is a lie, and Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). A vow, or promise, is a serious thing, and to break it is serious. So Jesus said to not do it. Simply say “yes” or “no.” And you should keep your word. Jesus also said, *Every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified [declared righteous] and by your words you will be condemned* (Matthew 12:36-37).

Verse 19—They came to Ephesus—straight east across the Aegean Sea, Ephesus was a seaport and the most important city in Asia Minor

- **and he left them there**—Priscilla and Aquila settled in Ephesus, the church gathered in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19), and they eventually returned to Rome (Romans 16:3-5).
- **Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews**—as was his custom

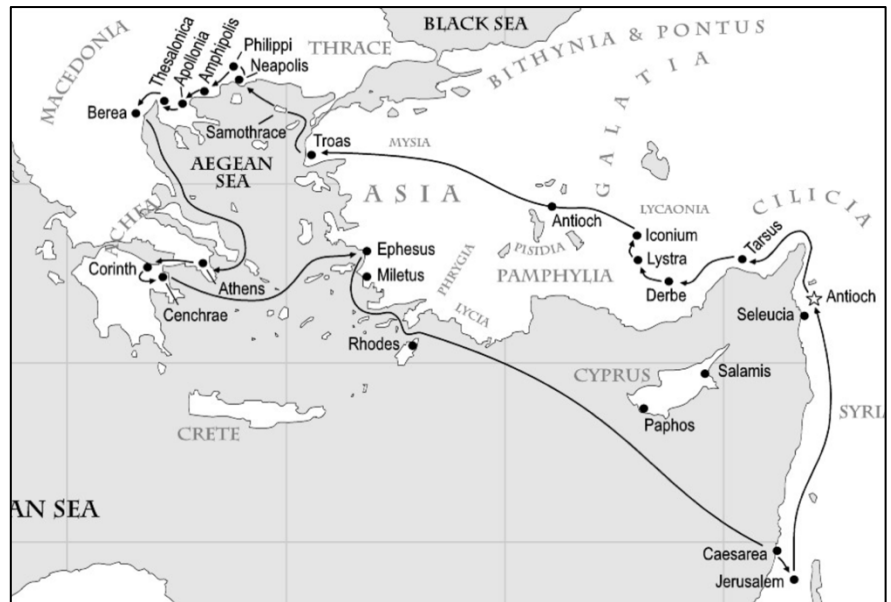
Verse 20—When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent—On Paul’s first journey through Asia, he was forbidden to *speak the word in Asia* by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6). Perhaps Paul was reluctant to stay on in Ephesus until he received clear direction to do so, as he received in Corinth (Acts 18:9-11). However, in removing Paul from the scene, the Holy Spirit opened the way for the ministries of both Priscilla and Aquila and then Apollos.

Verse 21—but taking leave of them and saying, “I will return to you again if God wills,” he set sail from Ephesus—A submission to the will of God, as Jesus had in the Garden (Luke 22:42).

APPLICATION—This is similar to making a vow. If you say you will do something, you have no idea if you can actually do it, because you do not have control over your circumstances. As James 4:13-15 says, *...you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow...you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”* He adds, *... you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil* (v. 16). Of course, you make plans, etc., but it’s your attitude about it—are you acknowledging that you want God’s will done or do you arrogantly think your will ought to be done? Only God can make promises because only God can keep His promises because God controls circumstances, they don’t control Him.

Verse 22—When he had landed at Caesarea—on the coast of Israel, about 20 miles north of Tel Aviv

- **he went up and greeted the church, and went down**—“went up” and “went down” usually refer to Jerusalem. If Paul did, in fact, go to Jerusalem, Luke does not make much of this visit.
- **to Antioch**—north of Israel, near the Mediterranean coast—a very unclimactic ending of the “Second Missionary Journey.”



Chapter 18 continued

The Third Missionary Journey (18:23–19:41)



Verse 18:23—*And having spent some time there* [Antioch], *he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening* [reinforce, make stronger] *all the disciples*. ...—notice the emphasis here, not on evangelism as previously, but on the growth of those who are now believers.

Verse 24—Meanwhile, back in Ephesus—*Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth*—located in northern Egypt near the mouth of the Nile River on the Mediterranean coast, it had a large Jewish population. *an eloquent man*—Gk. *logios*, used only here in the New Testament, it “can mean either a man of words...or a man of ideas” (Robertson, *Word*

Pictures in the New Testament). He was both a scholar and a communicator.

- **came to Ephesus; and he was mighty** [Gk. *dunamis*, where we get the English word “dynamite”] **in the Scriptures** [at this time, it would mean the Old Testament].

Verse 25—*This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord*—a phrase often found in the Old Testament, in a general way (Genesis 18:19; 2 Kings 21:22; Proverbs 10:29; Jeremiah 5:4-5; Ezekiel 18:25, 29; 33:17, 20), and in a way which more pointedly referred to the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3). This phrase (*the way of the Lord*) is used four times before Acts: *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Make ready the way of the Lord...”* (Mark 1:3; Matthew 3:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). *Lord* in the Old Testament Hebrew is Yahweh (Jehovah). When the O.T. was translated into Greek, Yahweh became *Kurios* (Lord) in the New Testament. So John’s ministry of making ready the way of *Kurios* is the Greek translation of Yahweh from Isaiah 40:3. Apollos, therefore, knew about the coming of the Lord, based upon his knowledge of the Old Testament, and that was confirmed by and consistent with the preaching and ministry of John the Baptist, who was appointed to prepare the way of Messiah by calling Israel to repent.

- **being fervent in spirit**—“to be hot,” enthusiasm and zeal for the things of God
- **he was speaking and teaching accurately** [true, error-free] **the things concerning Jesus**—that Jesus was the Messiah, predicted in the Old Testament (v. 28). While his knowledge was limited, he was accurate and correct in what he did teach.
- **being acquainted only with the baptism of John**—John’s ministry had two phases: (1) that phase during which he announced to Israel that Messiah (as yet unidentified and unknown to him) was soon to appear and (2) that phase after Jesus had been designated the Messiah, when John proclaimed Him to be the Messiah, and introduced Jesus to the nation as the fulfillment of the OT prophecies. Until (2), John’s message was a baptism of anticipation of the One who had not yet been revealed.

Verse 26—*and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue*—as John the Baptist did, preparing the hearts of the Jews to receive the Messiah

- **But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him**—They must have thought—His teaching points to Jesus, and he doesn’t know it.
- **they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately**—i.e., gave him new information about Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection. That this mighty teacher would consent to be taught

by a lowly tentmaker and his wife shows his godly humility. At this point, when Apollos believes in Jesus, he went from being an Old Testament saint to a New Testament saint. Apollos then becomes one of the great teachers of the church, mentioned together with Paul and Peter (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:6, 22; 4:6).

APPLICATION—In the article “Did Priscilla ‘Teach’ Apollos? An Examination of the Meaning of ἐκτίθημι [“explained”] in Acts 18:26” by Daniel B. Wallace, Th.M., Ph. D. (*bible.org*), Dr. Wallace explains, “In some of the debates over the role of women in ministry nowadays, much is made of Priscilla teaching Apollos in Acts 18:26. It is often said that since Priscilla taught Apollos, 1 Tim 2:12 cannot mean women may not teach men. Several assumptions are underneath this supposition, not the least of which is that ‘explained’ in Acts 18:26 has every bit as much force as ‘teach’ in 1 Tim 2:12. ... The verb ἐκτίθημι [“explained”] is used only by Luke in the NT, and only in Acts (Acts 7:21; 11:4; 18:26; 28:23). The word is actually somewhat of a vanilla term, basically meaning “lay out,” or “expose.” It can be used in various contexts, but in collocation with information being passed on it tends to be restricted to simple explanation without concomitant [accompanying] urging or rhetorical persuasiveness.” After extensive exploration of the usage of the Greek words for “explain” in Acts 18:26 and “teach” in 2 Timothy 2:12, Wallace’s conclusion is, “This then seems to be the line of demarcation that this text encapsulates (especially when it is compared to 1 Tim 2:12): a woman may explain the known facts of the gospel. But whether she has permission to exhort [charge, implore] men on the basis of those facts is both outside the scope of Acts 18:26 and its context and is proscribed [forbidden] in 1 Tim 2:12. In practice, I would see no problem with women instructing men in several areas in church ministry, such as Sunday school classes on church history, basic Bible facts (with a minimum of interpretation), and the like. But when it comes to teaching the Word to men in a manner that involves interpretation and/or application/exhortation, this seems to be a violation of the prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12.”

Whether you like it or not, this is one area we are going to be held accountable for at the Judgment Seat (Bema). How will Jesus judge your attitude about this issue and what you did? I thank God there is no prohibition to women learning and growing in the Lord, and we can teach other women.

Verse 27—*And when he wanted to go across to Achaia*, especially to its capital, Corinth (Acts 19:1)

- *the brethren* [believers in Ephesus] *encouraged him and wrote to the disciples* [believers in Corinth] *to welcome him*—

APPLICATION—This is your greatest endorsement—good words from fellow believers you know and trust.

- *when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace*—not through works (Ephesians 2:8-9), which is news to Jews, whose lives are built on works.

Verse 28—*for he powerfully* [vehemently, intense, emphatic] *refuted*—Gk. *diakatelegchomai*, an intense double compound word—he completely crushed his opponents, totally disproving their every point

- *the Jews in public*—i.e., public debates
- *demonstrating by the Scriptures* [Old Testament] *that Jesus was the Christ* [anointed One, Messiah]. Now he has a new message, i.e., new information to add to his message. He still uses the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, but now he knows that Jesus is that Messiah.

APPLICATION—Notice that his case is built on the Scriptures, not on his personal experience, etc. It is the Word of God that a person must confront.

Verse 19:1—*It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth* (18:27-28)

- *Paul passed through the upper country* [of Asia Minor] *and came to Ephesus* [on the Aegean Sea-coast]. Paul returned to Ephesus, as he said he would try to do (18:23). We learn a lot more about Ephesus from Acts 20; the book of Ephesians, and the letter to Ephesus in Revelation 1:11; 2:1-7, and 1 Timothy, written to Timothy, who was sent to Ephesus to minister.
- *found some disciples*—

Verse 2—*He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”* There is some controversy over this. Here are the issues:

- (1) Some say these *disciples* were already Christians and use this passage as a proof text for their view that receiving the Holy Spirit is a post-salvation or “second blessing” experience. This view does not take into account the transitional nature of the book of Acts, which means that the experiences and phenomena described in Acts are not normative for today. Also, this view would contradict the teaching of the New Testament epistles, which clearly declare that every Christian receives the Holy Spirit at salvation (1 Corinthians 6:19; 12:13; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 1:13) and define those without the Spirit as not Christians (Romans 8:9; Jude 19).
- (2) Nor does this passage prove these *disciples* were Christians. The Greek word *mathetes* (disciple) means “learner” or “follower.” Although every Christian is a disciple, the New Testament (and Luke) also speak of the disciples of the Pharisees (Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33) and of John the Baptist (Matthew 9:14; 11:2; Luke 5:33; 7:18-19; 11:1; John 1:35; 3:25).
- (3) Paul did not assume these twelve disciples were Christians. His question, “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” was to determine their spiritual status. David Williams explains the significance of Paul’s question:

His [Paul’s] criterion for what distinguished the Christian is significant. So, too, is the way in which his question is framed. It implies that the Holy Spirit is received at a definite point in time and that that tie is the moment of initial belief (the aorist participle, *pisteusantes*, being construed here as coincidental with the verb, *elabete*). The same thought is expressed, for example, in Ephesians 1:13: “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (cf. Acts 11:17). No space of time is envisaged between the two events; nor is the possibility entertained of believing without also receiving the “seal of the Spirit.” [*New International Biblical Commentary: Acts*]

- ***And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit”***—This answer confirms they were not yet Christians. They did not know about the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Therefore, they were Old Testament saints.

Verse 3—*And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism”*—i.e., they were disciples of John the Baptist. So evangelism in Asia began years ago with the ministry of John the Baptist (though there is no evidence that he himself ever went there).

Verse 4—*Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus”*—It seems like these disciples were followers of John the Baptist **before** he met and baptized Jesus. Apollos seems to have had a clearer understanding that Jesus is the Messiah, therefore being a disciple of John the Baptist **after** John met and baptized Jesus (yet not knowing Jesus was crucified and resurrected).

Verse 5—*When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*—Notice that Paul’s question of whether they were Christians or not had to do with receiving the Holy Spirit, but significantly, Paul did not tell them about how to receive the Spirit but about Jesus. When they got information about Jesus, they believed. As Jesus said in John 5:39, “*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me.*” If a person really believes in the Bible and God, they will recognize Jesus is God when they get the information about Him.

Verse 6—*And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying*—This was tangible proof the Holy Spirit had come into their lives (see Acts 11:15, 17). With these men, we have the fourth group to receive the Spirit: the Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8), the Gentiles (Acts 10), and the Old Testament saints (Acts 19). The same miraculous gifts were present so that all would know what was said of the Gentiles in Acts 11:17-18, they were confirmed to be Christians by the miraculous gifts.

Verse 7—*There were in all about twelve men.*

Verse 8—*And he entered the synagogue—* when he was here before, ***he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ...they asked him to stay for a longer time...*** (Acts 18:19-20), so he now returned and took up where he had left off.

- ***continued speaking out boldly for three months***—This speaking out was often mentioned of Paul, yet he asked the Colossians to pray for him in that regard (Colossians 4:3-4).
- ***reasoning*** [Gk *dialogomai*, i.e. “dialogue”] and ***persuading*** [“to convince by argument”] ***them***—Paul did not just lecture them, he entered into dialogue, discussions, with arguments (reasonings)
- ***about the kingdom of God***—i.e. the things of God and salvation (Acts 28:31) and righteousness (Romans 14:17).

Verse 9—*But when some were becoming hardened*—a word always used in the New Testament of a heart hardened against God (Romans 9:18; Hebrews 3:8, 13, 15; 4:7). It’s in the imperfect tense, which means it is a process. During the three months Paul was there, they gradually became more hardened. When the truth is repeatedly rejected, the heart hardens.

- ***and disobedient***—since belief is a divine command (Acts 17:30; Mark 1:15).
- ***speaking evil***—the outward result of hardening and disobedience is to speak evil of Christianity.
- ***of the Way***—a title for Christianity (Acts 9:2; 19:23; 24:14, 22)
- ***before the people***—in an attempt to destroy Paul’s influence with them
- ***he withdrew from them***—when he was making no progress for the Gospel
- ***and took away the disciples***—those who had repented and believed in Jesus
- ***reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus***—nothing is known of this school

APPLICATION—When a person’s heart is hardened, they cannot receive the Word of God. It seems as a person rejects the Word of God, they begin the process of hardening. Then God Himself hardens the person so they cannot repent. The first person we see in this condition is Pharaoh (Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 14:4, 17). Israel hardened their heart against God and His commands (1 Samuel 6:6; Psalm 95:8; Hebrews 3:8). We are commanded to not harden our hearts (Hebrews 4:7). Unbelievers during the Tribulation are hardened, they believe the lawless one in order that *they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness* (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). The warning is clear—hardening is a process. Once a person starts down that path, it is unlikely they will some day turn from that path. *Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts* (Hebrews 3:7; 4:7), *now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6:2). You are not guaranteed an opportunity for tomorrow.

APPLICATION—It’s not enough that people do not believe in Jesus. They will then speak evil of the Way. Though they speak of “tolerance” and want you to tolerate them, yet they will not tolerate you.

Verse 10—*This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord* [i.e., the Gospel was available throughout all of Asia] ***both Jews and Greeks***—With Ephesus being the major seaport of Asia, it was a center of travel in and out of Asia. We know the Spirit forbid Paul from preaching the Gospel in Asia (Acts 16:6), and Paul stayed in Ephesus (20:18), so it must be through teaching the disciples, the Word of God spread throughout Asia. The believers mentioned as the seven churches of Revelation 2–3 were probably converted during this time. So in God’s time, in God’s way, the Word of God was proclaimed in Asia.

Verse 11—*God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul*—With no written New Testament at this time to measure someone’s teaching, God used signs and wonders to authenticate His message (2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 2:22).

APPLICATION—Today we have God’s written Word. Like the Bereans, we are to be *...examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so* (Acts 17:11). We are not to look for signs and wonders to authenticate the message.

Verse 12—*so that handkerchiefs or aprons* [evidently used in his tentmaking] *were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out*—It was not Paul’s emphasis or purpose to do this. The idea that healing power could be transmitted through these articles was the people’s idea (see Matthew 9:21; Acts 5:15). That healing did happen through those means does not commend that method (as some would-be healers today would have people believe). In His grace, God accommodated the mentality of those people, and it accomplished God’s purpose to authenticate Paul’s message of the Gospel.

APPLICATION—Again, the miracles were done to authenticate that Paul spoke from God. It was a platform from which he was able to present the Gospel. The healings were not an end in themselves (as is done today).

Verse 13—*But also some of the Jewish exorcists*—The Greek word *exorkiston* means “to bind with an oath.” It is only used here in the New Testament. Ancient exorcists “attempted to expel demons by invoking the name of a more powerful spirit being. Exorcists were common in the ancient world, even among the Jews” (Matt. 12:27; Acts 13:6)” [MacArthur, *Acts*].

APPLICATION—Apparently, Satan allowed them to have “success” in casting out demons. Why would he do that? Because it resulted in converts to his cause. Today, for example, someone could be instantaneously “healed” at a healing meeting, resulting in people being led away from the Bible and following some leader, such as these exorcists did.

- *who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches”*—Like Simon Magus in Acts 8, these exorcists thought the power of the Spirit was available to anyone. They were not Christian Jews because they only knew Jesus as “whom Paul preaches.”

APPLICATION—Jesus said that at the Judgment Day, *Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me...”* (Matthew 7:22-23). This is a given in the context of *Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves* (v. 15). Jesus is warning us about false proclaimers, using His name to do miracles and cast out demons in order to devour us, as a ravenous wolf would.

Verse 14—*Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this*—Nothing else is known of these men. There is no record of a chief priest named Sceva. He probably gave himself the title to gain authority over the people (as many TV preachers, etc. do today).

Verse 15—*And the evil spirit answered and said to them, “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?”*—Though these exorcists fooled the people, they did not fool the demon. The demon evidently spoke through the voice of the man it possessed and challenged the authority of these men. The demon knew that Paul had authority from God over it, but these men did not have that authority.

Verse 16—*And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded*—With supernatural strength that sometimes accompanies demon possession (Mark 5:3-4).

Verse 17—*This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.* Satan wanted these men to succeed to compete with God and His messenger Paul, as Pharaoh’s magicians competed with Moses. But it backfired and resulted in greater glory to God and His Word through His messenger Paul.

Verse 18—*Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices*—They did not want to be caught *naked and wounded* as the exorcists were.

APPLICATION—Fear will motivate one to obey God’s commands. Moses said, *... that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin* (Exodus 20:20). Isaiah 8:13 says, *It is the Lord...He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread.* Jesus

said, *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell* (Matthew 10:28). If you do not fear God, you will consider His commandments to be mere suggestions.

Verse 19—*And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone*—They would not sell these books or give them away because they were evil. They needed to be destroyed.

- *and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver*—This would be 50,000 days' wages of a common laborer. It shows how widespread the practice of evil was.

APPLICATION—If you have something evil in your possession (such as an evil DVD), destroy it, don't give it to "Good Will" or to someone else.

Verse 20—*So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing*. The Satanic forces of the occult and magic could not overcome the power of God. The Gospel, confirming miracles, and defeat of the exorcists all resulted in awe and respect for the name of Jesus and a public casting away of the magical arts.

Verse 21—*Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."*—Here we have a glimpse of Paul's plans. It seems he was heading to Jerusalem to bring a financial gift for the needs of the poor there. He was going through Macedonia and Achaia to gather that gift (Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9). This would emphasize the church's unity and show in a very practical way their love for their Jewish brethren (James 2:15-16). Then he wanted to visit Rome, *...in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established* (Romans 1:11). But he even saw Rome as a stop on his way to Spain (Romans 15:22-24). This marks a turning point in Acts. From this point to the end of the book, the target in Paul's mind is Rome.

Verse 22—*And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus*—Timothy had been ministering in Corinth (Acts 18:5) before joining Paul in Ephesus for some unspecified time. They were sent to Corinth to prepare the collection for when Paul arrived there (1 Corinthians 16:1-12; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15).

- *he himself stayed in Asia for a while*—Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened for me, and there are many adversaries* (1 Corinthians 16:8-9).

Verse 23—*About that time*—Before he left Ephesus as he planned (vv. 21-22).

- *there occurred no small disturbance concerning*—perhaps as an emphasis, connecting this "no small" disturbance with the fact that the silversmiths were bringing "no little" business in verse 24, i.e., they had a huge business, and so interrupting this business caused a huge disturbance.
- *the Way*—an early title for the Christian faith (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

Verse 24—*For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines*—Shrines were household idols that were presented at a temple as votive offerings. Archaeologists have unearthed many terra cotta shrines but no silver ones. The silver ones had probably been melted down for their silver content.

- *of Artemis*—There were at least 33 shrines to Artemis throughout the Roman Empire, making it the most popular cult of all. Ephesus had the Temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World), making it the center of Artemis worship.
- *was bringing no little business to the craftsmen*—Many pilgrims flocked to Ephesus to worship at this temple to Artemis, so there would be a huge business for these craftsmen.

Verse 25—*these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said*—His argument was as follows: (1) *"Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business*—The issue was strictly financial, not whether Christianity was true or not.

Verse 26—“*You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, (2) this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all*—Paul was teaching that there was only one Living God, and He alone was the Creator of all things (17:24) and that idols were just a creation of man and not gods at all. Therefore, idol sales were down, and so was their profit.

Verse 27—(3) “*Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute*—Once part of the upper ranks of society, now their positions were threatened. Look what happened to the Jewish exorcists—they *fled...naked and wounded*. They didn’t want that to happen to themselves.

- (4) *but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence*—More than just their trade was being threatened. If what Paul said was true, their very goddess and religion was worthless, her temple would lose its glamour.

Verse 28—*When they heard this and were filled with rage*—This was a cry of anger, not of love or devotion to Artemis.

- *they began crying out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”*—These silversmiths were working the people into a frenzy.

Verse 29—*The city was filled with the confusion* [they don’t know what is going on—see v. 32], *and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia*.

- Aristarchus was from Thessalonica (20:4), who accompanied Paul on his voyage to Rome (27:2) and was in prison with Paul in Rome (Colossians 4:10). He was a Jewish believer.
- Gaius is a very common name, so it is not possible to know who this one was.
- The theater was the largest public building in town (still preserved today) and held about 25,000 people.

Verse 30—*And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly* [to defend his friends and the cause of Christ], *the disciples would not let him*—it would be a fruitless effort to try to reason with a mob mentality.

Verse 31—*Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater*.

- “The Asiarchs...were bound together in a league for promoting the cult of the emperor and Rome ... Every year an Asiarch was elected for the entire province, and additional Asiarchs were elected for each city that had a temple honoring the emperor” (Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*). The worship of the Roman emperor had not yet come to the point of opposing Christianity. They did not see it as the threat the silversmiths did.

Verse 32—*So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together*—mob mentality

Verse 33—*Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward* [as spokesman for the unbelieving Jews]; *and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly*.

Verse 34—*But when they recognized that he was a Jew*—There’s no indication that he was a Christian. To the pagan crowd, there would be little difference between the Jews and the Christians—both worshipped the Living God and would be against the idol worship of the Ephesians.

- *a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”*

Verse 35—*After quieting the crowd, the town clerk*—the city’s chief administrative officer (similar to a city mayor of a modern city). He would be the liaison between the city council and the Roman authorities. So he was Ephesus’ leading citizen. The Romans would hold him responsible for what happened.

- *said, “Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven?”*—“Me-teorites were often associated with the worship of the Mother Goddess [Artemis]” (Polhill, *Acts*, 413).

Verse 36—*“So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash*—He mistakenly thought that nothing these men could do could possibly affect their great goddess.

Verse 37—*“For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess*—In spite of Demetrius’ claims (vv. 24-27), the Christians were not thieves and they did not use insulting language. They had not acted improperly.

Verses 38-39—*“So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another [in court]. But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly.*

Verse 40—*“For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today’s events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering”*—Again, he admitted there was no real cause for the riot, and if the Romans investigated it, the Ephesians would be unable to defend their actions. This could result in a loss of the privileges the Romans had granted them.

Verse 41—*After saying this he dismissed the assembly*—His arguments were persuasive. As far as we know, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen did not pursue the matter any further.

APPLICATION—God caused the wrath of men to praise Him (Psalm 76:10).

Chapter 20

Verse 1—*After the uproar [in 19:23-41] had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted [strongly encouraged] them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia [to gather contributions to take to Jerusalem (19:21; Romans 15:22-29; 1 Corinthians 16:1-9; 2 Corinthians 8:16-22)].*

Verse 2—*When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation [strong encouragement], he came to Greece.*

Verse 3—*And there he spent three months (in Corinth—probably when he wrote Romans and possibly Galatians), and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria (from the port at Corinth), he decided to return through Macedonia (northern land route).*

Verses 4-5—*And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.*



But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us (including Luke, the author of Acts) ***at Troas***. Apparently, Luke had remained in Philippi after Paul and Silas had been forced to leave (17:1).

Verse 6—*We* (Paul with Luke) ***sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread*** (Passover), ***and came to them*** (the group in verse 4) ***at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days***.

Verse 7—*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread* [Communion], ***Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day***—Some say this is evidence that the early church regularly gathered on Sunday. However, this is a one-time example of what they did, and it seems more probable that it was because Paul was leaving the next day.

- ***and he prolonged his message until midnight***—Many things to say before he left.

Verse 8—*There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together*—The believers met in homes (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2). [The earliest known church building dates from the first half of the third century (*The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, p. 165).]

- Many oil-burning lamps would have added fumes and smoke to the stuffy atmosphere in the room, possibly why he was sitting on the window sill where the air was freshest and coolest.

Verse 9—*And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep*—This is word for a young boy, usually between 7 and 14. The fumes, stuffiness of the room, the late hour, all made him sleepy.

- ***and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead***—as a physician, Luke would have been able to determine the death.

Verse 10—*But Paul went down and fell upon him*—as did Elijah in 1 Kings 17:21 and Elisha in 2 Kings 4:34.

- ***and after embracing him, he said, “Do not be troubled***—make an uproar or commotion
- ***for his life is in him”***—i.e., his life has been restored.

Verse 11—*When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak and then left*—He certainly had everyone’s attention now. There was no question of his authority from God. But notice the emphasis was on Paul’s teaching, not on raising the boy from the dead.

Verse 12—*They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.*

Verses 13-14—*But we* (including Luke), ***going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos*** (about 20 miles from Troas), ***intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land*** (we’re not told why). ***And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene*** (the leading city of the island of Lesbos).

Verse 15—*Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios* (the birthplace of Homer); ***and the next day we crossed over to Samos*** (the birthplace of the mathematician Pythagoras); ***and the day following we came to Miletus*** (on the mainland, about 30 miles south of Ephesus).

Verse 16—*For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost*—to go to Ephesus would be too time consuming, meeting with all the believers who had great affection for Paul.

Verse 17—*From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.*

Verse 18—*And when they had come to him, he said to them* (in the only recorded message in Acts addressed to Christians).

- *“You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,*

Verse 19—*serving the Lord* (see Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4)

APPLICATION—*It is the Lord whom you serve* (Colossians 3:24), whether you are doing dishes, helping the poor, teaching God’s Word, working at your job, etc.

- *with all humility*—because a servant is not greater than his/her master (Matthew 10:24; see also 2 Corinthians 3:5; 11:5).
- *and with tears*—Three things moved Paul to tears: (1) he grieved over the state of the lost (Romans 9:2-3); (2) he cried over weak, struggling, sinning Christians (2 Corinthians 2:4); and (3) the threat of false teachers (Acts 20:31; Philippians 3:18).
- *and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews* (2 Corinthians 11:24, 26; Acts 9:16; 13:6, 45; 14:2, 19; 17:5-113; 18:6, 12-13; 19:9; 20:3; 21:27; 23:12).

Verse 20—*how I did not shrink* [“to draw back” or “to withhold”] *from declaring to you anything that was profitable*—Paul told Timothy ...*be ready...to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction* (2 Timothy 4:2; see also 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

- *teaching you publicly and from house to house* (privately)

Verse 21—*solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance* [change of mind] *toward God and faith* (trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation) *in our Lord Jesus Christ* (see Romans 1:14, 16; 11:13; 1 Corinthians 9:16, 19-23; 1 Timothy 2:7).

Verses 22-23—*“And now, behold, bound in spirit*—commonly used of physical binding with chains. Figuratively used here to refer to his strong compulsion to fulfill his ministry.

- *I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there* [specifically] *except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me*—see Romans 15:31 and Acts 21:10-11.

Verse 24—*“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God*—Paul had an eternal perspective

Verse 25—*“And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face*—Paul will no longer go to Ephesus or meet with people from there.

Verse 26—*“Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men*—because he did not hold back in proclaiming the Gospel.

Verse 27—*“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God*—There’s more to Christianity than the Gospel, for example, he’s now going to warn them about false teachers. There’s *the whole purpose of God, to shepherd the church of God.*

Verse 28—*“Be on guard for yourselves*—The priority is your own spiritual relationship with God before you can minister to anyone else (1 Timothy 4:1-15; 2 Timothy 2:20-21). Paul had outward virtue even before his salvation, calling himself blameless as to the law (Philippians 3:6), but he was not blameless compared to true righteousness that then came to him with salvation (2 Corinthians 1:12).

- *and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd* [protect and feed] *the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

Verse 29—“*I know that after my departure savage wolves [rather than feed the sheep, they will feed off the sheep, devour them] will come in among you, not sparing the flock;*

Verse 30—*and from among your own selves men will arise*—Steps in this process: (1) rather than serve others, one begins to want to be served (John 10), (2) instead of sacrificing him or herself for the benefit of the sheep, the wolf becomes willing to sacrifice the sheep so that he/she may benefit, he/she expects to gain from the sheep, even at the expense of the sheep, (3) when there is danger, he/she is not there to care for the sheep but eventually becomes the wolf, who actually devours the sheep.

- *speaking perverse [corrupt, crooked] things, [with the purpose] to draw away the disciples after them.*

APPLICATION—There are warnings about false teachers in every book in the New Testament, except Philemon, just as there were warnings about false prophets in the Old Testament. You are responsible for discerning false teachers. The closer we come to the End Times, the more prevalent these false teachers will become because there is a great falling away of the professing church from God and His Word (2 Thessalonians 2:3), and we see that today. The danger is all around us! Be on the alert! (v. 31).

Verse 31—“*Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.*

Verse 32—“*And now I commend you to God*—Although Paul was leaving them, he was not leaving them alone. God is the one who keeps them (Jude 24-25).

- *and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified*—The Word of God is the only fuel for growth (see 2 Peter 1; 2 Timothy 3 and 4; 1 John 2:18-29).

Verse 33—“*I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes*—Paul’s behavior was the opposite of the wolves.

Verse 34—“*You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me*—even though he had a right to be financially supported by the Ephesians (1 Corinthians 9), yet Paul not only worked to meet his own needs but the needs of those who traveled with him.

Verse 35—“*In everything I showed you [Paul’s conduct was his testimony] that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak [rather than preying on the weak, as the wolves do] and*

- *remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed [happy] to give than to receive’*—you’re always doing one or the other—getting or giving. These words are not recorded in the gospels. Paul must have known about them from another source, like Peter, for example.

Verses 36-38—“*When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all—And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again*—But he would send others, such as Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 4:12).

- *And they were accompanying him to the ship.*