

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Part 9 – Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey (15:40-18:22)

(No. 1119.9 – - NLC)

I. PAUL AND SILAS JOINED BY TIMOTHY IN LYSTRA

Acts 15:40-16:5: ⁴⁰But Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

^{16:1}He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. ²The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

A. Paul and Silas came to **Derbe** and **Lystra** (Acts 16:1)

1. Paul visited the cities he and Barnabas had evangelized two or three years earlier—Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and likely Pisidian Antioch.
2. The order of towns is reversed from his first journey since they were approaching them from the opposite direction on this trip.
3. Certainly Paul had vivid memories of the stoning he had received previously in Lystra, but that did not deter him from returning to visit the believers there, risking his own safety.

B. **Timothy** in Lystra

1. This is the first mention of Timothy in the New Testament (see Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1, 19; Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1; 1 & 2 Timothy; Phile. 1:1; Heb. 13:23).

2. As mentioned previously [see *Section V.F.3* of Part 8 on p.156], Timothy may have been converted through Paul’s ministry during his first visit to Lystra.
 3. Timothy’s mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois) were both Jewish believers (2 Tim. 1:5); his father was a Greek and may have already died by this time—nothing is said of his faith, so it is generally presumed that he was neither a convert to Judaism nor a believer in Christ.
 4. Timothy was a disciple and he had a good testimony in the churches of Lystra and Iconium (v.2).
- C. “Paul wanted to take him [**Timothy**] along on the journey, so he **circumcised him** because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.” (v.3)
1. As Paul would refer to Timothy as a “youth” or “young man” some 15 years later (see 1 Tim. 4:12), some believe he as only a teenager at this time.
 2. Not only did the early apostles always travel in pairs [see *Section II.A* of Part 8 on p.132], they would often take younger disciples such as John Mark and Timothy along with them for practical training and ministerial experience. What a privilege for Timothy to be chosen by Paul to accompany him on this second missionary journey!
 3. Why did Paul insist on circumcising Timothy, when he had steadfastly refused to compel Titus to be circumcised some time previously (see Gal. 2:1-5)?
 - a) The Scripture clearly states that it was “because of the Jews who lived in that area.” Timothy was of mixed parentage, but because his mother was a Jewess, that made Timothy a Jew by law—an apostate Jew because he was uncircumcised; Titus was a Greek.
 - b) In the case of Titus, it was a question of fundamental Christian doctrine—false teachers had been insisting that Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be saved, and Paul recognized this as an affront to the gospel of grace.
 - c) This case was entirely different. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were going forth on evangelistic work, and their first contacts would frequently be with Jews. If

these Jews knew that Timothy was an uncircumcised Jew, they might refuse to listen. So as a matter of expediency, not doctrine, Timothy was circumcised to eliminate an unnecessary hindrance to the preaching of the gospel to the Jews.

- d) Paul would later explain such practices in his letter to the Corinthians:

1 Cor. 9:19-22: ¹⁹*Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.* ²⁰***To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.*** ²¹*To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.* ²²*To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.*

D. “As they traveled from town to town, they **delivered the decisions** reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.” (vv.4-5)

1. Paul and Silas continued to deliver the letter drafted by the Jerusalem Council [see *Section VIII.* of Part 8 on pp.170-175] to the believers in all of the towns they visited.
2. The churches were strengthened in faith and grew daily in numbers (see Acts 14:22); this is one of the many “progress reports” that Luke gives throughout the book of Acts [see *Section I.H.1.* of Part 5 on p.70].
3. It is important that churches grow *both* in **faith** and **numbers**—one without (or at the expense of) the other is meaningless.

II. THE MACEDONIAN CALL

Acts 16:6-10: ⁶*Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.* ⁷*When they came*

to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

A. “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of **Phrygia** and **Galatia**, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.” (vv.6-8)

1. These verses give us further insight into the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit in the apostles’ missionary strategies— on some occasions, He would open a door and say “Go”— at other times (such as seen in these verses), He would close doors and say “No, don’t go!”
2. Having revisited the churches in Phrygia and Galatia, they thought of continuing into the province of Asia, but they were “kept” from going by the Holy Spirit [Gk. *koluo* = “forbidden” – KJV, “blocked” – MSG].
3. Later, they actually tried to enter Bithynia and again they were not permitted; we are not told why, but these events should remind us that the times and seasons are set by the Father’s own authority (see Acts 1:7).

B. “During the night Paul had a **vision**...” (v.9)

1. Having received several prohibitions from the Spirit of God, Paul is finally given positive direction by way of a vision.
2. Note once again the **variety of ways in which the Holy Spirit directed** the efforts of the apostles and believers in the early church:
 - a) Jesus had given them the master plan in Acts 1:8: “You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
 - b) Peter was guided by the OT Scriptures in choosing a successor for Judas (Acts 1:15-26);

- c) An angel of the Lord directed Peter and the other apostles (after releasing them from prison) to go back to the temple courts and preach the gospel (Acts 5:19-20); an angel of the Lord guided Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26) and then translated him to Azotus, a town 30 miles away (Acts 8:39-40);
- d) On a number of occasions, they received messages through prophets (Acts 11:27-30; 13:1-2; 21:10-12);
- e) They often had an inner sense or witness of what the Holy Spirit wanted: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28); [see *Section VIII.E.1* of Part 8 on p.173]; Paul was often warned by the Holy Spirit about imprisonment and hardships (Acts 20:23);
- f) There were times that the Holy Spirit spoke directly to them: Instructions given to the apostles (Acts 1:2); Philip directed to approach the chariot of the Ethiopian (Acts 8:29); Peter on the roof in Joppa (Acts 10:19-20; 11:12);
- g) As noted above, they were at times forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go to certain places (Acts 16:6-7);
- h) They were often guided by circumstances: Peter and John were at the temple because it was the time of daily prayer (Acts 3:1); the disciples were scattered by persecution (Acts 8:1-4; 11:19; 13:50-51; 14:5-6); civil authorities asked Paul and Silas to leave Philippi (Acts 16:39-40), and Paul would be taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea by the authorities (Acts 23:33); Paul’s appeal to Caesar determined his trip to Rome (Acts 25:11), and shipwreck landed him in Malta (Acts 28:1), delaying his arrival in Rome.
- i) Guidance frequently came through the counsel and initiative of other Christians: The apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria when they heard how they have received the word of God (Acts 8:14); the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22); the brethren at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Acts 15:2); Judas and Silas were sent by the church at Jerusalem with Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:25-27), etc.

- j) And on at least five occasions, men were guided by visions...
3. “Vision” [Gk. *horama* = “from *horao* = “to stare at, discern clearly, appear; something gazed at; a spectacle (especially supernatural)”]
 4. Visions were promised with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: “your young men will see visions” (Acts 2:17), and were often employed by the Holy Spirit to give specific guidance and direction: (Acts 9:10 – Ananias; Acts 9:12 – Paul; Acts 10:3 – Cornelius; Acts 10:10-19 – Peter; Acts 18:9 – Paul).
- C. “Paul had a **vision of a man of Macedonia** standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” (vv.9-10)
1. This was a clear and specific call to Macedonia, which Paul immediately heeded.
 2. We are not told who the man was—some have speculated that it was the Philippian jailer who would be converted there (Acts 16:29-34)—but the man may have simply been a representative of the region crying out with their need for the gospel.
 3. “We got ready...” – this is the first “we” passage in Acts, indicating that Luke joined Paul and his other companions at Troas [see Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16].
 4. “Concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them...”
 - a) “Concluding” [Gk. *sumbibazo* = lit. “to drive or knit together; to unite, infer, prove together”];
 - b) They were all unanimous in their understanding that this was God directing them to Macedonia: “confidently inferring” – AMP or “assuredly gathering” – KJV;
 5. Now the gospel would reach Europe (modern Greece and neighboring nations)!

III. LYDIA’S CONVERSION IN PHILIPPI

Acts 16:11-15: ¹¹From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. ¹²From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. ¹³On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

- A. Paul and company reached Philippi, where Lydia and her household were converted and baptized.
- B. "On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there." (v.13)
 - 1. It was always Paul's practice to go first to the synagogue when he visited a new city, but there was no synagogue, indicating that there were not many Jews in Philippi (a minimum of ten married men were required to open a synagogue).
 - 2. So he went outside the city to the place where Jews would gather on the Sabbath, and they found a group of women there and preached the gospel to them.
- C. "One of those listening was a woman named **Lydia**, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." (v.14)
 - 1. Lydia was likely a Gentile convert to Judaism; she had a heart for God—she was a sincere worshiper of God and had come to pray with the other women.
 - 2. She was "listening" and "the **Lord opened her heart** to respond to Paul's message."
 - a) Lydia's ears and heart were opened—she was keenly attentive to the good news;

- b) God opened her heart, granted her repentance, and enabled her to believe—then and only then could she respond [see *Section III.D.* of Part 8 on pp.141-149 for an in-depth discussion on the mysterious workings of divine sovereignty and human responsibility].
- D. “When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. ‘If you consider me a believer in the Lord,’ she said, ‘come and stay at my house.’ And she persuaded us. (v.15)
1. Lydia responded in faith and obedience—she and her entire household were baptized and became faithful followers of Christ.
 2. She persuaded [lit. “constrained, compelled or pressed”] Paul and his companions to stay at her house.
 3. Lydia was Paul’s first convert in Europe.

IV. PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON

Acts 16:16-24: ¹⁶Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” ¹⁸She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

²²The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

- A. “Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.” (v.16)
1. She had a “spirit of divination” (KJV, NAS)—[Gk. *Puthon* = “python (the diviner)”];
 2. This poor girl was twice a slave—not only was she a slave in the literal sense, but she was spiritually enslaved by Satan to do his bidding.
 3. She earned a great deal of money for her owners: To this day, people will spend a lot of money to have someone predict their future, even though such “fortune-telling” is demonically inspired; how ironic that they *could* know their future destiny simply by surrendering to the One who knows the end from the beginning and seeking Him who has already made plans for them (Jer. 29:11-14)!
 4. Let us be very clear here: astrology, horoscopes, palm readers, fortune tellers, séances, necromancy, Ouija boards, witchcraft, magic, tarot cards, divination, crystal gazers, clairvoyants, and any of a host of other occult practices (apart from seeking God and receiving revelation through His word and the Holy Spirit) that are used to learn about the future are DEMONIC!
- B. “This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.’ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!’ At that moment the spirit left her.” (vv.17-18)
1. During Christ’s earthly ministry, it was common for the demons to recognize Him and acknowledge who He was:
 - a) **Mark 1:23-26:** ²³*Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out,* ²⁴*“What do You want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the **Holy One of God!**”* ²⁵*“Be quiet!”* said Jesus sternly. *“Come out of him!”* ²⁶*The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.*

- b) **Mark 5:7-8:** ⁷*He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do You want with me, **Jesus, Son of the Most High God?** Swear to God that You won’t torture me!”* ⁸*For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!”*
2. All that the slave girl was saying about Paul and Silas was true; however, it was actually the *demon* who was testifying! Paul knew better than to receive testimony from an evil spirit.
 3. After hearing this testimony for many days, Paul finally became troubled in his spirit (v.17); this was the manifestation of the “discerning (distinguishing) of spirits,” one of the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Cor. 12:10: the words were right, but the spirit was wrong! True discernment enables one to judge people and situations, not by what the eye sees or the ear hears, but by what the Holy Spirit discerns (see Isa. 11:1-4, a Messianic prophecy).
 4. Paul cast out the evil spirit of divination. Driving out demons was one of the signs Jesus said would accompany those disciples who believed (Mark 16:17-18), and it is seen throughout the book of Acts (Acts 5:16; 8:7; 19:12).
- C. “When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.” (v.19)
1. How the love of money can blind us—here a poor girl who had been bound by Satan was marvelously set free, and all her owners could think about was their financial loss!
 2. This is reminiscent of the Gadarene demoniac, out of whom Jesus had driven a legion of demons into a herd of 2,000 pigs; rather than rejoice and thank God for the man’s deliverance, the people of the town were upset when they heard that their pigs had drowned in the lake, and began to “plead with Jesus to leave their region” (Mark 5:1-17).
 3. Once again a miracle had gotten the apostles into trouble!
- D. Without a trial, Paul and Silas were lynched, stripped, beaten, and flogged, before being thrown into prison and their feet fastened in stocks (vv.20-24).

1. NOTE: Up until this point, everything had gone smoothly with the missionaries' trip to Macedonia. Paul received a divine call in a vision, and everyone agreed that it was the Lord sending them to Macedonia to preach the gospel. They met Lydia, and she and her whole household believed and were baptized. Paul had now freed a slave girl from demonic bondage, casting a spirit of divination out of her. Confirmation after confirmation—surely they were in the center of God's will! Indeed they were, but we must never assume visions, divine appointments, and ministerial success exempt us from persecution, opposition and suffering.
2. Paul later complained to the officers of the city magistrates that even though they were Roman citizens, they were beaten publicly without a trial (v.37).

V. PHILIPPIAN JAILER CONVERTED

Acts 16:25-40: ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. ²⁷The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." ³²Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

³⁵When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." ³⁶The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now

you can leave. Go in peace.” ³⁷*But Paul said to the officers: “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.”*

³⁸*The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed.*

³⁹*They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city.* ⁴⁰*After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia’s house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.*

A. “**About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing** hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.” (v.25)

1. Having been lynched, publicly beaten with rods and flogged, thrown into the inner cell of the prison, their feet locked most uncomfortably in stocks, the apostles were praying and singing at midnight! What kind of men were these?
2. Anybody can sing when the prison doors are open and he is free as a bird; but hymns that arise from the darkest dungeon of pain and suffering are what Scripture calls “the sacrifice of praise” (Heb. 13:15-16), and oh how it pleases the Most High!
3. This was so amazing that it awoke all the other prisoners—they were listening to them.
 - a) MSG: “The other prisoners couldn’t believe their ears.”
 - b) The others heard heavenly joy coming from the inner prison, not groans and cursing.

B. “Suddenly there was such a **violent earthquake** that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose.” (v.26)

1. This was not an ordinary earthquake—this was a supernatural event.
2. Although the foundations of the prison were shaken, apparently there was no damage to the building, and no one was injured by the quake.

3. Not only were all the doors opened, but the prisoners' chains were unlocked!
- C. "The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!'" (vv.27-28)
1. Awakened by the earthquake and seeing that the prison doors had been opened, the jailer naturally assumed that all the prisoners had made their escape.
 2. The jailer knew full well that the escape of the prisoners would cost him his life, so he was about to commit suicide when Paul stopped him.
 3. None of the prisoners had tried to escape, perhaps because they were in awe of Paul and Silas and recognized the supernatural nature of the events that had just occurred.
 4. Note Paul's concern for this jailer's soul: "Don't harm yourself!" He could have easily let him fall on the sword, and he and Silas make their way to freedom. But Paul quite possibly recognized this was a divine appointment.
- D. "The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, '**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**'" (vv.29-30)
1. How suddenly God can change a situation—the jailer who had the power to lock these men in the stocks had now fallen to his knees, trembling before Paul and Silas!
 2. He referred to them as "Sirs;" this is the Greek word *kurios*, the word normally translated "Lord" and literally means "supreme in authority." In simpler terms, the jailer was now acknowledging that Paul and Silas were in charge!
 3. "What must I do to be saved?"
 - a) It is doubtful that he was asking about his personal safety.
 - b) He realized the prison doors had been miraculously opened, the bonds of all the prisoners loosed, and not one of them had escaped; hence, he could not feel himself in danger of losing his life on this account.

- c) It is more likely that he, like the prisoners, sensed something overwhelmingly supernatural and divine was happening.
 - d) This question was a good sign that the Holy Spirit was already at work in the jailer's heart; it is similar to the one asked by the crowd on the Day of Pentecost: "What should we do? (Acts 2:37)
- E. "They replied, '**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.**' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family. (vv.31-34)
1. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" – it is significant to note throughout the book of Acts how *simple* was the gospel they preached! (See Acts 2:38-39; 3:19-20; 8:5, 37).
 2. "And your household" – salvation has always been for the entire family or household; this pattern is seen throughout Scripture: (1) Noah and his whole family were saved in the ark, a type of Christ's salvation; (2) the Passover lamb, a type of Christ, was for the entire house (Ex. 12:3); (3) Lydia and the members of her household were all saved and baptized (Acts 16:15).
 3. That is not to imply that the other members of the family would be saved apart from each one actively placing his/her faith in Christ and being baptized; thus the apostles were careful to preach the gospel to all the others in the jailer's house, each one responding in faith and being baptized.
 4. All were baptized "at that hour of the night;" this confirms what we have already noted repeatedly throughout the book of Acts: baptism took place immediately after conversion—it was not a public testimony or church ceremony—it was a simple act of obedience to the gospel (see Acts 8:36-38).

5. The jailer was filled with joy [lit. “leaped much for joy”] because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family. The “joy of salvation” was the proof of the genuineness of his conversion.
- F. After a brief exchange with the officers of the Philippian magistrates, Paul and Silas were escorted out of the jail and visited Lydia again before leaving the city (vv.35-40).
 - G. It is interesting to note the three individuals from Philippi, singled out by Luke, whose lives were radically changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ— they were so different from one another—**Lydia**, a God-fearing businesswoman of reputable character; a demon-possessed **slave girl**; and a **jailer**; this shows in a dramatic way how the saving power of Jesus can reach the most diverse types of men and women! *Anyone* who believes can be saved!

VI. PAUL AND SILAS IN THESSALONICA

Acts 17:1-9: ¹When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,” he said. ⁴Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

⁵But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” ⁸When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. ⁹Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

- A. “When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to **Thessalonica**, where there was a Jewish

synagogue. As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days...” (vv.1-2)

1. Thessalonica was the capital of the province of Macedonia with a population of 200,000 and, being strategically located on trade routes, was an important commercial center. It would serve as a base from which the gospel would spread out in many directions.
 2. Unlike Philippi, Thessalonica had a large colony of Jews and thus a synagogue.
 3. “As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue...” – [see notes in *Section IV.A.1* on p.150 of Part 8].
 4. Presumably for three consecutive Sabbaths, Paul met with them; it is not clear if he was in Thessalonica for more than three weeks, although it seems his visit was cut short by opposition (vv.8-10);
- B. “He *reasoned* with them from the Scriptures, *explaining* and *proving* that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,’ he said.” (vv.2-3)

1. “**Reasoned**” [Gk. *dialegomai* = “to say thoroughly, discuss (in argument or exhortation); dispute, preach (unto), reason (with), speak”];
2. “From the Scriptures” – Paul used the Old Testament to show them Christ, just as Jesus Himself had done with the two disciples after His resurrection; contrast the strategy Paul used with the Jews here with that employed when he addressed the Greeks in Athens (where he quoted Greek poets rather than the Scriptures – see 1 Cor. 9:20-23);
3. “**Explaining**” [Gk. *dianoigo* = “to open thoroughly, expound”] – Luke uses the same verb used in his gospel (there translated “opened”) where Jesus made clear what the Scriptures were teaching about Himself:

Luke 24:25-27, 44-46: ²⁵He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?” ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He **explained** to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself...

⁴⁴He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵Then he **opened** their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day...

4. “**Proving**” [Gk. *paratithemi* = “to place alongside, allege, put forth, set before”]
 5. **Acts 17:3 (AMP):** *Explaining [them] and [quoting passages] setting forth and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, This Jesus, Whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ (the Messiah).*
 6. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ” – Paul boldly declared Jesus to be the Messiah.
- C. “Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women. But the **Jews were jealous**; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and **started a riot** in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. (vv.4-5)
1. A familiar refrain... a few Jews believed, many God-fearing Greeks and women were converted, and the other Jews became jealous!
 2. As was their habit, the Jews incited *others* to do their dirty work (see Acts 13:50)—this time they rounded up some hoodlums (ruffians, rascals, loungers, lewd fellows) from the street to start a riot.
 3. Paul, in his epistle to this church, remembered the rage and enmity of the Jews against him and the gospel:

1 Thess. 2:14-16: ¹⁴For you, brothers, became imitators of God’s churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, ¹⁵who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men ¹⁶in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be

saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

4. Paul and Silas had been staying at Jason's house, so the mob went there to bring them out.
- D. "But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: 'These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.' When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go." (vv.6-9)
1. Not finding Paul and Silas at Jason's house, they dragged Jason before the city officials and made him post bond for the apostles.
 2. "City officials" [Gk. *politarches* = "politarch, city ruler," used in vv.6, 8]; interestingly, this Greek word is found nowhere else in Greek literature, but in 1835 it was discovered inscribed on an arch in Thessalonica and is now preserved in the British Museum in London.
 3. Their charge against Paul and Silas: "These men have **caused trouble** ["turned the world upside down" – NKJV, AMP] all over the world... defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus."
 - a) This was actually a great compliment they were paying to the apostles, for they were simply following the One who declared that He had not come to bring peace, but a sword to the earth (Mat. 10:34).
 - b) This kingdom of God is radical, revolutionary—it cuts against the entire fallen world order—and it will one day overthrow all the kingdoms of this world (Rev. 11:15).
 - c) To be more precise, the present world *is* upside down—Jesus came to straighten it out!
 - d) How hypocritical of these Jewish accusers to pretend allegiance to Caesar or to feign concern that his decrees were not being obeyed—there was no love lost between them and the Roman Empire!

VII. PAUL AND SILAS IN BEREIA

Acts 17:10-15: ¹⁰As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹²Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

¹³When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. ¹⁴The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. ¹⁵The men who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

- A. Forced to leave Thessalonica by night, Paul and Silas go to **Berea**, and make their way straight to the synagogue to preach Christ! (v.10)
- B. “Now the **Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians**, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.” (vv.11-12)
 - 1. The Bereans showed better character than the Thessalonian Jews who had rejected the gospel and stirred up trouble.
 - 2. They searched the Old Testament Scriptures for themselves, checking to see if what Paul was teaching was true; many of them opened their hearts and believed.
- C. When the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching in Berea, they went there to stir up more trouble (v.13).
- D. Once again, Paul had to be evacuated, being escorted by some brothers out of Berea to Athens; Silas and Timothy remained in Berea (vv.14-15)
 - 1. The rage and persecution seemed to be directed principally against Paul, so Silas and Timothy remained with instructions to join Paul in Athens as soon as possible.

2. NOTE; Timothy had probably been left at Philippi, only later rejoining Paul and Silas here in Berea; the three were working very closely in these regions, as evidenced by the opening salutation in both of Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians: "Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

VIII. PAUL IN ATHENS

Acts 17:16-21: *¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.*

¹⁹Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." ²¹(All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

- A. "While Paul was waiting for them in **Athens**, he was greatly distressed to see that the **city was full of idols.**" (v.16)
 1. Although Paul had given instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens, only Timothy is later mentioned as having joined Paul in Athens (1 Thess. 3:1-5);
 2. Five centuries before Paul's visit, Athens had been at the height of its glory in philosophy, literature, and art; while the city was still the center of culture and education, those things were of no interest to Paul; this was not a sightseeing tour—he was burdened for the spiritual condition of the souls there.
 3. "The city was full of idols" ["wholly given to idolatry" – KJV, which is a more literal translation of the Greek here]; when man turns away from God, no amount of philosophy,

education, intellect or artistic talent can prevent him from sinking into the darkness and folly of idolatry:

Rom. 1:18-25: ¹⁸*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,* ¹⁹*since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.* ²⁰*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.* ²¹*For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but **their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*** ²²*Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools* ²³*and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.* ²⁴*Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.* ²⁵*They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.***

- B. “So **he reasoned in the synagogue** with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as **in the marketplace day by day** with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, ‘What is this babbler trying to say?’ Others remarked, ‘He seems to be advocating foreign gods.’ They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.” (vv.17-18)
1. Paul took the gospel first to the synagogue, and then to the streets in the marketplace.
 2. **Epicurean** philosophers – they were followers of a philosopher named Epicurus, who taught that pleasure and not the pursuit of knowledge is the chief end of life.
 3. **Stoic** philosophers – they were pantheists who taught that people should live in accord with nature and suppress all desire; they believed that wisdom lay in being free from intense emotion and unmoved by joy or grief.

4. When these philosophers, with all of their so-called wisdom and learning, heard Paul preach the good news of Jesus and the resurrection, they called him a *babbler*.
 - a) “**Babbler**” [Gk. *spermologos* = “a seed picker (as the crow); a sponger, loafer, gossip or trifler in talk”] – they used this derogatory term to say that Paul was like a crow picking up whatever secondhand scraps of philosophy or crumbs of learning he could find and scattering them around without digesting them himself.
 - b) The wisdom of God was foolishness to these sages of Greek philosophy:

1 Cor. 1:18-25: ¹⁸*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* ¹⁹*For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”* ²⁰**Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** ²¹*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.* ²²*Jews demand miraculous signs and **Greeks look for wisdom,*** ²³*but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and **foolishness to Gentiles,*** ²⁴*but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* ²⁵*For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.*

- C. “Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the **Areopagus**, where they said to him, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.’ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)” (vv.19-21)

1. Areopagus – lit. “Hill of Ares,” the Greek god of thunder and war whose Roman counterpart was Mars; the Court of the Areopagus exercised jurisdiction in moral and religious

matters; it served as the custodian of teachings that introduced new religions or foreign gods.

2. Apparently, the Athenians prided themselves on keeping current with all of the latest ideas and novel teachings, but Paul's ideas were *new* and *strange* for them.
3. Indeed, the story of God's love and redemption—sending His own Son to be a sacrifice for man's sins—is stranger than any fiction ever told! There has never been another story like it!

IX. PAUL ADDRESSES THE AREOPAGUS

Acts 17:22-34: *22* Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. *23* For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. *25* And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. *26* From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. *27* God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. *28* “For in Him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are His offspring.’

29 “Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. *30* In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. *31* For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” *33* At that, Paul left the Council. *34* A few men became

followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

A. “Paul then stood up in the **meeting of the Areopagus** and said: ‘Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are **very religious**. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: **TO AN UNKNOWN GOD**. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.’” (vv.22-23)

1. God had beautifully set the stage for Paul to preach the gospel to these scholars and thinkers, for they had specifically asked him to explain his new teachings to them (vv.19-20).

2. Commonly referred to as Paul’s “Mars Hill Address,” we see the master preacher go to work here; knowing he was addressing a Gentile audience, Paul used a totally different strategy than he would have in a Jewish synagogue [see *Section VI.B* on p.196]:

1 Cor. 9:20-23: ²⁰*To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

a) There are no quotations from Scripture;

b) Rather, Paul quotes from Greek poets;

3. They did not have a background in the Old Testament, so he had to find a subject of common interest with which to begin—he commended the Athenians for being very religious.

4. Paul used the inscription he saw on one of their altars, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD, as the “launch pad” for his message; it contained two important facts that he would build upon:

- a) There *is* a God;
 - b) The Athenians did not know Him—they were worshipping in ignorance.
5. Paul boldly informed them that the God they *didn't know* he *did know* and he would proclaim Him to them.
- B. “The **God who made the world** and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.” (vv.24-26)
- 1. Paul begins with a point of reference of paramount importance that all people can relate to—the creation—a **revelation of the Creator** to all mankind:
Rom. 1:19-20: ¹⁹*Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because **God has made it plain to them.***
²⁰*For since **the creation of the world** God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that **men are without excuse.***
 - 2. NOTE: With our whole modern culture now dominated by atheistic, evolutionary teaching from kindergarten right through college, we can no longer assume that people know that God is Creator—we must challenge them to examine the facts and realize how secular education has lied to them through the false science of evolution:
1 Tim. 6:20 (KJV): *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, **avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.***
 - 3. Paul emphasized the biblical truth (without quoting Scripture) that God doesn't dwell in human temples, thus implying that all of the Athenian temples, altars, and idols were of no value.
 - 4. He continued in his discussion about origins, not only the origin of the universe, but the **origin of man** and all of the

nations on earth: “From one man (Adam) He made every nation of men.”

5. Then Paul made a profound statement about God’s sovereign hand in human history and the various nations on earth: “**He determined the times set for them** [the nations] **and the exact places where they should live.**”
- C. “God did this **so that men would seek Him** and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.” (v.27)
1. “Reach out for Him [Gk. *pselaphao* = lit. “to feel after, grope for”];
 2. Paul was encouraging the Athenians (and anyone else), who were stumbling around in darkness and ignorance that if they would seek Him and grope in the dark for Him, they could find Him because He was not far from them.
 3. In other words, the “unknown God” is knowable—anyone who searches for Him will find Him (Jer. 29:13-14).
- D. “‘For in Him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are His offspring.’ Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. (vv.28-29)
1. **Paul quoted two Greek poets** (something he did elsewhere as well: 1 Cor. 15:33; Tit. 1:12), showing the broad scope of his learning and knowledge of literature, and using the poetry to show the relationship between humanity and the supreme God:
 - a) “In Him we live and move and have our being” – this quotation is from the Cretan poet Epimenides (c. 600 B.C.);
 - b) “We are His offspring” – from the Cilician poet Aratus (c. 315 – 240);
 2. Paul affirmed that we are all God’s offspring in the sense that He created all of us; he was not entertaining the false notion of the universal brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God: we only become true sons of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. He continued his argument stating that, if men are the offspring of God, then it is impossible to think of God as a gold or stone idol; these are crafted by human artisans, and are therefore not as great as their human creators. The idols are, in a sense, the offspring of human beings, whereas human beings are the creation of God.
 4. Acts 17:29 (MSG): Well, if we are the God-created, it doesn't make a lot of sense to think we could hire a sculptor to chisel a god out of stone for us, does it?
- E. “In the past **God overlooked such ignorance**, but now He **commands all people everywhere to repent**. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead.” (vv.30-31)
1. Having exposed the folly of their idolatry, Paul comforted the Athenians by informing them that God, in His great mercy, had up until this time, overlooked [“winked at” – KJV] their ignorance.
 2. Note the similarity to Paul’s preaching in Lystra and to his letter to the Romans:
 - a) **Acts 14:16: *In the past, He let all nations go their own way.***
 - b) **Rom. 3:25: *God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because **in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished...*****
 3. “But now...” – the light of truth and revelation had now come, so this would no longer be a sin of ignorance; the situation had changed—the coming of Christ marked a fresh start in God’s dealings with the human race.
 4. “He commands all people everywhere to repent.”
 - a) Repentance – to stop sinning, change one’s heart, mind and attitude, and turn to God;
 - b) Commanded – not a suggestion or something to be considered—this is an *order* from the Sovereign God to all people everywhere!

5. Why? Paul gives two reasons:
 - a) **Judgment:** *“For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man He has appointed.”*
 - (1) God, the “Judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25) and the “Judge of all men” (Heb. 12:23), has already set the date on His calendar when He will judge the world (Heb. 9:27);
 - (2) He has appointed the Man (not an angel), Christ Jesus, to whom He has committed the execution of all judgment (John 5:24-27).
 - b) **Resurrection of Christ:** *“He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead.”*
 - (1) Christ gave “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3) that He was alive after His crucifixion;
 - (2) With over 500 eyewitness accounts of Christ’s resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6), God has given credible evidence, assurance, conviction, confirmation and proof that JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD!
- F. “When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, ‘We want to hear you again on this subject.’ At that, Paul left the Council. A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.” (vv.32-34)
 1. Paul received mixed reviews for such a marvelous exposition of the gospel... some mocked, others wanted to hear more, and just a few became believers.
 2. We hear no more about Athens—no church was started there by Paul. Was his ministry in Athens a failure? Obviously not! A few souls were saved (one of whom was the very member of the Areopagus Council), and even if it had been only one, it was worth it all. Moreover, Paul had faithfully delivered the message—the results are always up to God, not us.
 3. Certainly, as already noted, the philosophy and “wisdom” of the Athenians proved to be a great hindrance in their ability to receive the simplicity of the gospel with childlike

faith; for most of them, the wisdom of God sounded like foolishness. How similar our modern culture is to that of the Athenians!

X. PAUL IN CORINTH

Acts 18:1-17: ¹After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

²There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

⁷Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. ⁸Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

⁹One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” ¹¹So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

¹²While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. ¹³“This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.”

¹⁴Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, “If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. ¹⁵But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.” ¹⁶So he had them ejected from the court. ¹⁷Then they all turned on

*Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court.
But Gallio showed no concern whatever.*

- A. “After this, Paul left Athens and went to **Corinth**. (v.1)
1. Corinth was a major city, and at the time, the chief city of Greece, both commercially and politically.
 2. One of the main temples in Corinth was the one dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love; because of that, prostitution and immorality were rampant in the city. Corinth’s sexual depravity was so widely known that the Greek verb “to Corinthianize” came to be synonymous with “practicing sexual immorality.”
 3. Paul was no doubt led to Corinth by the Holy Spirit, for in such a debased culture the gospel must be preached and a church established!
- B. Paul formed an important friendship with **Aquila and Priscilla**, one which was to continue for the rest of his life (see Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19); they were all tentmakers by trade, so Paul stayed and worked with them. (vv.2-3)
1. It is not clear from the Scriptures whether Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians when Paul met them, or whether they were saved through Paul’s ministry.
 2. Paul later explained to the Corinthian church that, although as a full-time apostle, he had every right to receive financial support from the churches, as a matter of policy, he chose not to use that right, working rather to support himself and supply his own needs (1 Cor. 9:3-18);
 3. He frequently made mention of his manual labor in his epistles, explaining that he did not want to be a financial burden to the churches and wanted to set an example for others (Acts 20:34; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:9; 3:8).
- C. “Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.” (vv.4-5)
1. As was his custom, Paul went first to the synagogue to preach to the Jews and Greek converts.

2. Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia; Paul had requested both of them to join him in Athens, which they evidently did (1 Thess. 3:1-3); but they may have been sent back to Macedonia almost immediately to help the churches there—Timothy to Thessalonica, and Silas perhaps to Philippi.
 3. “Paul devoted himself [lit. “was pressed or compelled by the Spirit” – KJV, NKJV] exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.” – this may suggest that the burden Paul felt was so great that he stopped making tents, giving his full time and attention to the gospel ministry.
- D. “But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he **shook out his clothes in protest** and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! **I am clear of my responsibility**. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.” (vv.6-8)
1. The Jews once again were Paul’s number one opponents—they “resisted and blasphemed” (NAS);
 2. Similar to his shaking the dust from his feet in protest to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch (who had resisted him), and turning to the Gentiles with the good news (Acts 13:46-51), Paul dissociated himself with the Corinthian Jews and cleared himself of any further responsibility for their souls.
 3. “**I am clear of my responsibility**.” Paul’s words are a solemn reminder to every believer that there is such a thing as *blood-guiltiness*. The Christian is a debtor to all men, and if he fails to discharge that debt by proclaiming the gospel, God will hold him responsible. If, on the other hand, he faithfully shares Christ and meets with stubborn refusal, then he himself is cleared of guilt, and the responsibility rests with the Christ-rejecter. Consider the following:
 - a) **Ezek. 3:17-19:** *17Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I*

speaking and give them warning from Me. ¹⁸*When I say to a wicked man, “You will surely die,” and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and **I will hold you accountable for his blood.*** ¹⁹*But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.*

b) **1 Cor. 9:16:** *Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. **Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!***

c) **Acts 20:20-21, 26-27:** ²⁰*You know that **I have not hesitated to preach anything** that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.* ²¹*I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus...* ²⁶*Therefore, I declare to you today that **I am innocent of the blood of all men.*** ²⁷***For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.***

4. After breaking away from the Jewish synagogue, Paul had the joy of seeing Crispus, the synagogue ruler, along with his entire household, come to faith in Christ (whom Paul himself baptized – see 1 Cor. 1:14-16); and many other Corinthians (Gentiles) received the word, believed and were baptized.

E. “One night the **Lord spoke to Paul in a vision:** ‘Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.’ So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.” (vv.9-11)

1. The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision.

a) Paul had seen the Lord Jesus in His resurrected body at his conversion (Acts 9:4-6; 1 Cor. 15:8);

b) He would later see Him in a trance while praying in the temple at Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-18);

c) Here he sees Him in a vision.

2. What gracious assurance God gave the apostle: *Don't be afraid, no one is going to hurt you; keep on speaking, for I am with you; I have many people in this city!*
3. **“I have many people in this city.”**
 - a) They belonged to the Lord in the sense that He had already marked them; He was working in their lives, and they would ultimately be saved.
 - b) Jesus said that souls first belong to the Father, and He then gives them to the Son in order that they may hear His word and be saved:

John 17:2, 6: ²*For You granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all those You have given Him...* ⁶*I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your word.*

4. The Lord's words so encouraged Paul that he stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God (much can be learned about this period from 1 and 2 Corinthians).
- F. Toward the end of Paul's stay in Corinth, the Jews again stirred up trouble, bringing false charges and questions about the Jewish law against him in court; however, Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, threw out the case, so the angry Jews all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him, but Gallio showed no concern whatever. (vv.12-17)
1. Paul's own people, the Jews, continued to be his biggest thorn in the side!
 2. Sosthenes is included in Paul's opening salutation to the Corinthians as “our brother” (1 Cor. 1:1), perhaps explaining why the Jews had beaten him—obviously he had become a follower of Paul and a believer in Jesus Christ!

XI. PAUL RETURNS TO ANTIOCH

Acts 18:18-22: ¹⁸*Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken.* ¹⁹*They arrived at Ephesus, where*

Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²²When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

- A. "Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, **he had his hair cut off** at Cenchrea **because of a vow** he had taken." (v.18)
1. Paul finally departed from Corinth with Priscilla and Aquila, sailing for Syria, his objective being to return to Antioch.
 2. Commentators are divided over the cutting off of hair because of a vow:
 - a) Many believe that Paul had taken a temporary Nazirite vow (see Num. 6:1-21) to express thanks to God for His deliverance or protection, the end of which was marked with the shaving of the head;
 - b) Others believe that the reference is to Aquila (himself a Jew – see Acts 18:2) who had his hair cut off, since the manner of the vow was strongly Jewish, and not fitting for a man of Paul's spiritual maturity;
 - c) The text is such that either could be the case, and we will probably never know for sure which interpretation is correct.
- B. Paul made a brief stop in **Ephesus**, leaving Aquila and Priscilla there; he reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue, who wanted him to stay longer, but he declined, promising to return, God willing. (vv.19-21)
- C. Sailing from Ephesus, Paul landed at Caesarea, greeted the church, and then went down to **Antioch**. (v.22)
1. This would be Paul's final visit to Antioch.
 2. He would spend "some time" there before departing on his third missionary journey.

XII. CONCLUSION

- A. On Paul's 2nd missionary journey, Silas and Timothy were Paul's primary co-laborers in the ongoing gospel outreach.
- B. In city after city, Paul and his companions encountered resistance from the Jews which resulted in riots, lynching, and imprisonment.
- C. Important churches were established whose names are familiar from Paul's epistles in the New Testament: Corinthians, Philippians and Thessalonians.
- D. One interesting exception was the city of Athens. The city was so dominated by religious idolatry and human philosophy that only a few were able to receive the good news of Jesus Christ. **NO CHURCH WAS ESTABLISHED IN ATHENS!** Athens is never again mentioned in Scripture after Paul's visit there. And herein lies a strong indictment against our modern Western culture: We, like the Athenians, are very religious; but it is often not true religion, i.e. sincere faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—it is a *potpourri* of secular humanism, atheistic philosophies, false religions and idolatry. If we don't humble ourselves and repent, the gospel of Jesus Christ may end up sounding like so much "babbling" and foolishness to the people here just as it did to the Athenians.
- E. After completing his trip, Paul returned to Antioch, from whence he would eventually embark on his 3rd and final missionary journey before his arrest, trials and voyage to Rome.