

Life of Paul

THE LIFE OF PAUL

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Note: These sermons represent an **overview** of the life of Paul in the book of Acts through Acts 21.

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Related Resources:

- Acts 1:8 Commentary (in depth)
- Acts 16 Commentary (brief)
- Acts 17 Commentary (brief)
- Acts 20:17-27 Commentary (in depth)
- Acts 20:28-38 Commentary (in depth)

Paul: The Man Introduction

Well, would you turn with me to the book of Ephesians. Now you just have to get use to that. We're moving into a brand new study, the book of Ephesians.

How gracious the Lord was in my life to go along to see the ruins of Ephesus. We had a chance to walk through those streets and to realize what Paul saw and to understand a little the feel of what we're going to be studying as he wrote to the believers in Ephesus. It was just a blessing beyond measure.

So, we're going to begin to ease into the book. How are we going to do it? We're going to look at the author first. As a matter of fact, we're going to take the first phrase of verse 1. It tells us everything we need to know. Look what it says. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by [or "through"] the will of God." That's as far as we need to go. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." It tells us who he is, tells us what he is, and it tells us why he is what he is. Did you get all that? Who he is, what he is, and why he is what he is. We're going to look at that first.

First of all, let's look at who he is. You see, by doing this, you should begin to get the feel of the man that God used to write the book. Some people believe in the dictation theory, that God gave them the words, and they just wrote them down. I personally believe that God fully possessed the man so that the man through his own personality and vocabulary could pen the words of the scriptures. So you've got to know the man who was possessed by God, who was controlled by God, so that we can understand that which he wrote. We're looking at Paul, the man, next we are going to look at Paul the missionary. Who was he? Who was Paul? Let's see if we can find some facts about him.

If you'll turn to Acts 22:3, that will be very critical in helping us put together a summary of the life of Paul. Who he is? You know, there

were some people who were born in significant places, and some people were born in insignificant places. Jesus was born in an insignificant place. However, the first thing we want to see about Paul is he was born in a significant place. It says in verse 3, "I am a Jew [we'll come back to that], born in Tarsus of Cilicia." He was brought up in Jerusalem, but he was born in Tarsus of Cilicia. Now where was Cilicia? Well, it was a province of Asia Minor. Now you realize that Asia Minor is modern day Turkey. I hope you realize that. I didn't, but I now do. When we came to Ephesus, we came to Turkey. Whereas Paul dealt with the Jews there, now it's a Muslim country, and the people have quite a different struggle.

If you would look at a map of Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey, on the left side would be Ephesus, on the western coast of Asia Minor or Turkey. If you went straight east almost all the way across the continent, you would come to Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor, or as I said, of Turkey today. Now Tarsus was the capital city of Cilicia. It was the chief city. As a matter of fact, everyone knew where Tarsus was. It was probably competing with Athens and Alexandria of that day to be one of the learning capitals of the world. Paul came from a very significant place.

If you look back up in Acts 21:39 of, Paul says something about that city. "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city." Now, the Greek word means "not a mean city," the idea there is "of no insignificant city." In other words, it was a place people would know about. It was a coastal province. Tarsus was a city of learning known worldwide. So therefore, Paul was a person who was born in a significant place. Having been born in Tarsus of Cilicia he was a Roman citizen. That's interesting. He was a Jewish boy raised up in Jerusalem, born in Tarsus, but was a Roman citizen. You know that played a very great role in his missionary journeys. So, number one under that outline of who was he, he was born or he came from a very significant place.

Secondly, in Acts 22:3 he was educated by a very special, influential person. Everybody knew who this man was. He says, "I am a Jew, brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel."

Gamaliel was one of the most respected, influential teachers of the Law in the Sanhedrin of that time. A Pharisee, he was a man who was honored, and he had great influence. If you'll look back in Acts 5:33, we'll see a situation where Gamaliel is brought out. This is the chapter that it's right after Pentecost. The Holy Spirit of God has come and empowered the apostles. Peter himself says, "Listen, you do what you need to do, but," he says, "We must obey God rather than men." Old cowardly Peter, the one who stood by the fire and denied Jesus, now empowered by the Holy Spirit of God, makes himself known.

Well, this really irritated the officials of that day. Verse 33 says, "But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and were intending to slay them." Who is the "them" there? That was Peter and the apostles. "But a certain Pharisee [there, see?] named Gamaliel [now watch], a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time." Verse 35 continues, "And he said to them, 'Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody; and a group of about 400 men joined up with him. And he was slain; and all who followed him dispersed and came to nothing. After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away some people after him, he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. And so in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or actions could be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.'" This is great advice from Gamaliel. Verse 40 shows his influence over the Sanhedrin. "And they took his advice." This is the man who schooled Paul. Paul was not only from a significant place, he was educated by a very special person.

Also in Acts 22:3 it tells us that he was known as a successful Pharisee. That is the understatement of the year. Verse 3 says, "I am a Jew." Was he ever! If you'll go on down in the verse, he says, "being zealous for God, just as you all are today." Let's look in Philippians 3:5-6. There he is telling them to keep on rejoicing. Stay away from people who try to add laws to grace. You see, that was what was going on in Philippi. We saw the ruins of Philippi. We looked for a synagogue. There wasn't one. That helped me understand that the Jews who were giving Paul the problem in Philippi had to have been proselyte Jews. There was no synagogue there when Paul went.

We saw the little river there where Lydia was baptized. Boy, that was precious. We took our shoes off, rolled our pants legs up and waded around in the stream where Lydia was baptized.

In Philippians 3:5-6-note Paul says, "Listen, they want to brag." These proselyte Jews were Gentiles who had decided to become a Jew and therefore, were circumcised and brought in. They weren't born one. Here they were telling these little, young Christians, "You need to be circumcised. You need to get back up under the Law." Paul says, "Don't pay attention to these dogs." Isn't it interesting in the Gospels the Gentiles were "dogs?" Paul is calling these proselyte Jews, who are trying to add law to grace, "dogs."

In Phil 3:5 he says, "I far more have a reason." He says, "circumcised the eighth day." Now every Jew was circumcised on the eighth day. Jesus was taken and circumcised the eighth day. All the male boys were circumcised on the eighth day.

He says, "of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin." Now that was interesting. When they came back out of captivity they lost the records as to what tribes they were from. They didn't even know who was of the tribe of Levi so they could be the priest of that

time. So, to know where you were from, to know your lineage meant you really had to be real. It's kind of like living in America today and being named Smith or Jones. You don't have to convince anybody you're from America. They know it right off.

Paul says, "I was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless." Now look with me to Acts 26:4-5, and we find some more about Paul being a very successful Jew in his earlier years. What he's telling them again here is he's a Pharisee, but notice the wording here. Verse 4 says, "So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which was from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem." He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia and raised up in Jerusalem.

Then it says in Acts 26:5, "since they have known about me for a long time previously, if they are willing to testify [in other words, Paul is saying, "They know who I am; they knew what I was] that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion."

Now to show how strict he was in his belief you have to remember the Pharisees. They were the policeman to the scribes. The scribes came about when they had lost the Law and read it in Watergate back in Nehemiah's day. The scribes came about to determine behavioral patterns of people. In other words, if you live this way you won't be found in this situation again. Well, the Pharisees were the police force of the scribes, if you please. They were the tithers of the day. On the outside they looked great. They were the strictest of all the religious sects of the Jews. As a matter of fact, they took ten commandments and made 631 laws out of it. It was ridiculous what the Pharisees had done, and yet on the outside they looked like the most religious people of the day. They rejected, very harshly, Jesus being the Messiah.

Paul says, "I was a zealous Pharisee." Now, in doing that he was a persecutor of the church. Acts 22:4-5 says that he put believers in prisons and persecuted them to death. Look at Acts 7:58, and we'll just see how zealous a Jew and a Pharisee Paul was. This is when Stephen was going to be put to death. He had just looked up into heaven and had finished preaching. He prayed, and the people were violently reacting. Verse 58 says, "And when they had driven him out of the city [Stephen they're speaking of here], they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul", who was Paul whom we're talking about. He stood right there and let them lay their garments at his feet.

In 8:1 it tells us more. It says, "And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered about the region of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him." Watch. "But Saul [that old devout Jew] began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."

Turn back to Acts 26:9-11. We want to see one more passage on this. I want you to get the full picture on how he grew up and what he was before he met the Lord Jesus Christ. Who was this man? He was a successful Pharisee. The Pharisees really badgered Jesus. Paul was one who went after Christians. Paul is giving his own testimony here. He says before King Agrippa, "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death, I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities."

Now here's the man we're dealing with. Here's the man God chose to write to the church at Ephesus. Here's the man who as he grew up came from a very significant place, Tarsus of Cilicia, one of the learning centers of the world. Everybody knew where Tarsus was. A man raised up in Jerusalem and educated by a very special person, Gamaliel, who had the most influence of the Sanhedrin over the Jews of that day. He also was known to be a successful Pharisee.

Well let's move on. Secondly, now that you know who he was and who we're dealing with, what was he? Turn to Ephesians 1:1-note. "Paul," what's the next phrase? "an apostle of Christ Jesus." We're going to be in Ephesians a long time. I am definitely known for getting messages out of commas. We're going to just inch our way through. Someone said years ago, "Yard by yard life's way too hard. Inch by inch life's a cinch." So, we're just going to inch our way through here. alright? What was he? He was an apostle of Christ Jesus. Paul is just an incredible guy. There are three things we need to understand by the word "apostle." The word is made up of two Greek words, apo, away from, and stello, to send. Let's look at the three things that we see in that word, an "apostle" of Christ Jesus.

First of all, we see that he was saved. He was saved. You could not have an apostle of Christ Jesus and not have a saved man. In other words, a man who would pursue, follow and suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ had to be a believer, had to be a saved man. Let's look at that in Acts 9:1. This is one of the most incredible conversions in all of Scripture, and it will mess up your theology every time you try to study it. When you try to figure out how people get saved, you get messed up with Paul. He was not seeking Jesus, he was seeking after Christians to persecute them. It was Jesus seeking after him.

"Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him

to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way.” That was one of the names given to the early believers of the New Testament. It’s odd to me that people today say that you don’t receive Jesus as Lord. You just receive Him as Savior. That’s mighty curious because even the very name they were called signified a method of life, a style of life and a direction of life that came from surrender to the Lord Jesus in their life.

Well, let’s read on, “both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” Verse 3 says, “And it came about as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting [the believers? Is that what your translation says? No!] why are you persecuting Me?’”

You know, a thought goes through here. You had better leave God’s people alone. If you mess with God’s people, you’re messing with God. God will defend His people. God stopped him in his tracks. You say, “Well, I thought that you had to seek after God so that you could find Him.” Well, Paul was a seeker after Jehovah, but he rejected Jesus as his Messiah. It was Jesus seeking after Paul that stopped him in his tracks.

Well, it says in verse 5, “And he said, ‘Who art thou, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.’” He was blind for three days, and Ananias came to him.

So, we know the conversion, the early conversion of Paul. The beautiful thing is to see that he was a devout Jew, a man who had class, a man who had culture, a man who had clout, but he was a man who God stopped in his tracks, turned around, redirected him and made him a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first thing we see implied in the word “apostle” is the fact that he’s saved. We know his conversion. It’s recorded again in Acts 22:3-16 and Acts 26:4-18.

Secondly, we know something else from that word. Not only was he saved, but he was sent. That word apostolos (apo, away from, stello, to send), means he was sent forth. A synonym of that gives the picture of an ambassador who goes someplace to represent another. He has a message to take to others on behalf of the one who sends him. So Paul was sent forth. Paul didn’t go somewhere and ask God to bless it. Paul was sent forth by Christ Jesus. So not only was he saved, he was sent. He was an apostle.

There’s one more thing that I want to bring out about the word “apostle.” We could bring out other things. The third thing was he was set apart. Now we need to understand this. The word “apostle” in the New Testament has to do with an office that only the Lord Jesus could give to people of the New Testament. He gave not only the office, but the authority that goes behind it.

The reason I’m saying that is we’re living in the twentieth century when doo-das are everywhere. There’s a group out in Texas. Many of you love this group. You watch. I’m telling you, you read. You think they’re on target. What you don’t know about this group is they have proclaimed themselves New Testament or New Age apostles. I don’t mean in the New Age sense that we normally understand.

They’re apostles to this day. So therefore, the canon of scripture is not complete. They’re still getting fresh revelation from God, and whatever they get from God is added to this book as apostles of the new times that we’re living in today. We need to understand that the apostles in Scripture were directly appointed by Jesus for the specific purpose of spreading the Gospel and giving us the doctrine of the New Testament. Prophets were to the Old Testament as the apostles were to the New Testament. There were no other apostles.

Now Paul says, “I am an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. I’ve been set apart.” You say, “Now wait a minute. I thought there were only twelve, and I thought Judas defected so that made eleven. The disciples cast lots and brought Matthias who would make twelve. Where does Paul fit in?” In a general sense, anyone who was a believer, who had witnessed the resurrected Lord could be called an apostle. But in the specific sense there were only those designated by Jesus with the authority to come to the people.

Paul calls himself an apostle born out of due season. Look in 1 Corinthians 15:7 Paul is speaking of himself. He never felt worthy. He was a persecutor of the church which meant he was a persecutor of Christ. So he never felt worthy to be called an apostle. I love the humility of this man. Paul is talking about the appearances of Jesus, and he’s defending the resurrection of Christ. He says in verse 7, “then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born [born out of season], He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” Paul very humbly addresses the fact yes, he’s an apostle, made one by God with the authority backed up behind it, but he doesn’t deserve to be one because he was a persecutor of the church.

If you’ll turn over to 1 Corinthians 9:1, you’ll see that truly he was a witness of the resurrected Lord Jesus. To be an apostle you had to be appointed by Christ, and you had to have been a witness of His resurrection, of His resurrected body. He says, “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?” Now watch. “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”

So we see in that word “apostle” something else about what Paul was. First of all he was saved. Secondly he was sent. But thirdly he was set apart, different from other apostles. He was in the specific office with the authority backed up behind it that when he

spoke it was the doctrine to the church. That's why in Ephesians he doesn't say, "Paul, a fellow believer." He says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." By the way, when you see "Christ Jesus" instead of "Jesus Christ" it means something. It's not just randomly mistranslated. "Christ Jesus" refers to Christ as the resurrected Christ after His resurrection. "Jesus Christ" refers to, most of the time, to Him before He went to the cross.

Paul says, "I am an apostle of Christ Jesus." How could he be one had he not seen Him? Where did he see Him? On the Damascus Road. God made him an apostle. So we see who he was. Who was he? He was born in a specific place, educated by a special person and known as a successful Pharisee. What was he? He was an apostle, saved, sent and set apart all at one time. It's incredible the life of Paul. He's a man backed up by the authority of God.

Then thirdly, why was he what he was? Why was he what he was? Why was he an apostle? To me this is the real meat of what God spoke to my heart as I was putting this together. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by [or through] the will of God." Now this is when it really began to minister to my heart, because there are three things that we find out about the word thelematos (see thelema). It's the word that has to do with the will of God. "Ma," the ending of it, means "the result of God's will."

First of all, we seek in this—now stay with me—the eternal design of God. It's the eternal design of God because thelema means "the result of God's will." In other words, God said it. He had the idea. It was His design. Therefore, the result of it was Paul becoming an apostle. Paul was never asked. Paul was told. If you ask Paul, "Paul, why are you an apostle?" He says in 1 Corinthians 15:10-note, "I am what I am by the grace of God. I didn't wake up one morning and say, 'You know what, I think I'll be an apostle.' Hey, I didn't wake up one morning and say, 'You know what, I think I'll become a Christian.'" No sir! Everything he was was by the grace of God. Just in the words "will of God" we see the divine design, the eternal design of God. Paul was what he was because God made him what he was. No other way.

Let me ask you a question. Who are you? What are you? Why are you what you are? I don't know why this is on my heart, but I might as well go ahead and mention it. Sometimes either I wake up paranoid, or these things are burdens on my heart. We go through seasons here. Some of you may visit us and wonder what we're all about. You will probably wonder for another ten years. We're not like every other church you've been to. We don't want to be like every other church. We want to be uniquely what God wants us to be. He has the design. I don't have that design. Why am I Pastor-Teacher? I haven't the slightest idea except that I must say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." God has a design.

I didn't come to this church years ago and sit down and come up with a plan to what this church is going to be. I was minding my own business in Panama City Beach, Florida when I ran into the Pulpit Committee that had been looking for a preacher for two years. They had been 60,000 miles and had heard 20 different preachers. I wasn't bothering a soul. I knew God had released me from my church in Mississippi and when I was praying about where I was going to go, I picked two other churches. This church was on the bottom of my list, but every time I would get on my knees God whisper this name. I couldn't debate that. I came here not even knowing what I would make. I just came here knowing God sent me here. I have no other explanation for it. When I got here I didn't come here expecting to grow a church. We don't go to growth seminars around here. We don't want the world's way of growing something. We want to know, "God, what are you all about in this place?"

Why are you in your church? We have people from time to time come into Woodland Park, and the first thing we begin to hear is, "I'm griped at this. I'm complaining about that. Why isn't it like the place I came from? Where was the preacher when I was sick? What's going on in this place?" Hold it! Hold it! Hold it! I've said since I've been Pastor of this church, "That door back there swings both ways." I have never asked anyone to come here. I'll never ask anyone to stay. That's not my business. That's God's business, but when you come don't bring your baggage from every place else.

We're not like what you experienced before. We expect something out of you here. You're not coming to be ministered unto. You're coming to be equipped so that you can minister. It's by God's design, not by man's design.

Paul was what he was by God's design. The word thelematos, means it was the result of the will of God. The Word says what a church ought not to be is an organization. It's not a place where people put in forty hours a week. The ministry is our life. I would love to punch in forty hours a week and stop work. What a piece of cake! No! We are what we are by the grace of God. There's a design here, and we're seeking after Him. Paul was what he was because it was God's design, not Paul's design. So let me just simply say to you, when you start seeing gaping holes in the church, remember God may have sent you to be part of the solution. He didn't send you to come in and complicate the problem by what you say.

This is not something new. I don't think I'm paranoid. Usually when I'm gone about three out of four Sundays from my church there's a restlessness in the camp. "Oh no! Wayne's not here this morning." Immediately people's minds start clicking.

"Well, who's preaching?" Listen, are you in church to hear the preacher or are you there to hear God's Word? Yes, God's put me here, and whatever gifts I have, God gave them to me. But remember this, I'm not the same cut as perhaps you're used to in other preachers. I can't help that. I want you to know that I'm trying to be what God wants me to be. That's all I want.

Listen, I'll be fifty years old next year. That's not very old to some of you. To some of you it's ancient. It depends on which side you're on. It's all relative. I just want to be where God wants me to be and do what God wants me to do. I really don't care where or what that is. I just want to be found being about His business.

Some of you who visit may notice that things are a little different. Yes, they are. We're trying to let God design and develop. We want to see a body, not an organization, but an organism. Folks, that doesn't happen overnight. I'll tell you how it happens. It happens when you and I start getting in touch with God through His Word and start, through the gifts He's given us, becoming what He wants us to be to others and stop worrying about what someone is or isn't. So it's by God's design.

Secondly, it also show us the eternal desires of God. This just really blessed me. The word thelema is the word when referring to God's will has to do with the gracious disposition of God towards something. I love that. In other words, that which God does Himself for His own good pleasure. Man, when I think about that it just blesses me. You ask old Paul, "Paul, how come you're an apostle?" "Man, I don't know," he would say. "Just by the grace of God I am what I am. God just took pleasure in doing what He did. That's all I can say." You see, it kicks in two attitudes here. One is the attitude of God in the way He does things in our life. He just does it out of His own good pleasure. It's God who cuts the pie, folks. Your gifts may be bigger than mine. My gifts may be broader than yours. I don't know. I had nothing to do with it. You had nothing to do with it. There's no such thing as comparing yourself to somebody else, except in the sense of imitating their faith. God has gifted us all a different way. Why did He do it that way? It's just out of His own good pleasure that He did it that way. That's all we can say.

So if therefore, I get to go to Greece and somebody else doesn't get to go to Greece, I guess you can say like Paul, "I'll be content in whatever circumstance I find myself." There are times when other pastors come to me and say, "How do you get to be gone so much?" Hey folks, I'm just who I am and what I am. I can't change that. You know what I've always been? The very moment I find people trying to press me into a mold they think I ought to be, I'm gone. I cannot be under somebody's thumb. Therefore, I have a ministry to let the people be what God wants them to be.

I ask my church, "Has anyone from our church called your house to see if you were at church last Sunday night? Has anyone called you up and checked on you to see how many times you've been here?" No! Why? Because our whole philosophy of ministry is to get them in touch with Jesus and let Jesus be in them what He wants them to be. I don't take a role and judge how spiritual they are by whether or not they come on Wednesday night. That's between them and God. I'm here to set the table. If they don't come that's their problem or their business. If people come when the table is set and don't eat that's their problem. I'm not responsible for them eating. I'm just responsible for making sure the table is set.

Folks, I want to tell you, when you get down to what God does, God does is His own way. Listen, if I go down in a plane, and God brings you another Pastor-Teacher, he'll be so different from me it'll make you flip over backwards. Don't worry about it. He'll bring in what He thinks the church needs and what He thinks the preacher He brings in needs. He'll put it together. It's just God's business. That's the way He works. Paul said, "I am what I am by the grace of God. I'm an apostle by the will of Christ Jesus."

Not only is it the attitude of God, it's the attitude of Paul towards God. You know that Paul was grateful until the day he died for being an apostle of Jesus Christ. He showed it in everything he did. He was willing to suffer. He was willing to take bad times with good times. Why? Because he was so overwhelmed that God by His own good pleasure did what He did in his life. Isn't that wonderful? To me that really speaks to where we all ought to be.

Thirdly it shows the eternal deliberation of the Godhead. You know, there was always something I still haven't fully grasped. It's the counsel of the Trinity, of how they counseled with one another. There's no definite article here which to me points to the fact of all of God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. We're talking about all the character of God. To me Paul is saying, "I am an apostle of Jesus by the will of God. God the Father had something to do with it. God the Son had something to do with it. And God the Holy Spirit had something to do with it. By the divine deliberation of the Godhead I am what am. I am an apostle of the Christ Jesus by the will of God."

Whatever you are, God wants you to be what He wants you to be. Whatever you are may or may not be fulfilling that. If you're surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ and broken of that old ugly stench of self in your life, then God's free to make you what He wants you to be. It's not what I think you ought to be. Don't ever worry about pleasing me. You just be what God wants you to be. That's the key to what God's design is in the body. It's His desire. He does it of His own good pleasure out of the deliberation of the godhead.

Well, what do we know about Paul who wrote the book of Ephesians? He was a unique bird, wasn't he? He was a man who came from a significant place. He was a man who was educated by a special person, Gamaliel. He was a man who was known as a successful Pharisee. That was the early part of his life. But what was Paul? He was an apostle of Christ Jesus, which meant he was saved, sent and set apart. And why was he what he was? Because of the will of Christ Jesus, because of the eternal design, the

eternal desires, and the eternal deliberation of the Godhead.

Let me ask you a question. Who are you? In Christ, who are you? Just look back to where you were born. Did you come out of an insignificant place? Hey, you're in good company. Jesus did too. Or maybe you came out of a significant place. You're in good company. So did Paul. It doesn't matter. What are you? What are you? "Well, I'm a successful businessman." Well, I'm not asking you that. I'm asking, what are you in Christ? What's your legacy going to be to this world? What are you? What is God's design and desires in your life? Thirdly, why are you what you are? Was it God doing it or was it you doing it?

Folks, my prayer, my heart, is that we start becoming what He wants us to become. May I say to you from my heart? I can't make it happen. I've been here almost eleven years. All I can say is, it comes when you and I get serious with God, get off our pedestal and get down, down, down, down. Then God can raise up what He wants to in our lives. As long as the big "I" is complaining and pointing fingers and criticizing folks, that's not going to get us anywhere. What are you? Why are you what you are?

**Jesus, be Jesus in me.
No longer me but thee.
Resurrection power
Fill me this hour.
Jesus, be Jesus is me.**

The world is sick of organizations, but they are hungry for somebody to show them Jesus.

Paul: The Missionary – Part 1

Turn with me again to the book of Ephesians. We're keying off that first verse. As a matter of fact, half of the first verse. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." We started looking at Paul, the man. We're going to look at Paul the missionary now. But let's back up a minute. Maybe you didn't hear the first part. Let's see what we have seen so far. Paul, the man, who was he? We looked at that. First all, we saw that he was born in a significant place. Acts 22:2-3 tell us that he was born in Tarsus of Cilicia. Now, everybody in that day knew where Tarsus was. Back in that day it was one of the centers of learning in the world, competing with Athens and Alexandria.

Secondly, we saw that he was educated by Gamaliel. You see, he was brought up in Jerusalem. Gamaliel was one of the key teachers of the Sanhedrin, very respected, very influential. That was Paul's teacher. Everybody knew his teacher. Everybody knew where he was born. Not only that, we saw that he was known as a successful Pharisee. By successful, I mean very zealous to the point that he persecuted the Church. We have the record of that all throughout Acts and other places in scripture, showing us how he actually scattered the Church. He became a terror to the people there who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we saw who he was: From a significant place, educated by a special person and known as a successful Pharisee.

Secondly we saw what he was. What was he? "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." That word "apostle" tells us three things. First of all, he was saved. We see that account in Acts 9:1-6. There's no doubt in anybody's mind. Secondly, he was sent, apostello (see also apostolos). The word apo means "away from," stello means "to send." To send from as an ambassador would be sent with a message to represent another. He was sent forth by Christ Himself. Not only that, he was set apart. The apostles of the New Testament had to be a witness of the resurrected Christ, not just spiritually. You know, so often we say, "Well, we're living in the twentieth century, and the Holy Spirit has revealed Christ to me, and He's the resurrected Christ." That is very true. But to be an apostle in the New Testament you had to witness Him with your own two eyes. Paul was an apostle "born out of due season."

Somebody made the observation this morning, even though they elected a disciple nobody said he was appointed an apostle, speaking of Matthias. Paul was appointed an apostle, and we see that through his letters. And so, therefore, he was set apart. An apostle is one who gives us doctrine of the New Testament. That's why when he writes his letters he says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." That said volumes to the churches. They knew he was backed up by the authority of Christ Himself.

Then we noticed why he was what he was. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by [or through] the will of God." In that term "will," thelema, we see the eternal design of God. What do I mean by that? It means God told him; He didn't ask him. God stopped him on his way to Damascus and saved him, set him apart, and sent him out. So therefore, we saw God's design. We saw also His eternal desire. The word thelema is the word that means God does what He does of His own good pleasure. So you see an attitude of God as He works in our life, but you also see an attitude of Paul as he responds to it. The whole time that he's on this earth ministering, he's never bitter, he's never angry, and yet he suffers all the marks of being a believer. Finally, we saw in that the eternal deliberation of God. There is no definite article there, so it means God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit had something to do with

Paul being an apostle. So we saw who he was; we saw what he was; and we also saw why he was what he was. Paul, the man.

Now we want to look at Paul the missionary. There are two things we need to look at. We're not going to finish this time with this part. This is sort of part 1. We're going to take our time. I told you that if you're in a hurry to do Ephesians then you're going to be very uncomfortable in these days to come. First of all, it is very important to make sure we nail down chapter 1. We may be there until the Lord comes back, I don't know, but we're going to make sure we get that nailed down so we can follow the flow throughout his book. But before we even get there we've got to look at the man and his missionary journeys.

There are two things I want to look at. One we'll accomplish, the other we'll just get in part. First of all, we want to look at the evidences of Paul's conversion. How do you know in Acts 9 that he was really converted on the Damascus road? Yes, we have the account. Yes, we have Ananias going to him. Yes, we have a blind Paul. Yes, we have him regaining his sight, regaining his strength. But how can we follow through his life to see the evidences of his conversion? As we do this I want you to ask yourself, "If I were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence in me to prove that I was guilty?" You're going to see in Paul there was plenty of evidence to prove that he was guilty of being a believer.

So turn to Acts 9. Acts doesn't tell us everything we need to know in chapter 9, because it jumps to the apostle Peter. We have to jump over to about the 13th chapter of Acts before we pick Paul back up again. We do, however, get bits and pieces. Acts 9 and Galatians 1 go together to help us put some of this together. What are the evidences of conversion in Paul's life? Well, the first one is a fearlessness in speaking the Word of God. I want to show you in a moment that Paul had that even in the midst of hostile situations. Now, we know in Acts 9 he was on his way to Damascus. Why was he on his way? To persecute Christians. He had all the records. That's all he needed. He was going there to get those Christians. The Christ of Christianity stopped him.

Now, the scripture's going to tell us as we look in Acts 9 beginning in verse 19 that he still gets to Damascus, but the agenda has changed. Instead of coming there to arrest Christians, he went there to preach Christ. That's the first thing you see is the fact that Paul truly had been converted. He had truly been turned around. There's been a marvelous transformation in his life. Verse 19 says, "and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus at the synagogue." Notice "in the synagogue." If you want to find a hostile place for a Pharisee, a Jew who, mind you, is a Roman citizen, if you want to find a hostile place for you to preach Christ, you find a synagogue. Paul used to go to the synagogue to pull the Christians out or to find the ones that were there. Now he's going to preach the Lord Jesus Christ: "and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogue saying, 'He is the Son of God.'"

Can you imagine what's happened to this fellow? Before he stood there at Stephen's death, mocked Stephen as he talked to the Lord, and approved of them stoning him to death. Now he's in the synagogue in Damascus preaching that Jesus truly is the Son of God. "And all those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, 'Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?' But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ. And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, but their plot became known to Saul. And they were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in large basket."

Now you're going to see this pattern develop in Paul's life. There he is in a hostile situation fearlessly preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. Immediately there's a riot. Immediately there are problems, and they have to let him down in a basket over the wall just to get him out of town. Let me ask you a question. Do you think that you have to go to a course on how to witness before you can share Christ with someone? I hear this all the time. "Oh, if you will just tell me how to witness, I would go out and do it." No, you wouldn't.

I remember when I was an Associate Pastor of a church in the land of the Philistines, they told me that I was in charge of Evangelism. I had to put together a course, and we were going to have certificates at the church to say that these people had passed that course. I remember getting them together. We had a door set up in a class room. We had the living room set up. They had to come in and be with a hostile, antagonistic person and defend the faith and share their faith. We learned the plan of salvation. I mean, we had it down. We had more fun training. It was more fun because they had come to us and said, "If you'll teach us how, we'll go share Jesus with somebody else."

Well, I want you to know that on the last night we finished, we had graduation. They came up. We gave them little certificates. Everything was geared around that night. They sang "So Send I You" and all these good things. We were going to send out these great disciples of Jesus to go out and win our city for Jesus. Folks, 30 days later we checked up on them. You know how many people had even opened their mouth to share anything about Christ? Zero. Not a single one of the people who went through that class was affected whatsoever.

You see, we live in a day when people say, "You just show me how, and I'll do it." No, sir! Until your heart is as surrendered as Paul's heart was to the Lord who had set him apart, changed him, converted him, there'll never be any fearless sharing of the Lord Jesus

Christ, especially in hostile situations. The first mark on Paul was when he got to Damascus he turned the tables on them. Instead of arresting Christians, he preached their Christ. The people did not know what to do.

I want to remind you of something. Paul was a man without a country. The Jews didn't trust him anymore, because now he had turned on them. The Christians were scared to death of him. He was a man who could go really nowhere. He had to just simply trust the Lord that had set him apart. He had a fearlessness to share Christ even in the midst of hostile situations. That's the mark of a genuinely converted individual.

We find him in Jerusalem. Acts shows that he goes straight to Jerusalem. No, sir! Galatians 1 shows you that there's a gap between Acts 25 and 26 of about three years when he was in Arabia, which is a desert region over there in that country. For three years he was taught by the Holy Spirit of God. Finally he emerges. Then the next time he reappears on the scene, yes, he is in Jerusalem. There we find the second thing about him. It's almost like the first, a boldness as he speaks. It's not so much that he's fearless of the crowd, but he speaks boldly the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, they had to get him out of the city of Jerusalem once he begins to proclaim Christ. When he began to preach and share Christ, they had to sneak him out of the city because of all the turmoil that was going on.

Well, the third thing we find in Acts 9:30 is after they have gotten him out of Jerusalem, they take him down to Tarsus. Remember, what was Tarsus? Tarsus was where he came from. He's going back home. We don't know a lot about what happened there. But we find that in verse 30 so it says, "when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus." But if you look over in Galatians 1:22 we do have a couple of questions answered. It's very difficult sometimes to put all these things together. I pray that you'll pray with us as we do this. In Galatians 1:22-23 Paul says, "And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea." This is right after it says, "I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia." That's where Tarsus is. Then in Gal 1:22 it says, "And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing" something.

Now this is the next characteristic of a person who is genuinely converted. What's that? The fact that he is a consistent witness wherever he is, even in his own home town. He had just gone to Cilicia. We don't have a lot of testimony about that except the reports keep coming in. The reports keep coming in to the believers who were back in Judea and Jerusalem. Here's what it was. Verse 23 says, "they kept hearing, 'He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.'" Wherever he was he was preaching the faith that he once tried to destroy even in Tarsus, even in his own backyard. There was a consistency of his witness that proved him to be a genuinely converted individual.

Well, the fourth thing we see about him as we track him on down is in Acts 11. We get into the apostle Peter's ministry. Then we have to jump to Acts 11:26. After he has left Tarsus we find him in Antioch of Syria. Now Antioch of Syria is going to become his home base: "and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch." They had gone after Paul and brought him down to Antioch. That is not Antioch of Pisidia, that is Antioch of Syria. "And it came about that for an entire year," watch this. Here's the fourth characteristic of a genuinely converted man. He does not just have a burden to share Christ. He has a burden to build people up in Christ, to equip them, not just to get them saved. Paul had a genuine discipling burden in his heart. To me that is a mark of Jesus being Jesus in Paul. Jesus would never just let a person get saved and leave him alone. The Lord Jesus Himself equipped His disciples, and that same Spirit is in us. As we're converted, it's the Holy Spirit of God in and through us that not only wants to see them evangelized, but wants to see the disciples of Christ equipped. It says, "And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

So you see, the result of that equipping, the result of that teaching, is people were actually called Christians. Up until that point they were called disciples. Have you heard that some people make a distinction in the Gospels between a disciple and a Christian? They say a person is not a disciple until later on in life. That's ridiculous. The disciples have always been disciples, but they were first called Christians at Antioch of Syria. The result of all of that is Acts 11:29. There was a prophet who came and said that there was going to be a famine. That famine is going to affect a certain part of the world. It says in Acts 11:29, "And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea." So already you're beginning to see the effects of this. After they have been disciple, they now have a burden to help others.

And so you see this consistency in Paul. Not only is he fearless, not only does he have a boldness about him, but he also has a burden to see people not just saved, but to see them built up in the Lord Jesus Christ. He spends a whole year with the disciples helping them learn and helping them grow.

Well, the next time that we see him is in Jerusalem for his second visit. That's found in Galatians 2:1ff. When he got there in Jerusalem, he informed the apostles that he was preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. It says that the ones of great reputation didn't side too well with that. But Simon Peter and some others came alongside him and said, "Well, the one thing we ask you to do. Be merciful to those who are poor." Of course, that was the burden of Paul's heart. In other words, he had a gospel. Yes, his burden was for his own people. In Romans 9:1ff, he said, "I would cause myself to be stricken if somehow I could somehow see my brethren saved." Not only did he have a burden for his brethren the Jews, which he was one, but he had a burden for the Gentiles. God had

commissioned him to take the message to the Gentiles. Without prejudice, whether it was Jew or Gentile, Paul wanted to share the Word of God.

I think there is a beautiful point brought out in James 2:1ff. He says, "Listen, if you have real faith, you don't show personal favoritism." There is an absolutely, absolutely, unprejudiced view when you share the view of God. So we see these genuine marks upon the apostle Paul.

Well, the next thing we see him is being proven. If you'll look in Acts 13:1-3, this is where we'll camp out for the rest of the message. We see him being proven and sent out by the church there in Antioch. It says in Acts 13:1, "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." Acts 13:2, "While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart [distinguish these two men] for Me Barnabas and Saul to the work which I have called them.'"

I want you to see something here. They do not become missionaries because of an act of the church. The Holy Spirit of God said to the church, "I have already done something in their lives. It's been proven in everything that Paul has done. Now I want you to distinguish between those two men." Acts 13:3 says, "Then, when they had fasted and prayed they laid their hands on them, they sent them away." No, they did not send them away; the word is they "released them" to do what God had already called them to do. You see, we think of the church as a calling and sending agency. No, sir! It's God the Holy Spirit. First of all, they were already proven by the fact they were genuinely converted. When a man is genuinely converted, God the Spirit sets him apart for God's use. At that particular point he has a goal. He has the same purpose in life that God has. Now, Paul says, the scripture says the Holy Spirit made this known to the people of that church. The Holy Spirit probably wouldn't have had to say that because they already knew that about Paul. It had been proven in his life. But the Holy Spirit ministered to them and said, "Listen, you set him apart. You distinguish between Paul and Barnabas, and I want you to do something. You turn them loose. Release them to do what I have already called them and set them apart to do."

So the church begins to help them in any way that they can. It's not the work of the church, it's the work of God the Holy Spirit in the church that causes missions to take place. It started when the Holy Spirit of God set him apart. When was that? On the Damascus road. From that very moment, for the rest of his life he had a purpose that God had for him, and the Holy Spirit says to the church, "Now, listen, I want you to know this about them, and I want you to turn them loose, release them and let them do and let them be what God wants them to be." So they've been proven.

Well, we see then the evidences of a genuinely converted individual. Just by looking at Paul and where he's been, we see a fearlessness to speak the word of God and a boldness to say what is needed to be said. We see a consistent witness wherever he was. Whether it was in his hometown or whether it was over here, he was doing the same thing. The reports never conflicted. They said, "This man, who used to want to arrest those who did that, is now preaching their Christ." He also had a burden to see people equipped, not just to be saved, but to see people equipped. A genuine Christ burden is in him. Then, finally, without prejudice, sharing the Word of God. There was no personal favoritism, whether Jew or Gentile. It made no difference. Paul just had a burden to get the message of the gospel to others. As a result, he was proven. As a result, the church distinguished that in his life, also in Barnabas's life, and they released them to do the work that the Holy Spirit of God had already appointed them to do.

Now that gets us up to the second part of the message. This is going to take a while. I tell you what. These kinds of messages before we start a book sometimes kind of frustrate me. This is spade work. You've got to do the spade work before you can get in the garden. So, we're going to look at his first missionary journey.

After the church had released them, after they had been sent out, as the scripture says, really released to do what the Holy Spirit had said in their hearts, we see the examples of his call. One of the first things I want you to see is what he was doing before he was released by the church he continued to do the rest of his life. You know, let me give you a thought. You may be thinking, "You know, I wonder if God wants me to be a missionary?" Friend, if you're not cutting it now, you won't cut it then. You've got to be living it now before you'll ever live it someplace else. It was already distinguished in Paul's life what God had set apart for him. The church recognized it by the Holy Spirit's revelation, and then they simply released them to continue to do what God had already appointed in their heart. You don't send a person across an ocean to make them a missionary. A person, when he's surrendered to Christ, exemplifies certain burdens. Those burdens, when he goes out, are simply an extension of what he's already doing where he was.

So we want to see the examples of the call of the apostle Paul. He took several missionary journeys, but we're just going to look at the first one. We're going to walk through it. Get your pencils out because this may help you down the road. Let's go back and start off, walk through, and see if we can get a picture of his first missionary journey. Next time we'll pick up there and tell you when he wrote certain books, and how it all fits on the calendar, when he took his first journey, when he took his second journey, etc. We're going to walk him through his life. You'll see where Ephesians fits into all of this as we begin to do our background, alright?

In Acts 13:4, after the church has released them to do what the Holy Spirit had decided they needed to do, we find the first

missionary journey beginning. Verse 4 says, "So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus."

You know, having been in those Greek islands, let me just tell you a little bit about it. They're all kind of the same. I mean, they're all just barren. There are mountains. Some of them have a tree or two, maybe four, and they're beautiful islands. I have never seen anything any more beautiful. I've been in the Caribbean and other places in the world, but when you get in that Aegean Sea, and you begin to see some of those islands that are over there, you begin to get a total different culture. It's like culture shock at first as you begin to understand the times and the places that they were in.

Well, they went to Cyprus. Cyprus was an island about 41 miles off the coast of Cilicia. Now, where are they coming from? Antioch of Syria. Where do they go to? They came down to Seleucia, caught a ship, and went over to the island of Cyprus. Cyprus was 41 miles from the coast of Asia Minor, the coast of Turkey. Salamis was the port city on that island, and it said that was the birth place of Barnabas.

Let me show you something that I found in doing this study. Look back in Acts 4:36. I found out something about Barnabas that I didn't know. "Barnabas" evidently was a nickname that the disciples had given to him. That wasn't really his name. He was just called Barnabas. I didn't know that. In verse 36 it says, "And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth [Cyprian, Cyprus], who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement)." Barnabas evidently came from Cyprus, and tradition tells us that Salamis, where they landed, was really where he was from. Old tradition tells us that's where he was martyred for the faith. We do not know that for fact.

They continued to preach in the synagogues once they had gotten to Cyprus. They preached in the synagogue, and Acts 13:6-12 tell us what happened there. "And when they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos [in other words, they crossed over to the other side] they found a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Paul and sought to hear the word of God." He was really interested. Acts 13:8 says, "But Elymas the magician (for thus his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him and said, 'You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil [boy, notice how they minced their words; they were always careful not to insult anyone they were dealing with!], you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of our Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.' And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking those who led him by the hand." Paul said, "By the Word of God you're going to be blind," the man was stricken blind. That will show you something.

Then Acts 13:12 says, "Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord." Now, do you see the result was that the proconsul came to know the Lord Jesus Christ? I guess you could say that would be the first miracle on this first missionary journey. It came there at Paphos on the island of Cyprus.

Now, Acts 13:13 tells us that they left Paphos in Cyprus, and they sailed to Perga of Pamphylia. It says in verse 13, "Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia." It tells us what happened there. John left them at that point. Pamphylia was a Roman province on the southern coast of Central Asia Minor. When you see Ephesus, that's not Central Asia Minor, that's Western Asia Minor. You have to swing around, and there you find Pamphylia. Perga was the capital city of Pamphylia. It doesn't tell us what went on except that John left them at that place.

Well, let's move on. Acts 13:14 tells us they left there, and they arrived at Antioch of Pisidia. Verse 14, "But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down." This is the same habit they've had everywhere they've gone. Pisidia was on up. Now, when you get to Pamphylia you just keep on going north inside the country. Pisidia was a mountainous province in Central Asia Minor, and Antioch was on the northern edge of Pisidia. Here Paul preaches one of his greatest sermons. As a matter of fact, go on to Acts 13:42-43, and let's see the response of his sermon. Man, he preached like a house of fire, and look what happened. Verse 42, "And as Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath." They loved it so much they wanted to come back the following Sabbath. "Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes [those Jews that came in later, those Gentiles that were circumcised] followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God." Well, they did. The next Sabbath they came back and preached the exact same message.

Look at the result in Acts 13:44-45. "And the next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the Word of God. But when the Jews saw the crowd they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul and were blaspheming. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, 'It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first [you Jews] since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are now turning to the Gentiles.'" He makes his announcement. "For thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth.'" And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as

had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the Word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. But the Jews aroused the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook the dust off their feet in protest to them.” I’d liked to have seen that—Paul just standing there, I guess, shaking the dust off, going right on wherever God wanted him.

I want you to see something that’s a pattern developing. Wherever Paul went, usually he was forced there by trial and by suffering. It was not as if Paul had an agenda. It was as if God had the agenda, and God would let it get so hot that it would force him out of a place almost like God was so far ahead of him. Every time he got in trouble God would move him, and when He moved him something else would develop in another place. Have you ever thought about that in your Christian journey? Now, I know we’re not the apostle Paul, but at the same time we’re led of the Spirit of God. Have you ever thought about the fact that when you’re going through those fires and those difficult times God’s just simply moving you to another pasture? It’s like the old shepherd who would move his sheep. He knows us, and He just continues to move us by His hand in His life.

Well, after they have left Antioch of Pisidia, Acts 14:1 tells us they go to Iconium. Now, if you’ll remember 2Timothy 3:11^{note}, there are three cities mentioned by Paul to Timothy. They are mentioned because of the great suffering that Paul went through. Do you know what they were? Antioch, that we’ve just seen, Iconium and Lystra. Buddy, he was not treated well at all. The battle is on. In Acts 14:1 it says, “And it came about that in Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and embittered them against the brethren.”

Now, let me back up a minute. Iconium is in another province. We just have seen them in Antioch of Pisidia. They move now in Central Asia to the province of Lycaonia. In Lycaonia there are basically going to be several cities that they’re going to go through. Iconium was the first one. Verse 6 says they became aware of the fact that there was an attempt made by the Gentiles and the Jews, and therefore, they had to flee to other cities of Lycaonia. So the pressure is on. They get to Iconium after coming out of Antioch of Pisidia, a brand new province, and they force them out of town one more time. The next time they stop they end up at Lystra. Are you following along? They’ve been to Antioch of Pisidia. They’ve been down to Iconium. Now they come to Lystra.

Verse 6 tells us what happens at Lystra. It’s very similar to everywhere else they’ve been. Acts 14:8-11 will really help you. “And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man without strength in his feet, lame from his mother’s womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, ‘Stand upright on your feet.’ And he leaped up and began to walk. And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, ‘The gods have become like men and have come down to us.’”

You’ve got to understand the culture of that period. There were gods everywhere. In all of these cities he went into idols were everywhere. They thought the gods had come down, invaded these men, and they were actually gods themselves. But what happens? Again you’ve always got that group. In Acts 14:19-20 it says, “But Jews came from Antioch [they’re following him around] and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.” Verse 20, “But while the disciples stood around him, he rose and entered the city.” Now, what would you have done? Would you have gotten up and gone back into the city or would you have hightailed it out of there? Paul was stoned. They thought he was dead. Finally he got up and went right back into the city. “The next day he went with Barnabas to Derbe.” Derbe is another city in the province there of Lycaonia.

Well, we’ve just about landed, because the tail flaps are down. He comes down to Derbe, as it says in Acts 14:20. Acts 14:21 continues, “And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples,” they started to backtrack. Now, understand where we’re going now. They go back to Lystra, back to Iconium, and back to Antioch of Pisidia. “Now wait a minute, Paul, are you a glutton for punishment? Why would you go back to these cities that caused you so much trouble?”

Well, look what happens when he gets back to Antioch of Pisidia. Acts 14:22, “strengthening the souls of the disciples [as he goes along to each of these cities], encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations (see thlipsis) we must enter the kingdom of God.’” So as he went back they are encouraging the disciples. Acts 14:23 says, “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Well, back through Pisidia to Perga to Pamphylia and then on to a place called Attalla. Now that’s different. That’s not on our list. That’s a coastal area. There they get on a ship, and they go back to Antioch of Syria. So we have his first missionary.

Now Acts 14:27 says, “And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all the things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.” I thought that was significant because the church had a role there in releasing them, praying for them, funding them in any way they could so they could do the job that God had appointed them to do. So therefore, they felt a responsibility to come back to that home church and to make a report of all that they had seen God

do in opening the door to the Gentiles.

Well, that's missionary journey number 1. You say, "Are we going to wade through them all that way?" I'm afraid so. We're not going to quit until we get every one of them. One of the things we want to do in these journeys is to begin to put some dates on this and find out when Ephesians was written, what was going on. You see, we're getting in the life of Paul, just a quick survey of it, and we must realize that wherever he went hostility and suffering followed him.

There's one thing I want to leave you with. You say, "How in the world am I going to apply this? I'm not an apostle, and I haven't been on a missionary journey in a while." Well, first of all, if you're saved and filled with the Spirit, God has a journey already outlined for you. There's one thing that blesses me about the apostle Paul. As they were divinely set apart by the Holy Spirit, and the church had released them, something hit me. I asked the Lord, "Lord what are you saying to my life in this?" The thing that hit me was they understood their call. They understood their purpose, and nothing would shake them in their determination to be faithful to their God. It didn't matter how much hostility; it didn't matter how much suffering. "Stone me," Paul said, "and I'll come right back in your city." They were divinely motivated with a clear understanding what it was that God had set about in their lives.

You know, I just don't know what is wrong with me. Maybe I'm getting old or something. Some of you have said to me, "Are you okay? Are you alright? Are people griping and complaining? Is that why you shared what you shared?" You know, I really do thank you that you love me that much to think that, but I want to tell you something. Years ago I began to discern what God wanted in my life, and I want to make sure you understand where I'm coming from. I'm not the apostle, and I put myself in no category equal with him. That's not what I'm doing, so just relax.

Years ago God spoke to my heart and began to burden me. I know my burden. I know what it is. I know clearly what it is. It's outside the church walls. That doesn't mean I'm not burdened there. No, I'm not saying that. But the bulk of burden that I have within me is to take the message that we're preaching in the church outside of the walls. I have always had it. When I came to this church I asked the Lord to not let me pastor. Isn't that crazy? I'm glad He didn't answer my prayer, because I feel like I've died and gone to heaven since I've been there. But I realize many times some of you look at me as if I'm a bird that you've never seen before. Of course, I do look a little funny, but I am different. I am different.

I want you to know from my heart I'm different, but I know because I know because I know what God has burdened my heart to do. The thing that I appreciate about this church is it has released me to do what God asked me to do. I could have never have imagined that I could have stayed as a pastor of a church this long and do all the things that God had burdened me to do.

So what I want to say is nobody's griping, and I'm not trying to get at anybody. What I'm trying to say is thank you for loving me enough to let me be what God called me to be. I know it's hard sometimes. Some of you come from backgrounds where the preacher was there every time you had a need. I mean, to hold your hand, pat your back, burp you or whatever was needed in your life. I know that. This is the thing that grieves me the most because I can't get everything done. I understand that. I also believe God has designed the body of Christ as to do those kinds of things. If it's ever going to be changed somebody's got to stand in the middle of the current and see it change. I've made up my mind I'm going to do that at the risk of some of you thinking I don't care. If I didn't care I wouldn't spend the time on my face and in the Word to preach to you every time I come into the pulpit. I've been gifted different than some of you, burdened differently and called differently.

Remember what I'm saying. Nothing shook the apostle Paul from that which he clearly understood to be the work that the Holy Spirit had set before him. That's my encouragement to you. Don't let anybody or anything get in the way of what God wants in your life as long as you're running your race down here on this earth. I tell you what, if I'm free to let you be what Christ wants you to be, and you're free to let me be what Christ wants me to be, this church, folks, is going to go down in history as a church that truly exemplified the Lord Jesus and allowed His life and Spirit to flow through them.

So, can I say that to you? Don't worry about me. I'm okay. I'm trying to thank you. Thank you for letting me be what God has called me to be. Sometimes that gets frustrating to me because when I hear those of you who don't understand, I want to come back and tell you again. This message allowed me to do that. I will never use a message to give me a soapbox, but I believe from the life of Paul I can clearly illustrate to you where my burden is. If it ever comes, and you let me know this, if it ever comes to where my burden overshadows and hurts this church in any way I want you to know from my heart I will not stay and belabor the situation. I will step aside and let God bring who He wants, gifted better than I, to do what I could never had done. But so far so good. I'm enjoying it, and I love it, and I want to thank you for letting me be what God has put on my heart. I can't be anything else. That's my love for you to let you be what God wants you to be. I want you to know that.

Well, we see the expressions, the evidence of his conversion. We see the example of his call. One of the things there is the consistency in which nothing shook them from what God had put before them. Let me ask you a question. What has God put on your heart? What are you to be? Are you going to be that? Are you determined to let God use you that way? Do you know your gifts? Do you know your purpose? Once you discover where you fit, folks, life is about to get more thrilling that it has ever been before.

He's gifted all of us for a purpose.

Paul: The Missionary – Part 2

Turn with me to Ephesians 1:1. We're not going to stay there, but I want you to get use to finding Ephesians. This our third message now on the first phrase of that verse. It says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." That's what we're looking at. We need to understand the man that God used to pen this letter before we actually get into it.

We've seen Paul the man. Last time we saw Paul the Missionary – Part 1. This time we're going to look at Paul the Missionary – Part 2. Next time we'll look at Paul the Missionary – Part 3. We will finish that at some point, but there's just so much that we're trying to look at. Who is this man called Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God?

Well, as I was introducing this last time I came across a passage of scripture. We hit it and ran off. You know, sometimes I do that, and then I go back and study. I want to lead in to what I'm going to say. I have really discovered how much I miss by just hitting it and running off from it. I want to come back to it. I want you to be patient with me. I guess you really have no choice. I want to see if we can understand something. When I come across something like this it's just so far-reaching I want us to go back to it.

We teach in our church a received ministry, not an achieved ministry. Now, in our church's By-Laws and Constitution we have what we call a philosophy of ministry. That's what this church is based on. That's sort of like the boundary lines in a football game. You know not to go out of bounds. How do you know when you've gone out of bounds? When you go against the grain of the philosophy of ministry that we have as a church.

What does it mean having a received ministry? Well, basically it means God initiates ministry, not man. In other words, from seeking after the will of the Lord, seeking with a surrendered heart, God leads an individual into ministry, not a committee sitting down and having a long range planning time and figuring out what they think God ought to be doing for the next five years. Rather, it's getting on our face before the Lord, seeking Him and letting Him lead us. God initiates ministry. That's what this whole church is based on.

Not only that, God empowers what He initiates. Once God starts it, God energizes it. It's got to be Him from the beginning. Then thirdly, in our philosophy of ministry God holds us responsible and accountable to be obedient to that which He has raised up. We must be in on what He's up to. Finally as a result, God, not us, not the church, certainly not the denomination, will get the glory for people who allow Jesus to be Jesus in them. That's our philosophy of ministry.

Well, you say, "Well, now, thank you. We really appreciate you interjecting that. What has that got to do with Paul?" A whole lot. I want you to see in Paul's life this very philosophy of ministry lived out. Not one single thing that Paul did was of Paul. It started with God, and even at the end of his life in 2Timothy 4:7ff-note when he wrote Timothy, it ends with Him when he says, "I have fought the good fight. I've finished the course. I'm ready now to go on back home. I have not at all pulled aside from that which God raised up and God led and God empowered in my life." Some of you may say, "Well, you can't really do this because Paul was an apostle, we're not apostles. There are no more apostles. So how could you say God's going to work in our life like He worked in Paul's life? How can you say that since he had a received ministry, we have a received ministry?"

Look with me in Colossians 4:17-note. Let me just show you what he says in closing out his letter as he addresses one by the name of Archippus. He makes a statement to him that shows and qualifies the fact that, not only did apostles have a received ministry, but every believer has a received ministry, that which begins with God, empowered by God and continues by God's doing. Then the glory comes back to Him. In Colossians 4:17 Paul says, "And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have [what does your translation say?] received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" "Archippus, you would not have a ministry had you not received it from God."

Look in John 3:26-27. Here's the principle. John the Baptist is the one speaking here. His disciples come to him in verse 26, and look what they say: "And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, He who is with you beyond the Jordan [speaking of Jesus], to whom you have borne witness, behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him.'" In other words, "John, He's baptizing more than you're baptizing." Look how John responds by saying in John 3:27 "John answered and said, 'A man can receive [How much?] nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven.'"

Those are just two of the scriptures that I would like to make sure we understand. Whether you're an apostle or whether you're a believer, it doesn't matter who you are. A man can receive nothing unless it's given by God. A received ministry, first of all, has to have a surrendered vessel with which to receive it. Once a person has received and is open to God, God in and through that person ministers to other people. That's the difference in a received ministry and an achieved. An achieved ministry is what man, because of his own schedule, can do for God and expects God to bless. A received ministry starts and ends with God. He gets the glory for

all that takes place.

Well, now turn to Acts 13. Rather than get into his second missionary journey we're going to do something else. I want you to see in Paul's life when he was commissioned and when he was sent out. Let's understand this was all of God. He was not of man. There are four things that I want you to see in Acts 13:14. The first thing I want you to see is the special choice that God makes here and asks the church to agree with. Verse 1 says, "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." Look at Acts 13:2. "And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Now that's the first thing I want you to see, a divine special choice that God makes and tells the church to make.

Now, before we get into it further, who does the Holy Spirit speak to? Well, we've read it in verse 1, but let's go back over it. We have Barnabas. We know who he is. He's the encourager who was the companion to Paul. Next was Simeon who is called Niger. That's self explanatory. Then there was Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. That shows you the upper class individual that he was to have been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. Finally we have Saul. So we have the group of men that were there. What did it mean when it said, "there were prophets and teachers?" Verse 1 says, "there were prophets and teachers," and then it names the list of those prophets and teachers.

Some of you may get upset with the word "prophet." You think the word "prophet" means "to foretell" as if these were people like Agabus who came and predicted the famine that was going to take place over in Judea. No, the primary meaning for the word "prophet" is not a foreteller of the future. That's a secondary meaning which is always found in isolated events in the New Testament. The primary meaning of the word "prophet" means "someone who speaks before others." It comes from the word pro, which means "before," and the word phemi, which means "to speak." It says therefore, here you have your preachers and teachers in the church at Antioch of Syria that are gathered together when the Holy Spirit speaks.

Now, obviously, these are the leaders of the church, maybe not all of the leaders, but they certainly were noticed as leaders of the church. How do you know that? Look at Acts 13:2. What were they doing? "They were ministering to the Lord and fasting." Now that tells us something. The word for "minister" there really grabbed me. It's not the word **diakonos**, which we normally think of. That's the word we get "deacon" from. That is not the word used there. If it had of been that word it could have been anybody in the church and then gives you a list of those men. The word that is used there is the word **leitourgeo**. It's the word we get the word "liturgies" from. As a matter of fact, it comes from two Greek words. One means "public" and the other means "work." It had to do with those who were in the office of a particular position. In the church everybody serves.

Way back when the Catholic church began to have its influence upon the papal state, and this goes way back in history, they made a distinction between the laymen and the clergy. That is totally non-biblical. All of us are ministers. All of us are missionaries. All of us are equal in that sense of the word. Because the church made that distinction we have grown up in it even up to the twentieth century. We think that a person who is the preacher of the church must be the minister, everybody else is just down below them. No, we're a body, and we just have different gifts within the body. The church messed our mind up years and years ago regarding this. The Bible does not teach that.

However, within any organization you've got to have a head. You've got to have a leadership. So there are offices of deacons and offices of elder. There are pastor-teachers within the church. These are those who minister, but they are in an official position of having been elected or put there by the church to which they minister. That would be the word **leitourgeo**. In other words, when they ministered they ministered from an official, appointed position. They were not any better than anybody else, but they were in an official position to do the ministering to others. So these men here are the leaders. They're the preachers and teachers at the church at Antioch back at Syria who are gathered together. They are the official leadership of the church.

What were they doing? They were ministering, and they were fasting before the Lord. Now the term "fasting" tells us the gist of their ministry. Evidently they were at a time when they had come together to seek the Lord. Why did they fast? Many of you have asked me about fasting and have asked me to preach on it. Maybe this is a good time to say something about it. Fasting does not make you spiritual. I don't know why people think that. "I've been fasting for three days." Well, that may only mean you're extremely hungry. That doesn't mean necessarily that you're doing anything spiritual. Fasting is the environment into which you put prayer. Now, say, for instance, you are having a burden about something, and you can't seem to get an answer. You need to hear from God. Fasting becomes a very biblical means of sacrificing yourself from food and other things, dying to selfish desires and putting yourself wholeheartedly into the position of prayer so that you can be extra-sensitized to that which God is trying to say to you in that particular area of your life. It doesn't mean you're more spiritual. It probably simply means you're more desperate. You need to hear from God. Fasting is that environment you put yourself.

So when you tag fasting on to the fact that they were ministering out of the official capacity that they have been appointed, they must have been seeking the Lord on behalf of the people who put them into those positions.

Who are they? Barnabas and Paul are just a part of the group. Please understand that. That's very important. Now it was at this time when the leadership of the church of Antioch in Syria was seeking the Lord, as they sought the Lord, that the Holy Spirit could speak. Only then could they hear what He said. You've got to be in a position to listen before the Holy Spirit can ever speak. The Holy Spirit said to them, "'Set apart for Me, Barnabas and Saul.'" Now, this was not something they had on their prayer list. This was not their agenda. They did not come together as a group and say, "Lord, what would You have Paul and Barnabas to do?" So the Holy Spirit met with them and said, "Set them apart for the work that I have called them." No! From what I get from the text they were just simply seeking the Lord. As they were seeking the Lord He just didn't speak to Paul and Barnabas. He spoke to all of them so that they could have the credibility and unanimity of the fact that He had spoken.

He said, "Now you separate for me, Paul and Barnabas." The term "set apart" is a command. It's an aorist imperative. They have no option. This is what they were told by the Spirit of God to do. It was God's agenda, not their agenda. Now this is why Paul can say in Ephesians 1:1, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus [How?] by the will of God." Paul says, "Buddy, I had nothing to do with it. I wasn't bothering anybody except for some Christians. I was on my way to Damascus, but God stopped me on my way. He turned me around. Now I am at a prayer meeting, and God said, 'You set for me Paul and Barnabas. I want them to do a work I've already called them to do.'"

So the Holy Spirit told these church leaders what He wanted them to do, not just Paul and Barnabas. He told the group as they sought the Lord, all of them together, so that they could put their stamp of approval on it. He told them to make a special choice of Paul and Barnabas.

The second thing I want you to see is this choice was based on a special calling. Now remember, they've got to be in a position to hear. That's the beauty to me of the variety of leaderships. When you put leaders together that love God and are surrendered to Him, when they all get together in seeking the Lord, it is incredible what God will say to them. It is incredible what God has on His agenda, not on ours, but on His. Well, this is a special calling. After telling of His special choice He says, "You set them apart." The word "set apart" simply means "to choose out from among."

Let me put it in terminology we can understand. Let's say I've got a bench full of players. I want this player and that player, so I pick this player and that player specifically. I pull them off the bench, and I say, "I want you to play." That's what the Holy Spirit says. Out of this group, He wants this man and that man. He didn't say, "I need someone. Are there any volunteers?" He said, "I want you, and I want you. I've made this choice."

Now watch He says next: "to the work to which I have called them." The Holy Spirit is simply saying to the church, "I've got some business here. I have an agenda. Now that you're seeking Me, I want to tell you what I'm up to. I want you to pick out these two men, and here's the reason: I have already called them." That's a perfect passive verb. Perfect tense means "way back over here I called them. In the councils of heaven We determined this a long time ago. Now it's bearing a present result, and I want you, the church leadership; I want you, church; I want you to choose these two men based on what the Godhead has eternally designed. Way back here We made the choice. Now you choose out from among you."

Well, the Holy Spirit tells them, "You select these two specific men because I've already called them to the work to which I have decided." You know, this just gets me excited. Remember, we're a church based on this very same kind of operation by the Holy Spirit of God. This helps us one more time to understand what we're all about. What has God called you to? What has God designed for your life? He had a special design on Paul and Barnabas.

Well thirdly, I want you to see a special church. How many churches do you think would listen to the Lord to begin with? Secondly, how many churches, once they have heard Him, would turn them loose, especially since this was Paul and Barnabas? Paul and Barnabas were two of the most crucial people in the New Testament. They ministered to the disciples for over one year in one place. These are the two guys you've got to have with you all the time. We not only see a special choice and a calling, but here you see a very unique and a very special church.

Watch what Acts 13:3 says. "Then, when they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Sometimes translations don't quite bring it out the Greek correctly. I'm not knocking your translation. The Greek word used for "sent" in verse 4 is the real word for "sent," not the word used in verse 3. In verse 3 it doesn't mean they sent them away. The word is a beautiful word. It's *apoluo*. It comes from two Greek words, *apo*, away from, and *luo*, to loosen, or to untie, to take the bonds off, to unbind.

I know when I was growing up one of the hardest things in the world was to tie my shoe. Once you learn to tie your shoes sometimes you would get them so tight you couldn't untie them. My son did this all the time. It took him forever to untie his shoe once he had tied it. Sometimes he would just have to pull his shoe off with it still tied. I would have to untie that thing to put it back on him, but he had it tied so tight. How was I supposed to untie it?

Well, that's exactly the word here, *apoloio*. It means "to cause to be untied, to unravel, to take away that which would cause to be bound." What did the church do? The church recognized through its leadership that they had two men among them who were leaders of the church that God had designed for something else. They were told to unloosen them, to untie them, to set them free. Now, to me that is a special church. They were told to loosen and set free two men of the caliber of Barnabas and Paul. What do most people do when you get that kind of caliber of men in their church? Buddy, they hang on to them tight. "We want them for ourselves." No, sir, the Holy Spirit said, "You chose out from among you who I've already called, and you turn them loose. You unloosen them. You don't put any bonds of them whatsoever."

You see, we're all uniquely different, just like Paul and Barnabas and all of the different Christians of that day. God has different callings on you. He has different callings on me. We have seven guys on our church staff. They're not all called the same way I'm called, yet we're all burdened for this body of believers. We've got several elders in our church. Some of them are in town. Some of them are not in town. Where are they? Man, they just have different callings and burdens.

I guarantee you this. Let's just say I did leave. I may go down in an airplane. That's not the way I want to go down. I mean, I'm gone. Do you think that catches God by surprise? Do you think this church is built on me? I guarantee you God will have somebody running right in behind me. I guarantee you he will be as different from me as night and day. Some of you, if you're followers of me, are in big trouble. The guy who comes in after me won't be like me. Thank God. Man, they threw the mold away when they made me. He'll be totally different. It'll take you six months to a year to adjust to the guy. Finally it'll dawn on you, "Wait a minute. God's called him differently than he called Wayne."

"Well, how can you have a preacher that's not like the preacher in the church that I came from?" I'll tell you how. When you get about God's desire, He just does it His own way. Most people think that I'm not the gift to the church anyway. I'm a booby prize.

What I'm trying to say is, all of us have a ministry. All of us have a calling. We need to be about the things which God has put before us. Listen, the church recognized this. The Holy Spirit spoke to them and said, "Listen, you choose these two men." He didn't just say that to Paul and Barnabas. He said it to the whole group. He said, "Hey, the reason you're doing this is because I have already called them. I have a work designed for them that is different from the rest of you guys." Why didn't He call the other ones it mentioned? Why didn't He call Simeon? Why didn't He call Lucius? Why didn't He call Manaen? I don't know. The Holy Spirit just does whatever He does.

Therefore, you have to be about your calling and your purpose. That's exactly Paul's life. His whole ministry was based on that. It was a special, special church to untie him and release him to do what God had uniquely designed for him to do in that specific place.

I've tried to help with the leadership of our church staff. Listen, I want the guys on our staff to be who God called them to be, not what the church thinks they ought to be. I really mean that with all of my heart. To a fault I try to let other people be what God wants them to be because I believe that so strongly in my own life. I want our ministers to be what God wants them to be, not what I come up with, not what I've drug in from someplace else. "But God, what do you want these people to be?" As you continue in that route God begins to raise up the work. It's received, it's not achieved. I mean all you can do is stand back and be in awe and glorify Him.

So, we see a special choice; we see a special calling; and we see a special church. Well, there's one more thing. We see a special commission. Now this commission is so different. It says in Acts 13:4, "So, being sent out by the church." Is that what your scripture says? No, it says that in verse 3. You know now that it doesn't really say "sent out" there, it really says "unloosed." They're untied by the church. Verse 4 says, "being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there sailed to Cyprus." This commission was not a commission put upon man by man. This was a commission put upon man by God Himself. Now they're following the Holy Spirit of God.

The term "sent out" there, *ekpempo*, means "to be sent out." This is the right word to use when you send somebody out. Paul does not have an agenda. I love it. When we see his next missionary journey you're going to see he had a plan. "Now, wait a minute, Paul. I thought you were on God's agenda, not yours." What does Proverbs say, "A man plans his way but God [What?] directs his steps." You're going to see that next time in the life of Paul. Buddy, he thought he had a plan. He thought he knew where he was going. No, sir, he was not commissioned by man. He does not have his own agenda. God has his agenda, and God begins to turn him and move him and get him over here. It's incredible what you're going to see him do as a result of that in his life. It was a very, very special choice, a very special calling, a special church and a special commission.

Can I ask you a question before I go on? What is your calling in life? If I asked you right now, could you stand up and tell me, "I believe I've come to this point in my life. I believe this is what God wants me to be, and what He wants me to do."? See, some of you think that if you're not on the mission field or in the pulpit or in some position in the church, you've missed God's calling. Are you kidding? If we didn't have plumbers, electricians, accountants and lawyers, where would we be? Everybody has a unique place in life. Whatever way God chooses to let you find the ministry He has in your life is His business. All of us have a design. All of us have a purpose.

You might be a housewife. You're saying, "Well, all I do all day long is change stinky diapers. I have to wash clothes and dishes. I don't even get to see the mirror to comb my hair. I don't know how these women look so nice all the time. I'm just working all the time." Hey, if that's what God's put before you, rejoice, friend. That's just as good in His sight as the apostle Paul on a missionary journey. All He asks us is to be faithful to that which He has raised up in our lives. If it's not what somebody else is doing, that's alright. God doesn't care about that. You're only accountable for what He's put in front of you. To him who is given much, much is required.

Well, what is your calling? Are you about your Father's business, young people? You better listen to what I'm saying. What has God called you to do? Don't fool around with your life until you get 30 years old and then try to get serious with God. If you're a believer you're just as accountable to God as I am. You need to be about what God's purposes are in your life now. The more you're surrendered, the more the Holy Spirit can speak. The more He speaks, the more you can hear and the more you begin to see God working in and through your life.

Well, it's wonderful to know what it is and to walk in it. Most frustrated people do not know what God has designed for them in their life. They don't know what their gifts or burdens are. They don't know the direction God's trying to take them in their life.

Well, okay. Enough of that. Turn to Acts 15. I want to lead you up to the second missionary journey. Paul is a unique man like all of us are unique. God has His own calling, His own choice, and His own commission on his life. In Acts 15:1-29 something unique happens. Paul is in Antioch of Syria. They've just now called him and sent him out. He's just been on his first missionary journey. What did he do on that first missionary journey? Do you remember our last study? He left Antioch of Syria on a boat to Cyprus, crossed over Cyprus to Paphos, left Paphos and went to Asia Minor which is modern day Turkey. If you'll get a map and look at it, you'll see that. When he got to Asia Minor he went to Pamphylia which was one of the coastal provinces there. He went up through Perga. He went on up to Antioch of Pisidia, which was another province which set right above Perga in Asia Minor. He comes out of Antioch of Pisidia to Iconium. Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were the three places that almost beat Paul to death. That was the worse experience Paul had ever had. He turns around at Derbe and goes right back through Lystra, Iconium, back down through Antioch of Pisidia and right on down to Attalla. From there he catches a boat and goes back to his home base at Antioch of Syria.

Now you're at Acts 15:1. In verse 1 it says, "And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue."

Now what happened? A group of saved Christian Jews from Judea came down and were trying to get these young Gentile believers to be circumcised, as if that had anything to do with their salvation. That sounds just like the twentieth century. It hasn't changed, has it? People are still trying to get us baptized in order to be saved. They don't even realize we're saved by grace. That was Paul's message then. That's our message now. Paul says, "You're wrong." Boy, they went at it head on. So the people there said, "Hey, you had better go to Jerusalem and get a ruling by the council in order to make sure we're doing the right thing."

So Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem. This is when they had the Jerusalem Council. Simon Peter and James had a lot to say in that meeting. The council came to this conclusion, "Leave the Gentiles alone. We're saved by grace, not by works. Don't you dare put them back up under the Law. Jesus fulfilled the Law." Isn't it wonderful that they came to that conclusion? We work out of that even up to this day?

After the council they went back home. They took two people back home with them from Jerusalem. This will be important to you later. One of the men was named Silas. Remember Silas? "Well, I thought Paul went with Silas on the second missionary journey." He did. "Why did Paul leave Barnabas?" You will find that out next time. The other fellow was named Judas, who some people called Barsabbas. We don't know who that was. All we know is these were two men who came back with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch of Syria.

Thus we have the interlude between the first missionary journey and the second missionary journey. There were a total of four missionary journeys. We looked at the first one earlier. We've got three more to go.

Paul, the missionary. Make sure you understand he was a man who was on God's schedule. He didn't have a map. He only had the Guide, and the Guide had the plan. He had to stay surrendered to the Guide in order to be where God wanted him to be all the rest of his life.

You know, when you look at scriptures today, and you study the life of Paul, one thing you find very clearly. What was written of Paul? "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." After he's dead now, and we're looking back at him, what can be said of Paul? He never regressed. He wasn't a John Mark that out of cowardice ran from Pamphylia. He wasn't a Demas who loved this present world and bailed out on God. No, sir! He was a man that was God-called and God-initiated. He stayed true to that calling to

the day that he died. What was written of Paul could now be said of Paul.

My question to you this morning is, what is written of you? What's God's choice in your life? What's God's calling in your life? What's God's commission in your life? It takes a special church to allow people to be who they ought to be under the anointing and leadership of the Holy Spirit of God. First of all, you've got to find out what it is God wants you to do. What is written of you? One of these days when you die, and we look back over your life, what was written of you? What were you, in the diary of heaven? What is written now that you're supposed to be fulfilling as a vessel unto the Lord on this earth? What purpose is your life? One day when you die will we be able to look back and say, "What was written of you can truthfully be said of you?"

There are few people that I've met on this earth of which that can be said. Roy Hession from England was a man that was true to what God put before him while he was here on this earth. He was a man who lived it, a man who never wavered from what God asked of him, a man who knew his place. I use to ask Roy, "What do you think about this?" He would say, "I don't know" I would say, "Well, I thought you knew everything because you're famous." He would just say, "I just know Jesus, and I know His blood cleanses me." I loved the humility of that man. He knew where he fit in the body. He stayed with it until the day he died.

Listen, what has God called you to be in this body? Some of you are thinking about joining. Well, if you do, get serious with what God wants you to be. We're not here to entertain you. We're here to equip you so that you can be better at what God has raised you up to be in this world. We're there to stand behind you.

Well, I could just go on and on, but I'm going to quit. Can it be said of you what is written of you?

Paul, the Missionary – Part 3

Turn with me to Ephesians 1:1. Now, you are saying, "You're not going to stay there." I know. I just want to make sure by the time we actually get to Ephesians 1:1b, your Bible will just open to it. We are going to take that first phrase. I don't want you to think I am just running around trying to introduce this by biding time. No, it starts off and says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." What are we doing? We are trying to look at Paul. Who is Paul? He is an apostle of Christ Jesus by what? By the will of God.

We've looked at Paul, the Man. Now we are continuing to look at Paul, the Missionary. Next time we are going to start right in on the Second Missionary Journey. We've already looked at the first one, and we are going to start with the second one in our next study.

In the last study we saw that Paul had a received ministry, not an achieved ministry. If Paul were to walk up to us today and we could ask him a question, we would probably say, "Paul, what is it that gave you the idea to become a missionary?" I am sure he would say back to us, "It wasn't my idea. It was God's idea." Everything in Paul's life was ordered by God Himself. Every step of his journey was guided by a divine hand. As Proverbs says, "A man can plan his way, but it is God that directs his steps."

In Acts 15:30, we saw that as they returned to Antioch, there were two other people. There were two people along with Paul and Barnabas. Who were they? One of them was named Judas, nicknamed Barsabbas, but what was the other one's name? Silas. Now, that's important. Acts 15:36 starts his Second Missionary Journey. That is where we want to begin. There are several things that we want to see.

What in the world can a missionary expect? Paul was saying, "I have already been on one journey. Now here is another one. God orders my steps. I plan my way, He changes my direction." What are some of the things that a person who has surrendered to Christ can expect as he walks in that adventure with Him?

Well, first of all, he encounters a sharp disagreement. Probably one of the things Paul did not expect was what happened as recorded in Acts 15:36. Let's read it together. "And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.'" What he wanted to do was backtrack, go back over into Asia Minor and check on the believers that came to know Christ as he was on his First Missionary Journey. He wanted to see how they were doing.

I want you to look at Acts 15:37. There was a disagreement, a sharp disagreement which came up between Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas was commissioned by the Spirit, but recognized by the church as we saw earlier. Verse 37 says, "And Barnabas was desirous of taking John, called Mark, along with them also." Go back to Acts 12:25, and you'll find where they brought John Mark back from Jerusalem with them. They meet him in Acts 12:12 and bring him back in Acts 12:25. Look at verse 25: "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark." That's important, because sometimes he literally in scripture is called Mark, and sometimes he is called John. That's why we say John Mark.

In Acts 15:13 they take him with them on their first journey. In verse 13 it says, "Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos [which was on the island of Cyprus], and came to Perga in Pamphylia." Now that is the coastal area of Asia Minor. "And John left them and returned to Jerusalem." We don't know anything else. We just know that he left them, and he came back to Jerusalem. Why did he leave them? Well, we find out now in our text, Acts 15:38. This is very, very important. This caused a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 15:38 says, "But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work." Now, this is strong. What does it mean, "he deserted them"? The word there is the word *aphistemi*. It is the same word that you get the word "apostasy" from. Many people think that apostates fall away from the truth. No, sir, there is no falling away. The word *apo*, means away from, *histemi* means "to stand." It means "to stand back, fold your arms and not have anything to do with it." Now, an apostate teacher is one who stood away from that which he knew to be true. He was never saved to begin with.

However, this word is used in a different sense with John Mark. What made him stand away from the apostle Paul and Barnabas? We don't really know. We can sort of conjecture a little bit. Perhaps it is because he had just come from Jerusalem. Remember the problem that they were having with those people from Judea who were always trying to add the Law to grace? Maybe John Mark was one of them. Maybe John Mark could not stomach the fact that these Gentiles were allowed to come into the covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ by grace and grace alone. They didn't have to be baptized to be saved. They just simply by grace received Him. Maybe he was on that side. Maybe having heard the message that Paul was preaching, he stood away from that and went back to Jerusalem. I don't know.

Maybe the word had gotten to him that they were about to go to Antioch of Pisidia. We studied that in the First Missionary Journey. They were going to Antioch, then to Iconium, then to Lystra, and then to Derbe. There was a hostile group of people waiting for Paul when he got there. Maybe John Mark had already seen some of the hostility on the island of Cyprus because of Paul's boldness in his preaching. John cowardly deserts him, willingly stands away from him and goes back to Jerusalem.

Whatever the situation is, and we won't know until we get to heaven, at least we know that Paul and Barnabas took two different sides of the story. Barnabas being the encourager, probably wanted to encourage John Mark, and wanted to take him along. Paul said, "No way. Absolutely no way. I don't want a deserter with me. I don't want somebody who is going to stand away from me."

Now what happened? Acts 15:39 continues, "And there arose such a sharp disagreement." Now, that's a translation. Those two words are really one word, and the word has to do with that which provokes somebody, that which stimulates somebody. The word "stimulate" is a little more cultured.

You know, you have to have stimulating conversations with your wife. "Yeah, she provoked me, or I provoked her." That is really what it means.

I mean, they flat got upset with one another. Barnabas said, "No, let's take John Mark." Paul said, "No sir, I don't want a deserter with me." Well, what happened? This is a missionary; he is God-called. Barnabas is a missionary; he is God-called. What is the first thing they were looking for on this Second Missionary Journey? Companionship and traveling grace. What happened? A sharp disagreement. What happened? Verse 39 says, "they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord."

Somebody might say, "I thought these men were better than that." Isn't it amazing how we seem to deify people that are sent out by God? We think for some reason they eat holy cereal or something. I mean these people have got shoes on that cannot ever step on wrong places. I want to remind you of something. These are human beings. That should be an encouragement to every heart. God uses people who have feet of clay. What you have here are two human beings, loving God, who have feet of clay and who sharply disagree to the point they break up. One goes one way, and one goes another. I don't want to leave it there. It appears to me from Acts 15:40 that Paul had the blessing of the church, not Barnabas. Paul evidently was right.

You know, being motivated to encourage is kind of like me. Sometimes you want to look over some things and just pick up somebody and help them out. Evidently Barnabas was wrong in doing that. There was something God was dealing with John Mark about, because it says in verse 40, "Paul chose Silas and departed, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord." It says nothing about Barnabas as he took off with John Mark, but it does say something about Paul who takes Silas. When does Silas get there? He came from Jerusalem with them. He was there to be a companion to Paul.

There is a sweet end to this story. Look over in 2Timothy 4:11-note. This is the latter years of Paul's life. Paul is in prison about to be martyred for the faith. As a matter of fact, he tells you that over and over again in that book. He puts some personal notes here in the last part of 2Timothy 4 that I think just really sort of shows you that Paul wasn't mad at John Mark. Paul had a discernment as to what he was called to, and he knew that John Mark would be a detriment to that. In 2Ti 4:11 look at what he says, "Only Luke is with

me.” As he gives instructions there to Timothy he says, “Pick up Mark [John Mark, the same one], and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.” Now, that blesses my heart. That’s the godly part of Paul. Paul was not mad at John Mark, but Paul had discerned something about him that would be a problem down the road. He could not afford to take him along. Paul was going to be dealing in hostile places. He didn’t need a coward with him. He didn’t need somebody that had their own agenda. He says, “No, he cannot go.” He didn’t mean that he didn’t love him. It is proven in the last days of his life. He said, “Could you bring John Mark with you, because he is useful to me for service.” That is a sweet ending.

Well, what is the first thing he encounters? A sharp disagreement. So, if you are going to be surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ, you don’t get the luxury of choosing your companions. The ones you thought were going to walk with you may be the very ones who will take issue with you, and you may have to depart from them. It doesn’t mean you don’t love them, but you must be about your Father’s business. If they leave you, friends, God has somebody else to take their place to get on about the things that God has in store for your life. A lesson well learned.

Well, secondly, we see a changed direction. God completely change his direction. In Acts 15:41-16:10 we see that Paul and Silas began their journey. Acts 15:41 says that he was traveling through Syria. Now, where is Syria? That is where he was when he left Antioch, Antioch of Syria. That’s his home base. It says they went through Cilicia, probably through Tarsus. Why? Because that is where Paul was born. That is where he was from. He had been there earlier. Cilicia was that coastal area of Asia Minor. Then he backtracks through Asia Minor where he had been on his First Missionary Journey. He goes back. Now remember, when he first went through Asia Minor, he went through Antioch of Pisidia, and Iconium, and then Lystra and then Derbe. Well, he is backtracking it now. He comes up the other way. He comes through Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, on to Antioch of Pisidia.

Let’s go back to Acts 16:1. He gets to Lystra. Something happens at Lystra that we need to take note of. In Acts 16:1 it says, “And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra.” When he got to Lystra look what happened. “And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy.” Boy, you remember Timothy? Timothy was to be with him for the rest of his life. He was never like a John Mark. He would not leave him. He was not like a Demos, loving the present world. Timothy really was going to be the most faithful companion he had ever had. “Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.” And it goes on to say, “he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.”

So he picks up Timothy. This is so important as we start to study the journeys of Paul. He picks up an associate who is like-minded in his heart. Remember in one letter, he said, “I could only send Timothy to you because he is the only one I know who is of like heart and of like mind with me.” He found him to be the greatest friend he would ever have in his ministry on this earth. He calls him his son in the faith.

Well, drop down to Acts 16:6-10. He leaves and ventures through the Phrygian and Galatian regions. I want to try and explain something to you that is very difficult. If you will hang in there with me, maybe we can get some sense out of it. These were all provinces of Rome. Asia was the property of Rome in the sense that they dominated that area. Depending on the emperor, they would change the region. Therefore, it is very difficult to put any sense to the regions of Asia Minor at that time. Let me just see if I can start off and do that. Start up at the north of Asia Minor with Pontus, which is in the northern part of Asia Minor. Now you are going to come in a circle. We are going to sweep right around the country. The next area would be Galatia. Actually, Galatia sat right to the south of Pontus. Then you would have Cappadocia, Cilicia, which is on the coastal area. Then you would have Pamphylia, which was another coastal area; Lycia which was another coastal area. The names of these provinces would change depending on the emperors who were in power. Then you come on up to Pisidia. Remember, Pisidia was up in the mountains. This is where Antioch of Pisidia was where Paul had all his problems. Then you would come to Asia. Now, Asia is not the Asia we think of. Asia is that area that encompasses Ephesus on the western side of Asia Minor on the Aegean Sea. Then you would have Phrygia which we are talking about here, the Phrygian region.

It is so difficult because as I studied this, I found out that Phrygia was and Phrygia wasn’t. Huh? Some of the Roman emperors just dismissed with Phrygia and split it up and put them in two different other regions called something else. But the Phrygian region sat right above Ephesus there in the inward part of the country on that northwestern side. Finally, right up next to Pontus you would have Bithynia.

Basically what you have done, you have gone right around the country in a circle. He goes up. He backtracks. He goes back through Derbe and Lystra. He picks up Timothy, goes on that way, and he is headed up sort of northwest in the country.

Acts 16:6 says, “They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.” I thought that was interesting. They weren’t stopped by the devil. They may have had their plans, but the Holy Spirit said, “You are not going into Asia.” They had been stopped from sharing the word by the Holy Spirit in Asia. Verse 7 says, “and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia.” Remember, Bithynia is in that top part of Asia Minor, “and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them.”

Now, what happens is a squeeze play. Have you ever played ball? A squeeze play is when you shut off two areas and open up an avenue for somebody to go through. That is exactly what is going to happen here. He squeezed them out of Bithynia, squeezed them out of Asia and then opens the path, the only way he could have gone, towards Troas. Oh, God is going to put him right where He wants him.

Look in Acts 16:8, "and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas." That is a seaport area, a coastal area of Asia Minor on that far, northwestern side of that continent. This is where God is going to say, "Now, Paul, you had a good idea of revisiting these other cities, but I've got something on my mind that you hadn't even thought about." As a matter of fact, this is to me one of the most historical events you will find in Scripture other than the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul is brought down to Troas, he wanted to go into Asia. God said, "No." He wanted to go up into Bithynia, and God said, "No." God just basically opened up a path and shot him right through it into Troas to get him where He wanted him to be.

Now, let me tell you why that is so important. Keep on reading in Acts 16:9, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" Now where is Macedonia? That's in Europe. I mean, we are talking about a total different continent. He has not been anywhere around there so far in his journeys. Then it says in Acts 16:10, "And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia [Why?], concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them." You know, it's interesting to me that the word "concluding" does not mean the vision sent him over there. That wasn't the deal. The word "concluding," *sumbibazo*, means "to gather," *bibazo* means "to unite something, to force it together."

What is happening here is Paul was saying, "Hmm, I'm not stupid. I tried to get to Asia, and the Holy Spirit wouldn't let me." The imperfect tense was used there. "I kept trying, and I kept trying, and I kept trying. I tried to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus shut the door. Now something is going on here, because here I am down here in Troas, and now I've had this vision." So putting all of the facts together, the vision being a large part of that, he concluded, "I must go to Macedonia." God had completely redirected his route.

It starts off with a sharp disagreement. He gets a companion he didn't think he was going to have. He ends up with his whole direction changed, all of his plans changed, and God forces him over to Troas to take him into another continent. Why did he trust the vision alone? Who knows. He had the vision, but the vision was not what caused him to make his move. What caused him to make his move is all the facts when he put them together.

Now, what is so important about Macedonia? Again, that's Europe. You say, "Well, here I am in America." Man, what a wonderful country we live in. Friends, do you realize that we are based on Christian principles. Now, it doesn't look like it, and there's nothing apparently even reminiscent of that in our country today. Even Columbus fasted and prayed before he found this place. Of course, that is not in your books in school because they don't want you to know that God had something to do with America. "Let's take His name out. Let's do it ourselves." That is the day we live in. America would not have even been Christianized had it not been for Paul being redirected, instead of going to Bithynia, instead of going into Asia, forced between the two, around to Troas. God gave him a vision and said, "Now, I'm going to show you something you hadn't even thought about in your life." He takes him over to Macedonia. The Holy Spirit has completely changed his direction.

In Acts 16:11 it says, "Therefore, putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis."

Now, you know, I've just got to stop. Neapolis is a seaport area. We were there. As a matter of fact, we heard a little lady that started a church who had seen the gospel in a romance magazine. Spiros Zodhiates has been a pioneer of that kind of evangelism. He is putting it in romance magazines and putting it in newspapers. Little Effie came 20 years ago, found the gospel in a romance magazine and started a little church there in Neapolis, one of the most thriving churches there in that area, all because of seeing the gospel in that magazine.

Well, Neapolis, like I said, is a seaport area. Paul went to Neapolis in Acts 16:11. From Neapolis, which is on that seaport, he went right on to "Philippi, which is a leading city of the district [verse 12 says] of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days."

The rest of the chapter talks about his visit to Philippi. Philippi, like Ephesus and Athens, is a lot of ruins. You can really see what was going on there. They had two market places there. One of them was commercial, and one of them was just to argue in and this kind of stuff. You know, the court cases and things like that would be held there. There was a rock that stood there, and they said that was the Bema. As a matter of fact, I have a picture of me standing on the Bema. That was the place they would stand to make their speech or do whatever they were doing. I got to stand on that. We saw Philippi.

I asked a man if there were any synagogues there. He never showed us one, which shows you why it was that Paul had to go

outside the city to find a little prayer meeting outside the gates. There were no synagogues. Paul would always go to the synagogue, but not at Philippi. So the only thing we can figure is there weren't many Jews there. You had to have so many Jews to make up a synagogue, and evidently there weren't enough.

We saw the jail. Remember when Paul was in jail? We saw the jail. This is all recorded in Acts 16. Remember the jail cell opened, and they said, "Don't worry about it. We are all here." How could they know everybody was there if they were way back in the back? You know, you get in your mind that they are down the hall 400 yards back around the corner stuck in a little pit. No, I mean, the cell was about fifteen feet long. From the back part of it you could see everybody in the whole thing. So when the cell opened, they were easily in eye contact with everybody that was there, and they simply said, "Don't sweat it. We are all here. Everything's fine." Of course, that is when the Philippian jailer got saved.

I think one of the sweet things there was to see where Lydia was baptized. Of course, that is in Acts 16:14, "And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us,..." The place where she was baptized is right down from the city. There was a beautiful stream. As a matter of fact, because it was so hot we took our shoes off and were very reverent as we waded in the water. We just stood there thinking about all the people that had been baptized in that area. As a matter of fact, today they have a baptismal fixed up there. It was a beautiful thought to be in that spot where Lydia had been baptized.

So, Paul had gone from Neapolis on the coast there all the way up to Philippi. The Macedonian vision ends as Paul leaves alone while Timothy and Silas stay later on in Berea.

Let's back up a little bit. Where did they go when they left Philippi? Look at Acts 17:1. Remember what happened after he was put into jail? They found out that he was a Roman citizen, a Jew, but a Roman citizen. They had already beaten him in public and put him in jail and hadn't given him a public trial. Now that was embarrassing to the magistrates. They begged Paul to leave because of the humiliation in the situation which had been created. Acts 17:1 says, "Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica. We called it Thessalonica, and they laughed. It is Thessaloniki."

When Paul got to Thessaloniki, what did he find? He found a synagogue. He would always go to the synagogue. There one of the greatest churches of the whole New Testament springs up. God was redirecting him. He was over on Asia Minor, wanting to go to Asia, wanting to go to Bithynia, but God said, "No." He shut the two doors and opened another pathway for him to go to Troas, gave him a vision, took him across an ocean to a totally different continent, took him right into Philippi where you find your first church there. Then from Philippi he goes over to Thessaloniki.

At Thessaloniki, he only stays three Sabbaths. That is all the time that he had. After those three Sabbaths, they ran him out of town, and he goes where? He goes in verse 10 to Berea, "And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews."

Of course, Berea, we stopped there. We have got a picture in the oldest building they have there. They don't know how far really it goes back. It's just a little hole in the wall, but Berea was a place that you remember. There was some fine people there who had a lot of integrity. Why? Verse 11 says, "these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica." Do you know what the word "noble-minded" means? They had more class, to put it in my language. They had more class than they did over in Thessalonica. So what did they do? What made them more noble-minded? "For they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."

Well, he has a ministry there to the Bereans. Then, of course, there is another stirring that comes about. You see, watch this, every time he does something, and God blesses it, pressure and hostility move in. Every time pressure and hostility move in, God takes him over to another ministry. Paul didn't plan this. Paul planned to be in Asia and Bithynia. Here he is in Macedonia, and he doesn't know what is going on the next day. God is just leading him. Everywhere he goes, he is very faithful to his call. He establishes a church here. He establishes a church there. Now he is in Berea. The people have come to believe, but now what happens? Others come in and stir up the mind-sets of the people. He is forced to leave one more time. Acts 17:14 says, "And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there." They stay at Berea. Paul is now by himself, and we see the next part of his journey.

So we see a sharp disagreement. That is the first thing. Boy, isn't it fun to walk with God. The first thing you find out is that your companion that you thought was going to go with you gets mad at you and goes in another direction. Secondly, you think you've got your schedule all planned, and God has you clear over here doing things that you never dreamed you were going to be doing.

Finally, he goes down to Athens and thirdly, a vigorous defense. This is totally unsolicited and unsuspecting. Paul did not go down here to do what he did. He went down here to wait on Timothy and Silas. Notice in Acts 17:16, "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens [and this is when it takes place], his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols." You

can tell he is a God-called man. If you get a man who is doing it on his own, he takes days off. But you get a man who loves Jesus, buddy, it is going on all the time. Here he is in Athens. He is not down there to preach. He is down there to wait on Timothy and Silas, but he looks around him, and he sees all the idolatry that is absolutely everywhere.

Acts 17:17 says, "So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present." You know, if Timothy and Silas had arrived early, and they couldn't find him, guess where they would look for him? Several places, one is, go to the synagogue and listen for the yelling, because he is probably making somebody mad. If he wasn't there, go the market place. That is where all the people were. Not the commercial market, but the other place where they loved to argue doctrine. If he wasn't there, try to the local jail. Chances are you would probably find him there. I mean, Paul never sat still. He was a God-called man. When you get a God-called man, he is going to do what he is called to do all the time. That is his life. It's not 40 hours a week. That's his life.

So there he is in Athens, and he just gets upset. God gave the apostle Paul an intelligence that we don't find much in the New Testament. I mean, this guy is incredible how he uses the mind God gave him. Verse 18 says, "also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. And some were saying, 'What would this idle babbler wish to say?' Others, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,' because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection." He says in Acts 17:19, "they took him and brought him to the Areopagus."

Now the Areopagus could also be called Mars Hill. I went to school at Mars Hill College. Now I know what my college name was all about. There was big rock. It is a huge area that you get up on. It is up on top of a mountain, not on the very top, because on the very top is the Acropolis. That is where the Parthenon is. The Temple of Athena was up there.

Right down in the shadow of that was what they called Mars Hill or the Areopagus. It was a place where they would go and just argue back and forth. As a matter of fact, if you will look down in Acts 17:21, it says, "Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new." They would say, "Don't tell me something old, tell me something new." I believe that is just like most of the churches in America that want something. They don't want something that is old.

They were on this big hill there, and Paul gets up and preaches one of the greatest messages. Look at what he does. He had seen down in the market place or down in that area an inscription to the Unknown God. Paul was so intelligent, so sharp. He was given the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. It says in Acts 17:22, "And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observed that you are very religious in all respects. 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."'" Now watch what he does. This is so neat. I mean, if you don't get excited about this, just get saved. Watch this. He says, "What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you." Now, whoever they meant that to be for, Paul picked up on it and got up on this big rock.

Paul is standing up here and in the hearing of everybody standing below him, he says, "You know, that inscription to the UNKNOWN GOD, I know Him. His name is Jesus." He began to preach the Lord Jesus Christ resurrected, in the gospel, of course, that we know and understand.

Well, of course, there were many who came to believe. Acts 17:32 says, "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, 'We shall hear you again concerning this.' So Paul went out of their midst. But some men joined him and believed." It gives the ones there that came to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we see here a man who has already had to go through a sharp disagreement. The companion that he wanted to travel with just left him. Secondly, he has a totally changed direction. Everything he had planned to do, God just rearranged and took him to a brand new continent that he had never planned to go to. Then we see him giving a vigorous defense that was totally unplanned. Just sitting there waiting on Timothy and Silas, and God stirred his heart, and believers started popping up all over Athens.

Well, fourthly, we find an assuring declaration. He leaves after Timothy and Silas come to meet him. He leaves Athens and goes to Corinth. That was my one thing that I wanted to see while I was over there, and I didn't get to do it. So I am going to have to go back. I just didn't have one more day. If I had one more day, I could have gone up to see Corinth.

He leaves Athens and goes up to Corinth, and it is in Corinth that Timothy and Silas meet him. Look at Acts 18:5. It says, "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." Well, obviously he stirs up some hostility, but he gets an assuring declaration. Look at what God says to him in Acts 18:9-10. The Lord Jesus just appears to Paul in a vision and tells him something that just refuels him. As a matter of fact, he stays there a year and six months. "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." "Go on, man, preach the gospel."

You know I understand just a little bit of that. We were over in Romania, and they told me, "Number one, do not preach eternal

security. The people are works-oriented. They do not understand that you are eternally saved. They believe you can lose your salvation. Number two, don't preach on grace. Number three, never laugh in the pulpit." They told me all the things that I wasn't supposed to do. It was almost as if I had to be somebody that I'm not. Now, when I got over there and would get on my knees the night before, knowing that the Communists were all over that place, and knowing that they were after us and followed us everywhere we went, the Lord put on my heart, "You tell them what I tell you to tell them." I have never known the boldness that I knew standing in the pulpits over there. I preached on grace. I preached the fact that they were eternally saved, and I had a ball laughing with them, and they laughed right back with me. We had one of the most wonderful times I have ever had in my life. It was as if the Holy Spirit did the same thing to me that He did to Paul. "Go on and preach it. I've got many people in this place. We will protect you."

You know what I found out? said, "Wayne, you were to be put on the black list for all of Romania. From the first time you came, they wanted to know who you were." I mean, I am kind of hard to hide. They wanted to know who I was. They thought that I was an FBI agent or CIA agent. They thought that was why I was going to the churches. The churches, of course, were the people that loved God, and they would tell you the honest things about what was going on in the country.

They gave me the code name of Allen. That's my middle name. It wasn't anything I made up. It is just what my Mama named me when I got born. They left out Wayne and left out Barber. Nobody over there knew me as Pastor Wayne or Wayne Barber. They would not have recognized that. So, the men who were following me, going to each church after we had preached and left, went to the Pastor and said, "We want to know about this Wayne Barber." They said, "Who?" They said, "This guy, Wayne Barber, who is he?" "We don't know any Wayne Barber." "Well, who is the man in your pulpit?" "Pastor Allen from America." "No, I'm looking for Wayne Barber."

Some friends of Cornelius who were in the Secret Service, after it was all over with, sat down with him, and they began to discuss this, and they discovered they tried to blackball me every time I went over there. It was like God said, "Don't worry about it. I've got a lot of friends in this place, and I'll keep you protected. You just do what I tell you to do."

That is exactly what He told Paul, and, friend, that cranked him up, and he stayed there a year and a half and made many, many disciples there in the area of Corinth.

Well, what have we seen so far? A sharp disagreement; a changed direction. "What are we doing in Macedonia? I thought we were going to be up in Bithynia." A vigorous defense in Athens; an assuring declaration in Corinth; and finally, in Acts 18:18-22, we find a homeward departure. Man, you talk about a boy that wants to get home. Even in all of this, you see him heading right back to Antioch of Syria. That was his home base. In verses 18 through 22 it says, "And Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him [he brought two more people], Priscilla and Aquila." You have heard of them. "In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow. And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there."

When we got to Ephesus—I did not know that Ephesus was modern day Turkey. It is amazing geography—being in Ephesus was incredible. Ephesus was a seaport area back in Paul's day, but not anymore. The old city of Ephesus is way back off the shoreline because there was river there that has through the silt which has built up over the years, filled up all that area. As the sea coast changed and moved forward, now Ephesus sits way back up about six miles from where the actual sea coast is. Back in Scripture times, it was the seaport area. As soon as you came into that harbor, you stepped on these streets, and it is incredible what is preserved.

Ephesus, to me, was the most preserved and the most tremendous ruins that we saw while we were over there. You walk up that street on one side and on the other side there are market places to sell and a goddess or a god sitting right beside it. All the way up that street, you had nothing but idolatry. There is where the Temple of Diana was, there in Ephesus. We got to go there. We got to see the big Coliseum where 30,000 people began to wail and shout at the apostle Paul. We began to get a feel of a man by himself, really. He had Silas with him, but he's the man that everybody is after. Being there, being outnumbered by just so many people, and yet you see the tremendous work. The book of Ephesians was written to the people here at Ephesus.

Well, he stops at Ephesus. "Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews [by himself]. And when they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent." I get the feeling he is ready to go home. Verse 21, "but taking leave of them and saying, 'I will return to you again if God wills,' he set sail from Ephesus," which is on that western side of Asia Minor. "And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and he went down to Antioch."

"Oh, glory! You have finished the second journey." Yes, we have. What did we see? You say, "I want to follow Jesus. I know I won't be going to all these places, but I want to follow Jesus. What can I expect?" Well, you can expect your companions that you thought were going to go with you to split and go another way. You might just hold that in the back of your mind. You can expect the fact that you may plan your agenda, but God is not impressed with it. He is going to turn you every which way, because He's got the design and the direction in your life. You can expect the fact that you are going to have some unplanned times of a vigorous defense of the gospel of Christ. You will never plan that, but it will come your way if you are a God-called person. You can expect the fact that the

Lord will step and intervene many times in hostile situations to assure you that it's okay to go ahead and do the things that I have asked you to do.

You know, we are beginning to know Paul a little bit more and now when we get into the book of Ephesians, we will be able to understand where he came from, how God changed him, where he had been, all of his ministry. I have begun to realize, you know, if you walk with God, you just can't plan your own agenda, can you?

I have people come to me all the time and say, "Brother, you don't know my life. My job just ended." I say, "Well, okay. Wonder where God is turning you. Wonder where God is directing you." "Do what? Well, can't you get me a job?" "Are you kidding? Man, I can't balance my checkbook. I'm sure somebody is going to take my recommendation. I can't get you a job." "Well, what are you telling me? How can I be encouraged?" Man, listen, if God has shut the door here, what does He do? He opens one someplace else. If you are making your own mistakes, help yourself. I am talking about a surrendered believer. God will turn you this way. He'll turn you that way. He'll turn you this way, and sometimes He'll just shut you off like a squeeze play and just pop you right through, and you will end up in a place you would never dream you would end up. He'll put you into something that is more glorious than anything you have ever thought about in your entire life.

Paul: The Missionary – Part 4

This is the fifth message introducing this marvelous book. We are looking at the life of Paul in that first phrase Ephesians 1:1. It says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus." Turn to Acts 18 as we prepare to get into his Third Missionary Journey.

Over and over again, we try to bring it out in our preaching and in our messages to show you that the Christian life is not you and me living like Jesus. You can't do it. I can't do it. To prove that, get up in the morning and say, "Lord, I am going to be like you today. I am going to love my brother." God will put a brother in your life by noon that you didn't know existed, and you are going to be crying out, "Lord, I can't." He is going to say, "That's right. I never said you could. I can, and I always said I would." We have to die to ourselves. It is daily going to the cross, mortifying the deeds of our flesh, then letting Jesus be Jesus in us. When you do that, you become a minister at that moment, and you also become a missionary. You are giving Him first place in your life. That is how you show you are a seeker of Him. All of these things have to do with the same thing. Once you do that, the adventure begins.

You know, I wish I could just share every day about the adventure of walking with Jesus. You who are walking with Him know what I am talking about. You're planning your way, and God is directing your step. Isn't it wonderful? My whole life is an adventure. You know, I don't know how to balance my checkbook, but with Him in it, oh, it is just tremendous. You wake up on Monday morning, get up and say, "Lord, I am willing to walk with you. I am seeking you. I give you first place in my life, my thoughts, my mind. Whatever you want to do, You just do it in and through me." Then the adventure begins. God uses you to touch other people's lives. The experiences begin to happen.

Years ago in my preaching, I used other people's illustrations. Finally one day, I was praying, and the Lord so convicted me. He said, "Wayne, why are you always quoting from somebody else? Why don't you let me give you the experiences that they have had. Let me give you your own testimony as you walk with Me." How exciting it becomes when it is your walk with Jesus.

Well, Paul was a man. He is an apostle, that's right. Don't ever think that the will of God is only for the apostles. We've already gone over that. Don't ever think that God doesn't walk with us. Don't ever think that He only walked with those apostles that were back there in the New Testament. In one sense, we are not anything like the original apostles. In another sense we are all sent forth from God. We have a commission, and we have a mission. God wants to do things in and through our lives.

So far, we have been looking at his adventures in the First and Second Missionary Journeys. We saw him as a man, but now we are looking at him as a missionary. This is message number three in that topic.

Well, on the First Missionary Journey, to refresh your memory, Paul encountered great hostility. That is something that sometimes a believer doesn't look out for. Even though we are not going to be treated possibly like Paul was, 2Timothy 3:12-note tells us that if you seek to live a godly life, you will be persecuted. That is part of it. Welcome to the normal Christian life. He leaves Antioch of Syria, which is his home base, and goes over to Cyprus. When they get to Paphos, which is on the western side of the island of Cyprus, they run into a man by the name of Elymas who was a magician. He was not a believer, and he tried everything to stop the proconsul, the governor of that area, from coming to know Christ. Paul looks at him, prays and the man is struck blind. The proconsul becomes a believer. That's the first place that they went.

They leave Cyprus, sail over to Asia Minor, to the southern coast there to Pamphylia. There Paul had to take a great hurt in his life

as John Mark defected. John Mark bailed out and went back to Jerusalem. We don't know why, except in his Second Missionary Journey, we realize how serious it was. It says when he stood apart, it was *aphistemi*, which meant he willingly withstood himself from Paul. Now why, we don't know. I have a thought. He was from Jerusalem. He couldn't handle the message of grace that Paul was preaching to the Gentiles. As a matter of fact, as soon as he leaves, after the first missionary journey, the council of Jerusalem is set up. It could have been that John Mark was a part of all that. We just don't know. That's all conjecture. When he gets to Antioch of Pisidia he is run out of town. Antioch was up in the inland part of Asia Minor. Remember Asia Minor is modern day Turkey. That may help you in your geography. That was a great reception! Even though there were many believers, he had to leave. He gets into Iconium, and there they had to flee. He gets to Lystra, and Paul and the apostles were attacked by an angry mob and were stoned by the fierceness of the crowd.

So you are seeing right now what it is like to be on an adventure with Jesus. You are light, and you are in a world of darkness. There is going to be conflict. That is the normal Christian life.

Well, in all of it, God opened a great door. Look in Acts 14:27 as he ends up that journey. He gives a report to the church, and look what he tells them about that journey. Now, this is just the way it is. You are treated by hostility and yet, at the same time, God is doing a great work. The man who is a believer does not major on the persecution. He majors on what God is doing in and through his life. In verse 27 it says, "And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that [God] had done with them [now watch] and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles." [God] opened the door wide open. Paul walked through it, and now he brings his report back to the church at Antioch in Syria. That's his First Missionary Journey.

On his Second Missionary Journey, he starts off immediately with a sharp disagreement. I know this must have really hurt him. Barnabas, his best friend, the one who goes along with him, his companion, has an argument with him. Barnabas wants to take John Mark, but Paul, being the theologian, will not do it. Barnabas, being the encourager, I guess, wants to help John Mark. But Paul will not go along with him. It says there is a sharp disagreement. The word means "provoked" is kind of like the sharp disagreements you have with your wife at times. I am sure you don't do that. It was a provoking type of thing. As a matter of fact, it was so bad they had to split company. Paul went with Silas and Barnabas took John Mark, departed company and went in different directions. You know that must have hurt Paul.

Not only that, he also runs into a change of direction. He tries to go up in Bithynia and tries and tries and tries. The imperfect tense is used there. He comes down and tries to get into Asia. He tries and tries and tries, but God won't let him. God put a squeeze play on him and pops him up to Troas. He gets to Troas, has the Macedonian vision and guess what? He goes in an entirely opposite direction than what he had planned. He ends up in Macedonia, the northern country above Greece. It sits right on top of Greece. He gets over to Macedonia and Neapolis. Of course, you know the story there as the Philippian church was born and many other great and wonderful things happened. That was the southern part of Europe. We have Christianity in America today because Paul obeyed that vision in Troas.

In Acts 17 we find a vigorous defense. One of the things that excites me is when you are walking with Jesus, the Spirit within you becomes sensitized to the things in the world around you. Wherever you are, you begin to become sensitive, whether it's at the gas station, at the restaurant or downtown. Wherever you are, you begin to see, not through your eyes, but through His eyes. The Spirit within you becomes troubled when you see sin abounding everywhere you go. Paul was there at Athens waiting on Timothy and Silas, not bothering anybody. He is just looking around, and the Spirit within him was troubled. Therefore, he goes up to Areopagus, which is Mars Hill, gets up on that big rock and defends the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Timothy and Silas do not make it to Athens. They meet him in Corinth. If they had come to Athens and they couldn't find him, all they would have had to do was listen for the roar of the crowds. I mean, wherever Paul was, something was going on. He was either in jail, in a riot, in a fight, being stoned, or being robbed. Something was going on. He couldn't sit still in Athens.

That is just the way it is. Don't you love that? When you are filled with the Spirit of God you can't sit still when you see sin around you. You can't sit still when you see things around you and people living in darkness. God's Spirit within you becomes troubled about what you see and gives you that boldness to speak out for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, we also find him over in Corinth when he finally meets Timothy and Silas. This is in Acts 18:1-17, and this brings us up to where we are going to start in this study. We find him having an assuring declaration. Look in Acts 18:9-10. It says, "And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.'" Listen, to be surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ is an adventure to which nothing can compare.

Can I ask you a question before we get started? Are you living out that adventure in your life? Could I ask you what happened in your life last week, what God did on Monday, and what God did on Tuesday? Did you walk with Him? Did you talk with Him? I mean, this is the normal Christian life, folks. It is not just coming to church on Sundays. It is living in the vitality of a living, resurrected Christ. It is an adventure beyond measure to those who will say "Yes" to Him and just let Him lead them through life.

Well, instead of talking about what Paul experienced as we get into this Third Missionary Journey, let's turn the direction a little bit. Let's look at how others were affected. We have been talking about how Paul was affected and what he experienced. To keep our interest up, and it is kind of tough wading through these journeys, let's just look and see how people were blessed because Paul was obedient to do what God told him to do.

Remember in Luke 5:1-11 when Jesus had come down to the Sea of Galilee to the Lake of Gennesaret? People were surrounding Him. He asked Simon, "Can I borrow your boat?" He pushed Himself out a little from the land, and He taught the people. When He finished, His lesson really began. He looked over at Simon, and He said, "Simon, put out your nets into the deep water if you want to catch some fish." Now, Simon Peter was a fisherman, and he knew you didn't fish in the deep water. He knew that you didn't fish in the daytime. You especially did not do all of this in front of a crowd. Simon said, "Well, Lord, we fished all night long. We have fished." Everybody knew he knew how to fish. "But we have caught nothing."

But then Simon does what God knew he would do. Even with a little bit of reluctance, he said, you know, "but nevertheless, at your word, we will put down the nets." What happened? The nets broke. I don't know how that works. Somehow they got so many fish, they had to call their partners. Their partners came over. Their boats almost sunk. Simon Peter saw all of that and he said, "Depart from me. I am a sinful man, Oh, Lord." The Lord Jesus told him, "Now, listen. From this point on, you follow me, and I will cause you to catch men." In other words, if you will obey me, there are going to be people around you that are going to be affected as a result of your obedience.

That is a promise to every one of us today. Maybe it won't happen like it did with Paul. Maybe it won't happen like it did with the disciples. But if I say, "Yes" to the Lord Jesus Christ, things are going to happen in my life. One of the things I can count on is people are going to get saved because of my willingness to do what God has told me to do. Eternal results will come out of me if I just say "Yes" to whatever the will of God is in my life. That little Greek word, "you will catch men" doesn't mean anything to people that aren't fishermen. If you are a fisherman, it is going to grab you. It means to catch them alive and keep them alive. Now, what does that mean to a person that is not a fisherman? Nothing. What does it mean to a fisherman? A fisherman catches a fish and what does he do?

They have this catch and release system now. I don't do that. I catch and keep because I like to eat fish. In this program you catch the fish and throw him up on the bank. What does the fish do? It breathes deeply and flips and flops everywhere. What's he doing? He's trying to get back in the water. Man, you have pulled him out of the water. He can't breathe. They breathe differently than we do. Well, you leave him on the bank 15 minutes and what does he do? Flop, flop. You leave him there 20 minutes and what does he do? You leave him there 25 minutes and what does he do? He, what? Dies! That's right.

Now what did Jesus say? You are not going to catch fish that are going to die. That is like any work that man does of his own flesh. It will look alive for a while, but it's going to die. You can do your own thing. Do it your way. You go on and do it your way, and whatever it is, the results will die. When you do what God tells you to do, you'll catch men alive, and they'll stay alive. One day in glory, you are going to see the results of your obedience to Jesus.

Some of you are saying, "Well, this is getting a little complicated. I thought church was just one hour on Sunday. That's all I've got." Well, if that is all you've got, friend, you might as well stay home and watch television. That is not Christianity. Christianity is a person, relating to that person, surrendering to that person, walking with that person, being used by that person. It's God touching a lost world with the light of Jesus in the gospel in your life. That is what I want you to see in Paul this time.

Instead of looking at what happens to Paul, let's think about those people that are going to be blessed because Paul was willing to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, we are going to go to Ephesus first. Look in Acts 18:23. He has now left Antioch of Syria where he was in verse 22. It says, "And having spent some time there, he departed and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples." Wherever Paul went, he would encourage the brethren. He has already been there once.

Now, where is Galatia and Phrygia? Remember, Antioch of Syria is over in Syria. When you come up by land, you come up over the upper regions of Asia Minor, or modern day Turkey. That is Galatia and Phrygia. Acts 18:24-28 talk about Apollos and how he goes before Paul to Ephesus. Look at 19:1. It says, "And it came about that while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus, and found some disciples." The upper country mentioned in that verse is Galatia and Phrygia. He comes on down.

Asia is not the Asia we know of today. That will confuse you when you see it in Scripture. Asia was the far western region of Asia Minor in which Ephesus is found. In other words, Ephesus is on the western coast of Turkey or at that time, Asia Minor. It was one of the most important cities in Asia Minor. It was also one of the most Satanically controlled cities of all the places that Paul goes to. That's important to remember. It is at Ephesus that we find the basis of his writing the book of Ephesians, so you want to pay attention now.

We are in Ephesus. When we get to Ephesians, some of the things he says in Ephesians have a whole lot to do with what we understand about it right now. He has been there once before. Go back in Acts 18:19, and it says, "And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews." Verse 20 says, "And when they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking leave of them and saying, 'I will return to you again....'" Look at the next phrase. If you have a New American Standard, what does it say? "if God." "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." In other words, Paul was saying, "I don't have my own agenda. I am on His, and whatever He wills, that is what I'll do. I'd like to come back, but I'll follow Him. He may or may not let me." So he set sail from Ephesus.

Well, we see him fulfilling that desire in Acts 19:1. God must have willed because he goes back to Ephesus. Paul continuously walked by the instruction and leading of the Holy Spirit of God. Evidently a great work was done in Ephesus. The time that Paul spent there was very credible because there were leaders who grew up out of that venture. We see in Acts 20:7 while Paul was in Miletus on his Third Journey that he calls the elders of Ephesus to come and meet with him. "Elders" is plural in that verse, "Church" is singular. So evidently in that church at Ephesus there were many men who had been raised up and trained probably by Paul or others. They were very obviously the means by which we see the successful work that was done in Ephesus.

Most people think Paul wrote 1 Corinthians while he was there. Look at 1 Corinthians 16 for just a second. It seems to indicate that he was in Ephesus when he wrote the first letter. They think he wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia. That is his next stop on his Third Missionary Journey. In 16:8 he says, "But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." So it seems to indicate that not only was there a great work there, but there were many adversaries that came against him. Paul wrote the first letter to the church at Corinth from Ephesus.

It was Timothy that Paul left at Ephesus to help the people. We find that in 1 Timothy 1:3. We find that in his last imprisonment. In 2 Timothy 4:12-note, he sends Tychicus to Ephesus to help them and to instruct them. He had a burden to see them grow up in the Lord. In 2 Timothy 1:16-18-note, we find that Onesiphorus greatly ministered to Paul while he was in Ephesus. He had so much trouble and so much adversity. A man by the name of Onesiphorus really ministered to him. We find Ephesus mentioned there. There is one more mention of Ephesus. Do you know where it is? In Revelation 2:1-note we find the church at Ephesus. It is the first church that Jesus told the apostle John many years later to write. Guess what they had done after all the time that Paul had spent with them. He says in Rev 2:4-note, "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love." So in all the things we look at Ephesus, remember how they ended up. Remember, it is not how you start, it's how you finish that matters to God. They started well, but in the end of it, they walked away from their first love.

Well, how were the people blessed by Paul being in Ephesus? In Acts 19:11-21 we find several things. You may put it under this heading: God did many miracles through Paul when he got to Ephesus. There were two kinds of miracles. Remember, these are pagan people. They walk in darkness. They have no light. Here is Paul coming to them with the word, the gospel of God. Okay, first of all we have the miracle of new birth. Let's go back to Acts 19:1. Look at the last part of the verse. Paul "came to Ephesus, and found some [What?] disciples." Now, if you ever study Scripture, find out whose disciples they were, because "disciples" is an important word. Verse 2 says, "and he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said to him, 'No, we have not heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.'" Acts 19:3 continues, "And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' And they said, 'Into John's baptism.'" Now, who does that tell you they were disciples of? John the Baptist.

Now, be real careful. Some people take these Scriptures and just go crazy with them. This is the final mention of the outline of Acts that is given in chapter 1. If you will just go back and look at it, this is a very simple book. People have made it quite different. Look at Acts 1:7-8. The outline is right here. The book will follow the flow of that outline all the way through. It says in Acts 1:8-note, "but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Now what is this? This is the inauguration of the new covenant. Listen, the Holy Spirit does not baptize you. Do you understand that? There is no baptism of the Holy Spirit. What did it say in the gospels? John the Baptist said, "I baptize you with water, but there is one who comes after me of whom I am not worthy to tie his shoe laces. He will baptize you with fire." Is that the Holy Spirit he is talking about? No, he is talking about Jesus. In Acts you are seeing the fulfillment of this. It was prophesied way back in the minor prophets. This was the day the new covenant was going to be inaugurated. It is an historical event. You see, the Holy Spirit becomes the means by which you are baptized. In other words, you are baptized with water. You are baptized with the Holy Spirit. If you know Jesus, you had to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. That is the mark on you that you have received Jesus Christ into your life. I don't why in the world some people have made this another doctrine, as if there is a second blessing. It is not in Scripture, folks.

Well, he gives you the outline. He says, "and you shall be My witnesses [Where?] both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." In Acts 2 through Acts 7, you've got Jerusalem and Judea. In Acts 8, you've got Samaria. In Acts 11, Peter gives his report concerning the Gentiles who are receiving the Holy Spirit. Remember, when the Holy Spirit came, the prophet Joel says that it is going to be a mark of judgment against Israel. They have rejected Christ as their Messiah. They will see the Holy Spirit come upon believers. Now you have in Acts 19 these disciples of John the Baptist in the far remote part of western Turkey. How in the world did they get over there? I don't know, but they are there. As a result of this the Holy

Spirit now has come upon believers. This is the last time the outline is mentioned in the book of Acts. The gospel spreads now throughout all of the earth.

So what is happening to these men here? Well, he goes in Acts 19:4 says, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into [the Greek word there is "into," not "in"] the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying." Now, folks say today, "Well, now if you get saved, you've got to speak in tongues." No. This is a fulfillment of what they said was going to take place back then. Just as the Jews received it and the tongues came upon them, so did the Gentiles. By the way, it wasn't so much the speaking in tongues as in the hearing of the tongues. This allowed the people to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus in their own language.

The word "tongues" is not some unknown ecstatic language. The word "tongues" is glossa, and it comes from the word that means languages, understandable languages. Only the King James Version points this out in 1 Corinthians. The Corinthian people were in a pagan cult outside of town. They would work themselves up emotionally and begin speaking in ecstatic tongues. The King James says "unknown." Good job. What they were doing was cursing Jesus and didn't even know it. They claimed it was the same gift as what happened at Pentecost. I hear people all the time saying, "Oh, Lord, give us another Pentecost." What in the world for? The first one is good enough. Let's just live in the beautiful blessing of what that was. What was it? It was the beginning, the inauguration of the new covenant, a historical event that was prophesied in the Old Testament by our Lord Jesus Himself.

So what is happening here? These guys are getting saved, folks. John the Baptist said, "You better repent, repent, repent." He had bugs hanging out of his teeth and was wearing an animal skin over himself. There's no telling what this guy looked like. He was saying, "Repent, for the day is coming, and the day is at hand." So the people would repent. Jesus hadn't even come yet. Jesus came, died, and promised the Holy Spirit. These guys, all they were doing was trying to repent, trying to repent, trying to repent. Paul told them about the name of Jesus, and they were baptized into His name. With what? With the Holy Spirit. How do you know? They spoke in tongues, and they prophesied. So the prophecy was fulfilled.

So what we are seeing here are folks getting reborn. We are seeing them come and find new birth in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are not the apostle Paul; I am not the apostle Paul. It won't happen to us quite like that because we are living a few generations later. I want to tell you something though. There's one thing you can count on until Jesus comes back. When you walk in the adventure of being filled with the Spirit of God, you will see people saved as a result of that lifestyle. Now, don't get hung up; I'm not telling you how to do it.

As a matter of fact, you may be a housewife. I love to say this. You've got kids that are like growths on your legs. I mean, they are just walking around clinging to your legs all day long. You don't even have time to wash your hair in the morning. Your house looks like a plane has crashed in it. You don't have time to do anything except quiet squalling kids and try to get clothes washed and get food. You are saying, "How in the world can I walk in the adventure of Jesus and see people saved in my life?" When you are surrendered, God will bring them to your front door if He has to. It may not be hundreds, and it may not be ten, but you are going to see people come to know Christ, somehow, by your life. Whether you are watering or sowing, I don't know, but as a result of your witness and your life for Christ, somebody is going to get saved. That is the redemptive purpose of why God leaves us on this planet. We are to glorify Him. By us glorifying Him, He reaches others for salvation.

I remember when my wife was at that time in her life when our children were about to drive her nuts. They were at that age. You know, it is a wonderful age, but it also a screaming age. You just want to grab your hair sometimes and pull it out. They were at that age. I remember, my wife really use to have trouble understanding grace. I've just watched how God has done a work. She is a good balance for me. I am all grace. She used to be all law. It is good to have both of them together. If I am not careful, I will get into license, and if she's not careful, she will get into legalism. So we just kind of balance each other.

I remember how she was concerned about how she could be used of God. How could she go out and pass out tracts? I mean, at the Piggly Wiggly, you don't pass out tracts. You just elbow to get room to get in the line. She wanted to know what do I do to be a part of this?

I remember little Lori. Lori was a tough girl. She could whip most boys in our town. As a matter of fact, she is married now and has children. I can't believe it. I mean, she is just as sweet as she can be. Lori was a stout woman. She came up to the house and banged on the door one day. She was selling something for the school. Diana invited her in. Diana couldn't go anywhere, so God just put her on her doorstep. She sat down and talked with her and found out before long that she was a member of a church that talked about Jesus, but didn't tell you how to relate to Him. As a result Lori realized she was lost. That was what was wrong with her. She did not know Christ personally. My wife led her to the Lord right there in the house.

Did she go out on a missions group? Did she go out on an evangelism team? No, she just said "yes" to Jesus, and Jesus brought her right in the front door. You will find that when you are walking with Jesus, people are going to be touched for salvation. Whether

or not you actually lead them or whether or not you are doing the watering and somebody else leads them, you are going to have a role in seeing people being redeemed for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know what I think is wrong in our century? We have this nominal Christianity. We don't have a walk with Him. We are not dying to self. As a result, we don't see people getting saved. I can't make them get saved, and you can't. God can when we surrender to Him. That you can count on. Paul saw that in the miracle of the new birth.

There was another miracle that he saw. Look at verse 11. Not only did he see the miracle of new birth, but the people experienced, now watch this carefully, extraordinary miracles. Now, that is important. Look at Verse 11, "And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul." Now, first of all, Paul was not performing them, God was performing them. Secondly, I want to make sure you understand the word "extraordinary." If you don't, you are going to miss something here.

Now this is the beauty of systematic theology. Do you know what that is? That is just verse by verse, verse by verse. We have been on his first journey. What miracle did you see? Only one outside of people getting saved, which to me is the greatest. You saw Elymas being struck blind. That's it. That's it. What happened to Paul? Could he stop the devil from getting his people to stone him? No, sir. He got stoned and just about got killed over there in Lystra. Think about the second missionary journey. Any miracles? Not one, except people getting saved. We are on the third missionary journey before we even find anything like what we are going to talk about. That is important.

The word "extraordinary" means "rarely ever happens." That's the word in the Greek. Let me show you. In Acts 28:2, it is used. Paul had been shipwrecked at Malta. They were glad to get ashore. They come upon a bunch of barbarians. The word literally is barbarians. Verse 1 says, "And when they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives [the word for natives there is the word "barbarians"] showed us [What kind of kindness?] extraordinary kindness." Now listen, it's not like a barbarian to show you kindness. That is rarely ever seen, so he chooses to use that word to express the kind of kindness that those natives showed him. Remember that.

When he was doing extraordinary miracles at Ephesus, this was not the norm. This was the abnormal in the sense that God doesn't normally do these things through an individual. Why would He do that at Ephesus? Because it is the most Satanically infested city of all of Asia Minor. Being a seaport, everything was there. The Temple of Diana. Artemis is the word used. Artemis and Diana are the same thing. It was a pagan-dominated city.

We walked off the seaport, and up that road. There would be a shop and an idol, a shop and an idol, a shop and an idol on both sides of the street all the way up to the top of the hill. At the top of the hill there sat the big Temple. The whole city was built around this Satanic symbol of Artemis or the goddess Diana. So therefore, they had to deal with that. Why would God do such extravagant things? It had something to do with where he was and what was going on.

Well, let's look at it. In Acts 19:12, it was so extravagant. It rarely ever happened: "that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them." Now, folks, that does not mean when you turn on your television and someone gets on there and says, "If you will send in \$1,000, I'll send you a piece of my apron or handkerchief. Put it on whatever is ailing you, and you will get well." Who in the world would do that? No, sir. This didn't happen everywhere he went. It just happened here. Why? I don't know. Ask God when we get there. I don't know. It's extraordinary. It rarely ever happens.

Not only that, it says the evil spirits went out. Demonic spirits were cast out of the people that were there. Were they saved or were they lost? You know where I stand on that. To me they had to be lost to have an evil spirit within them. Let me show you something else. In Acts 19:13-19 it shows you that apparently Paul was the only one who had this kind of authority upon him while he was there in Ephesus. Now, this is important. Who is Paul? He is an apostle of Jesus Christ born out of due season. What authority does he have? The authority every apostle had to do those things which the rest of us don't have the authority to do. Even with them, it rarely ever occurred. Look at verse 13: "But also some of the Jewish exorcists, 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.' And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this."

Now watch this. To me this is the most humorous thing that happens in all of Paul's journeys. I don't have a weird sense of humor, but this just tickles me to death. "And the evil spirit answered [out of this man that was possessed by an evil spirit] and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?'" Oh, I love it. They were going around behind Paul trying to mimic and mock what Paul was doing, just like they do today. People send them the money, and they just keep having their big sessions. "We are going to do what Paul did. Oh, Lord, do it again." Why in the world does He need to do it again. Man, the fresh things that God is doing today are good enough for me. Aren't they for you?

Well, it says in Acts 19:16, "And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them [the seven sons of Sceva] and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded." Now, you see, only Paul had the authority over him. They didn't. They were trying to mimic and mock what only God chooses to do at rare times through the ones He chooses to do

it through. It goes on, “And 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. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver.” That’s a lot of money. Each one, each drachma, was a day’s wage.

Now, why was this going on? What was God doing? What was the real reason? Look at Acts 19:20. Why don’t we ever go far enough? “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.” The literal Greek doesn’t really say it quite like that. I think it is important to bring it out. The literal says, “Thus by the might of the Lord, the word increased and showed itself strong.” There are two words that are important. One is the word for might. It’s not *dunamis*, power, which we always think about. No, sir. It’s **kratos** (**word study**), the right and the might. It is manifested in power. It is the word that refers to manifested presence and significance of force or strength. The word of God was being preached. Paul was doing this. God chose to honor it. He showed everybody in that Satanically infested city that it was the word of God that had strength and might and authority over every principality and power.

The word **ischus** (**word study**) was the word that meant innate strength of something. It refers to something that manifested itself over anything or anyone. In other words, because of the careful consistent clear presentation of the word of God, the gospel of Christ, God took that and manifested the word to where extravagant things happened to the point that people had no doubt that the true God was all over Paul.

If you will go back to Acts 19:8-10, you’ll see what he had been doing now. The rest of the verses just pick out bits and pieces of this. “And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.” Now watch this in Acts 19:10. “And this took place [For how long?] two years so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

Now here is something you can expect. There are two things you can expect. You can expect miracles, the miracle of new birth. When you start proclaiming the word, living the word, and obeying the will of God, you can expect that. Whether you are the actual one leading them or watering, somehow you are involved in that process.

Secondly, you can expect in rare times, extravagant things to happen, but don’t look for them. Don’t make those things the norm. The norm is seeing people come to know Jesus. That’s the key.

I can tell you hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of times that I have seen people respond to the gospel and receive Jesus Christ as their Lord in their life. Now which one are you going to major on? Those things that rarely ever happen, or those things that you can take to the bank? Friend, when you obey Jesus, the people around you are going to be won to Jesus Christ because of your faithfulness.

Paul: The Missionary – Part 5

Turn with me to Ephesians 1:1. We are going to stay there about two seconds just so you can get your mind on the fact that this is what we are introducing. It will take us a while. This is our sixth message on this first phrase. “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” We have looked at Paul, the Man. Now we are looking at Paul, the Missionary. This is our fourth message on Paul, the Missionary.

Would you turn with me to our text today beginning in Acts 20. As you are turning there, let me just go over a couple of things that might be helpful as we get into this message. You and I are not apostles. But, like Paul, when we are surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ, things begin to happen. Let me tell you first of all what happens when you get saved. Now I know you’ve seen this over and over again, but I am telling you, some of us haven’t yet learned it.

This is my fish mitten named Ethel. Her husband, Edgar, went on to the great lake in the sky, I think. I can’t find him. Our life is sort of like Ethel when we don’t have Christ. I may say to Ethel, “Ethel, there is a lost world out there. Go reach it.” Without my hand inside of her, she can’t do a thing, can she? “Ethel, aren’t you burdened about people who are lost?” No. Ethel, what is going on in your life anyway? She’s just dead. There’s nothing in Ethel. Suppose I put my hand inside of Ethel. If Ethel ever received the Lord Jesus Christ by repentance and faith, something comes inside of Ethel. “Ethel! Are you concerned about others who are not saved? Ethel! Are you concerned about Christians that need to be encouraged?” You know, things start happening inside of Ethel. Is it because of Ethel? No. It’s because of the life that is in Ethel.

Now, I know that sounds a little dumb, but how would you explain it? I mean, how do you tell people the difference between religion

and Christianity? Christianity is receiving the person of the Holy Spirit of God into your life. Christ's Spirit comes into your life. Now, we are told to cooperate with that Spirit. It is said in Ephesians 5:18, "Be ye filled with the Spirit of God." "Filled" means "on a consistent basis to be controlled by the Spirit that lives within you." Only then do we become productive as far as God's kingdom is concerned. Only then are we ministers, and only then are we missionaries. At the moment we surrender, God takes over and begins to do what He alone can do in and through us. It's like a light being turned on inside of someone.

Well, what can you expect when that happens? This will really encourage your heart and make you want to go out singing. There are two things that you can expect. John 16:33 says you are going to have tribulation in this world. The word "tribulation" means "suffering." Some of that is talked about in that verse. He is talking to the disciples there about the persecution that will come to them. We know that, just by being human beings and living under the curse of Adam which is still upon this earth, we are going to have sickness. We are going to have bad times. It is going to rain on the just, and it is going to rain on the unjust. The sun is going to shine on the just and on the unjust. I mean, these things are going to happen circumstantially in our lives. Also, 2Timothy 3:12-note it says those who seek to live godly lives in a world filled with tribulation and chaos can expect to be what? To be persecuted. That's great to know, isn't it? You see, the moment I start cooperating with the Spirit of God within me, the world around me, which is literally upside down, is going to come against me. You see, Christ in me has turned me right-side up. That is why I look so odd. That is why you look so odd. That is why we look so odd to a world that is upside down.

Now, at a recent Equip Conference, one man preached from the book of Colossians. He was talking about the ways in which the devil tries to get into your mind through false philosophies. He jumped to Romans 1, and he talked about how people of this world have suppressed the truth. The word "suppressed" means that they have put one layer of humanism on top of another layer of humanism on top of any other layer of humanism until finally nobody recognizes the truth any more. That is the kind of world we live in.

Who in the world would have ever thought about criticizing a man like Vice President Quayle because of the fact he took a pro-life stand? Who in the world has ever heard of anything like that? They are making him the laughing stock of television. I am telling you. The people who are doing that are upside down. When you are light, you are going to irritate the darkness which is around you. That is the world we live in. That's what you can expect. You can expect it in your families. You can expect it in your job situations. You can expect it in your neighborhood when you start cooperating with the Spirit of God living inside of you. Automatically, people will hate you because they hate Him. They have rejected everything He has ever stood for.

We have seen this in Paul's life. We don't even have to go back over it. We have seen people from the point of taking him outside of the city and stoning him, to the people that followed him from place to place embittering people around him and trying to always cause chaos in the man's life. If you wanted to find Paul on one of his journeys, go into the local city that he is supposed to be in. Look in the prison first. Usually he is in jail. If he is not in jail, listen for the mob, because there is usually a riot going on somewhere when Paul is present. If he is not there, then he is in between the two, because he is constantly in trouble. He is living in an upside down world. As a matter of fact, the people of that upside down world accused him and his brethren of turning the world upside down. No sir, they were trying to turn it right-side up. That is what light does. People don't want light. They like their darkness. The light exposes the deeds of their darkness.

Well, that is what we can expect. So, tomorrow morning when you get up, say "Jesus, you be Jesus in me. I can't. You never said I could. You can, and you always said you would." What can I look forward to? I can look forward to people looking at me as if I am a quart low. They actually think I am ridiculous. I am an idiot. People who don't know how to think don't understand the believer living surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is something else you and I can expect. It is not all bad. As a matter of fact, there is a ton of it that is good. When we turn on to the Lord Jesus, and He is allowed to live and breathe and be who He is inside of us, we can expect that God will use us to bless people around us who are starving for what they don't even understand. We can see the miracles that God will do through us.

We saw that when Paul was in Ephesus in Acts 19. This time we are going to move a step further. Everywhere Paul would go, God would use him to bring people the miracle of the new birth. God chose at Ephesus to do some extraordinary miracles. He doesn't always do that. The word "extraordinary" means "rarely ever happens." I don't know why in the world people are building denominations on what rarely ever happens. God brings others to know Christ as a result of our living whether I actually lead them or whether I am planting and sowing by my lifestyle. God always gives the increase. We are a part of that whole process and plan.

Well, let's move on to Macedonia. Now, Paul has been in Ephesus. This is the Third Missionary Journey of Paul. You should have a map attached to this study. Up on the right side is Paul's Third Missionary Journey. That is where we are. Some of you have asked, "Where is Asia Minor? Where is Antioch of Syria? I don't understand all these places." Hopefully, this map will help you. Look over at the top right-hand corner of your map. Come straight down, and you will see a little place called Antioch. What is the big country right below it? Syria. Antioch of Syria was Paul's home base. That is where the First Missionary Journey began and ended. That is where the Second Missionary Journey began and ended. That's where the Third Missionary Journey begins, but it doesn't end like the

other two.

I want to show you now where Asia Minor is. Right down below Antioch sort of off to the left a little bit is Cyprus. That's an island. On his first journey, Paul took a boat to Cyprus. Then he went up into Asia Minor. That's the land right above Cyprus. You say, "Now wait a minute. Why did he take a boat? He could have gone by land to get into Asia Minor." That's right. Why did he go by boat? I don't know. I'm going to have to ask Paul. He was under God's leading, and that's what God told him to do. There is Asia Minor. If you come all the way over, right in the middle of your map, you'll see a little dot and a little city out beside it named Ephesus. That is the western coast of Asia Minor.

Now, if you go from Ephesus straight north you will come to Troas. Remember Troas? What happened at Troas? The Macedonian vision. What happens? He leaves there and crosses the water. See those little circles up there on your map. They are islands. He crosses from Troas, and then you see Philippi, Neapolis, Thessalonica, and Berea. All of that is Macedonia. Now, when you go straight down below Macedonia, you have Greece. I used to think Macedonia was Greece, but it's not. Macedonia sits on top of Greece. That will help you as we go through this study.

Turn to Acts 20, and we will see now how Paul leaves Ephesus and goes to Macedonia. First of all, when you surrender to Christ, people are blessed by the miracles of God, the miracle of new birth and other things. Secondly, they are encouraged by the compassion of God. There are two things that will happen. We are going to see this in Macedonia. Look at verses 1 and 2 of Acts 20. "And after the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he departed to go to Macedonia. And when he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece."

Now, don't you wish we had a little bit more than that to go on regarding what happened in Macedonia. I do, but those are the only two verses we have. Why did he leave Ephesus? Let me go back and explain that to you. Over in chapter 19, we find that Paul ran into quite a few problems. The problems he ran into, specifically here, were mentioned in Acts 19:23-41. I won't make you read them, and I won't read them for you. In that period of time a man by the name of Demetrius, a silversmith, was selling these little statues. You have seen these things. He was making a ton of money off of them. Several other business men were doing the same. The statue was of Artemis. Artemis and Diana are two names for the same pagan goddess of that area. I choose to use Artemis because my wife's name is Diana. He was making these little silver statues of her. People would buy them, take them to their house and worship the goddess. This was a very lucrative business. Listen, folks, idolatry always makes money for somebody. It never glorifies God. They were making a ton of money off of this idolatry.

Well, Demetrius doesn't like it because when Paul came along he was saying, "Listen, you can make anything with your hands. That's no goddess. There is only one true God. That is the Lord Jesus Christ." They began to lose business because people started getting saved. So Demetrius calls a meeting of all the businessmen in town. Of course, others joined in with them. In Acts 19:26-28 he says, "And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all." Go for it, Paul.

Look at Acts 19:27: "And not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute [that was his real problem], 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 [he was actually thinking that all the world worships her; that is sort of an interesting thought] even be dethroned from her magnificence." Verse 28 continues, "And when they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'" Now, a whole riot breaks out. In verse 30 it says, "And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him." Look in Verse 29, "And the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia."

I've been there. It was so wonderful. We were right there at that amphitheater. Now you have got to get the picture here. They all rushed into this amphitheater. It will hold 30,500 people. If you could go to the very top, have someone drop a pin down at the bottom, and you could hear that pin hit the ground. That is how good the acoustics of that place were. It would seat 30,500 people, and they flooded into that place.

Look what they do in Acts 19:34: "But when they recognized that he was a Jew [there was a man by the name of Alexander who was trying to give a defense as to what was going on] a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'" Now, you can imagine the sound inside that amphitheater. You can hear a pin drop when only one person is there; 30,500 people are inside this big arena. They won't let Paul go in. That was probably a good thing because, knowing Paul, he would have probably outshouted them all as he preached the gospel. They are shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" for two solid hours! Well, the mayor of the city finally quiets them down and says, "Look, guys, you have to cool it because if you don't, the Romans are going to take us to court for disorderly conduct." So they have to quiet the mob down.

When the mob quiets down and things get a little more still around there Paul leaves Ephesus. You know, he just thought it better to

get out of town at that particular point. He goes on into Macedonia. Now look on your map where Ephesus is. How did he get over to Macedonia? It doesn't tell us. He probably went right up to Troas like he did before and cut over to Philippi. He had already been that route once, so that is probably the way he went. He gets over into Macedonia.

We only have two verses about this. Oh, but there is something hidden in Acts 20:2. Look again. "And when he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece." That word "exhortation" caught my attention. What does it mean, much exhortation? The word "exhortation" in the Greek is the word **parakletos** (see related paraklesis). It is the word that means "be called along side." Para means "along side," **kletos (word study)** means "to be called." So we get "to be called along side." It is the word that has to do with comforting someone or to encourage someone. Now, who do you think he is encouraging? Who do you think he is comforting? He goes back to where he has been before on his Second Missionary Journey. It took him into Macedonia because of that vision and because of the providence of God in his life. Obviously, these are the believers that he has led to Christ during that time.

Remember all the problems that they had in Thessalonica? Remember they went into Berea, and the Jews followed them. Everywhere he went there was hostility and tribulation, as we said earlier. At the same time, there were people who were receiving the miracle of the new birth. That was not Paul. It was someone inside of Paul that was causing all this to happen. You've got to understand that. If you don't, you are going to think, "Well, I'm not Paul so that will never happen to me." It was not Paul. It was Christ in Paul giving him a concern and a burden for believers who need to be comforted.

So he goes along side them, and he comforts those believers. The difference in exhortation and mercy, to me, is significant. When you say "exhortation," it is always with words. When you say "mercy," it is with deeds. It is exactly the same heart, it is exactly the same compassion. When somebody shows mercy, normally it is with what they do for the person. When somebody exhorts somebody or encourages them, it is what he says to them that comforts and encourages their hearts.

An example of that, when you get into the gifts of the Spirit, you get the gift of exhortation. You get the gift of mercy. My wife has more of the gift of mercy. I have more of the gift of exhortation. It's the same heart, but they come out entirely different. We were in the hospital one day, and we walked in this little room, and there was this little lady. I caught it right off. She was feeling sorry for herself. I could tell it. When I walked inside, she started moaning and groaning and complaining. She was fine before we walked in the room. I said, "Look there. She wants everybody to feel sorry for her." Well, my wife, with the mercy, probably sees the same thing, but she runs over and pats her pillow and fixes it up around her neck and pats her on the cheek and gets her a glass of water and makes sure she has got a straw in it and gets ice in the glass. I'm thinking, "Oh, that is just pampering that woman!" I ended up saying, "Listen, you know what Philippians 4:13-note says, 'You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.'" I started exhorting her with the Word. I started saying, "Hey, you need to be content in all circumstances."

This is why I don't come to see you in the hospitals. You don't want me in your hospital room. I am not going to make you feel any better. One pastor I know down in Florida was told, "Don't go to the hospitals anymore. You just study and teach the people. We'll take care of the hospitals." That's the way I am. I am not going to feel sorry for you. "Quit complaining. Man, it could be worse. That guy down the hall is dying." They are two different gifts. Exhortation is with words. Mercy is with deeds.

Paul exhorted them. He encouraged them. As a matter of fact, the text says, "with many words, he exhorted them." He encouraged them. Personally, I think he used the Word of God. I don't see why he would use anything else. However, that's not necessarily true all the time. When you come along sometimes just put your arm around somebody and encourage them a little bit. Say, "Come on, man, you can make it." Obviously the Word of God is the only thing solid that we can stand on, but there is something to the fact that the Christ inside of Paul, as he yielded to Him, burdened his heart. He burdened him not only for the lost, but for those believers who needed to be encouraged in the tribulations and the suffering that they were going through.

In our church we are doing everything we can possibly do to help you realize that Christianity is not some form. It is not coming to church and saying you paid your dues. Christianity is living in a vibrant relationship with the person of the Holy Spirit of God, which is Christ's Spirit living within you. When you wake up on Monday morning, you have no idea what's coming. Who cares? You just say, "Lord, I can't. You never said I could. You can, and you always said you would. I am going to cooperate with you under the will and your Word today. Just do through me what only you can do." You will see people come to know Christ because of your lifestyle. You are going to see believers who are going through tough times comforted. They need a friend to come alongside. It won't be the same ones I'll go to.

Listen, this is what happens so often in a body this large. You find somebody that is really hurting and get all upset because the staff hasn't gone to see them. Did you go? Well, if you went, you took Christ. Who needs the staff? All of us are ministers. They don't want me. They want Jesus. That is what they want. When you say yes to Jesus and you get to them, don't worry about who else didn't get there. As long as you took Jesus you took everything that person will ever need. That is the Holy Spirit of God working in your life. We are all ministers. We are all missionaries when we are surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. People are going to be comforted.

You know, you don't see this here in Paul's life. Look back in Acts 14. On his first journey, he has been persecuted and stoned by some unfriendly people. He turns right around and goes right back to the very same places for one purpose. Look at Acts 14:21-22: "And after they had preached the gospel to that city [Derbe] and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra [What happened in Lystra? Well, they were also treated very hostile there.] and to Iconium and to Antioch."

When Paul writes Timothy, he says, "You remember those three cities, Iconium and Antioch and Lystra?" He talks about how badly he was treated there. These were three areas that you wouldn't want to turn right around and go back to. But what is the heart of Paul? He's not thinking of himself. Christ is beating inside of him. There are believers in those three cities, so he backtracks and goes right back to the same place. Why? Verse 22 says, "strengthening the souls of the disciples [Look here], encouraging them [that's the same exact word] to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'"

Man, that just blesses my heart. Here is a man who has been beat up, but he turns right around and goes right back to those people. He goes back right in the midst of all that. He says, "Listen, guys, you stay in there. If you will stay in there, God is going to bless you. Through these tribulations, one day you will enter the kingdom of God." He has a heart to comfort those who are hurting.

In Acts 16:40, on his Second Missionary Journey, he does the same thing in Philippi. He has just been in jail. I mean, everywhere he goes, he is in trouble, but his heart is not centered on what is going to happen to him. His heart is centered on what's happening to them. Acts 16:40 says, "And they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them [same word] and departed." Paul had a heart to come along side of believers who were going through difficult times and encourage them with the word of God. He did that to get them back on their feet so they could continue to walk the journey that they were walking.

Every year I go to do the International Congress on Revival. We are going to be going over to Krakow, Poland and also to Salzburg, Austria. We are bringing in those precious believers from all over those countries, just like we did back in Greece this summer. It's just like we did in Vienna last February. If you want to see what it is like to come alongside a persecuted believer, put your arm around him and encourage him, I want you to pray about going with us. It will bless your life.

I remember the hotel we stayed in was fairly nice for that area. The people coming in from those countries walked around and put their hands on the walls and felt the walls. They kept saying, "You know, I don't believe anything could be this nice." They would go to the meals and have so much food on the tables and big stacks of rolls. Many of them would take food back to their room with them. They couldn't believe all of that food was accessible and given to them. One of the ladies said, "You know, you could have used all this money to build churches in our country." With tears streaming down her face, she said, "I thank God, you thought more of people than you did those buildings because nobody has ever treated us like this. This is just like a little piece of heaven to us." They thanked us and thanked us. You wouldn't believe the letters that have come back to the States from those folks. Why? Because we came alongside of them, put our arms around them and equipped them.

This is what missions is all about. It is not just seeing the lost come to know Christ. It is also encouraging the brethren, discipling them, comforting them and coming alongside. That is what happens when you start surrendering to Jesus. Sometimes that takes you out of the country and sometimes it takes you across the street. You don't know where it is going to take you. That is what the Christian life is all about.

In other words, when I go out, I am no different than the apostles. Yes, I am in the sense of the office, but not as a person. If I am surrendered to Jesus, He'll use me the same way. Do you want to be used that way? Then God will burden your heart to come alongside somebody and encourage them.

Thirdly, not only do we see people blessed by the miracles of God and encouraged by the compassion of God, but we see in Troas, the people instructed by the word of God. Now how in the world did Paul get from Macedonia, then to Greece? How did he get all the way up to Troas? Let's look at that in Acts 20:3. This is quite an interesting story. It says, "And there he spent three months," in Greece. We don't know where he was in Greece, whether it was Athens or Corinth. We don't know where he was. It doesn't tell us. It says, "and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria." Now, why would he be going to Syria? That is his home base, Antioch. Paul was ready to go home, but God changed him again. I love this. In our walk with God, you never know what tomorrow will hold. He says, "and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia."

That word "determined" is an important Greek word to understand. It is the word that means he had discernment. God gave him the proper judgment to subvert their plan and go a different way. God gave him the wisdom to know what was going on and changed his whole plan. Well, what does he do? He is down here in Greece. Look on your map again. Greece is on the left side of the map on the top part of the page. You see Achaia? You see Corinth? You see Athens? That's Greece. He was probably in Athens if he was going to sail all the way around to Antioch. When he found out there was a plot against him, God gave him the wisdom to go straight north. He goes up to Philippi, back up into Macedonia, and cuts across to Troas. This is quite an interesting departure from the

journey he was about to take.

Well, let's go ahead and read it. It'll tell the story. Acts 20:4 says, "And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea [all of these people it mentions here are those he had led to Christ and disciple], 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 at Troas."

Now there's just a little technicality here we need to deal with. Who is the "us"? If these were his companions, who had gone ahead? Look at Acts 20:6. "And we sailed." Now, wait a minute. I thought his companions had gone ahead. Who wrote the book of Acts? Can anybody tell me? Luke. I tell you what. It has got to be Luke that was still with Paul. Why would Luke still be with Paul? Because Luke was a physician. If anybody needed a physician, Paul did. So everybody else went ahead. He kept Luke with him. He didn't know what would happen to him between the time he left Greece and the time he got to Troas.

Well, he set sail from Philippi "after the days of Unleavened Bread and came to them at Troas within five days." It took them five days on the water to get from Philippi to Troas, "and there we stayed seven days." Now watch what happens. Here he is in Troas. It took five days to get there. It was an unplanned trip. He was going over to Antioch of Syria. Now he has rerouted himself, and he comes over and spends seven days with these folks. What does he do during that time? Well, Acts 20:7 says, "And on the first day of the week [Sunday] when we were gathered together to break bread [the Lord's Supper], Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day." Now watch this, "and he prolonged his message until midnight."

I love that. I don't know, it just sort of encouraged me. You know, we are always on this little track. I am watching the watch. It is funny what I see when I am preaching. Some people, about 12:00 just start popping out of the service. It's kind of like, "If the Holy Spirit does not work by 12:00, forget it. I am going to lunch." It wasn't quite that way in Troas. He had already been to Troas once. These were believers who were really hungry for the Word of God. It was not like America where you can turn on Christian radio anytime you want. They didn't have it. They didn't have anything. Buddy, they loved it when Paul was with them.

So he just extended his message until midnight and watch what happens. In Acts 20:8 it says, "And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together." Now, wait a minute. Lamps. They didn't have electricity! That's right. When you think of lamps, you think of our kind of lamps. What kind of lamps do you think of? Those kind that are very bright and wake you up and make you able to see. They didn't have lamps like that. They were torches, basically. A torch usually is fueled by oil of some kind, usually olive oil. That oil has a smell to it and a little smoke tint. By the way, how many of you have been out in the country and used one of those old kerosene lamps? Personally I like that kind of thing. I don't want to live that way. You know, once every ten years is all right. It has a very low light. You don't have bright lights that are fueled by oil. It is always a low light.

Many times I have been camping, and I am just sitting around. It is not even hardly dark. At home you are up for five more hours. I am sitting around, and those little lamps are burning and that smoke just starts drifting around. It is low light. Your eyes just get heavy. You just feel like you've got cement blocks on them, and they are just falling down. Now, you have got to understand that, because look at the next verse. I am just trying to encourage you all that get sleepy during the message. You are not the first ones. Don't think you are going to hell because of it.

Look in Acts 20:9. "And there was a certain young man named Eutychus." Now what's wrong here? How come the young people can't stay awake? I don't know. I guess we just inherited that down through the generations. His name is Eutychus. I guess they brought their kids, and they were all sitting in the windows. They were on the third floor, "sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep." The word there means progressively it is getting worse and worse. You know, the guy starts in the morning and preaches all the way to midnight. That's a little long. The boy is hungry, and the lights have been turned on. There is oil in the room, and it goes on to say, "as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep." I mean, he just drops off, "and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead." I mean, folks. It killed him. You see, don't go to sleep in the service. That's a principle we've learned. Don't go to sleep or you'll die! He fell down.

Verse 10 continues, "But Paul went down and fell upon him." The word *epi*pto means "he just fell on him." I mean, he fell on him bodily, full length on top of him. That is exactly what it was, "and after embracing him." In other words, he just got right around him and embraced him. I don't know exactly what all takes place here. There are a lot of people who make a big deal out of this, but it just doesn't tell us. It says, "after embracing him, he said, 'Do not be troubled, for his spirit is in him.'"

Go back up to Acts 20:9 where it says he was picked up dead. Actually the Greek is "as if dead." We don't know for a fact that he was dead, but certainly everybody there had drawn the conclusion that he was dead. Maybe when Paul jumped on him, it knocked the breath back into him. I don't know. Whatever happened to him, he probably didn't go to sleep in a service for a long time. Paul jumped on him.

Now watch how much concern they have for him in Acts 20:11. "And when he had gone back up, and had broken the bread [they

started the Lord's Supper] and eaten, he talked with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed." That's a long church service, quite spectacular. Verse 12 says, "And they took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted."

Well, the thing I wanted to show you here is, we are not looking so much at what happened to Paul, but at what happened as a result of the obedience of Paul. We have seen encouragement by the compassion of God. We have seen instruction now by the word of God. There is a hunger out there. When you let the Word of God be rich and real in you and let it abide and dwell in your heart, you can't help but share that with somebody else. I don't care who you are. Is that Paul? No, that's not Paul. That's Jesus in the life of Paul. The burden in the heart of God is to get the Word of God into people's hearts so they can be trained and equipped and grown up. These are the things you are going to see start happening in your life when you start surrendering to Him, getting into His word, and letting His will infiltrate your life. People are going to be saved at your office. People are going to be touched by the light that is in you. Hostility, yes; tribulation, yes. But you are going to see Christians comforted and encouraged. You are also going to see the brethren instructed by the Word of God.

Recently members of the Hauna tribe of Papua New Guinea visited our church and needed \$17,000. I'll tell you something. The heart of people who are surrendered to Christ came alongside them and encouraged them beyond whatever you could imagine. \$25,000 came in from our people. They only needed \$17,000. Another \$5,000 came in for the Caribbean Christian Center for the Deaf. \$30,000 was taken up in one offering. You see, that is one of the reasons I don't tell you that you had better give. Why? Because it is going to fall on deaf ears unless you are surrendered to Jesus Christ. If you are surrendered, you are going to give because you are going to recognize need. You are going to be sensitive to it. You are going to do what God tells you to do. Only when a person is surrendered to the life of Jesus in him, will He ever hear you when you say you have a need. It falls on deaf ears because the first thing about a person who is a lover of self is the fact that he is a lover of money. He has a nerve to his pocketbook. Don't touch it. The moment he gets surrendered, what he have is yours. Let's all make sure the needs of the brethren are met.

Paul: The Missionary – Part 6

Turn with me to Ephesians 1:1. You know we are only going to be there for a second. I just want to remind you that's what we are doing. This is the eighth message introducing the book of Ephesians. We may have at least 20 before we are finally in Ephesians 1:1.

Ephesians is written by Paul. We know that from the first phrase of Ephesians 1:1. We've been spring-boarding off this first phrase which reads, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." Now turn to Acts 20 as we continue to study the life of Paul and the missionary journeys of Paul. We have looked at Paul the man, and now we are looking at Paul the missionary.

This is going to take us a while. We may go right into our missions conference the last part of September. This was not premeditated, but it might be the best way in the world for us to enter into that conference truly understanding the heart and the life of a real missionary. Remember, when you surrender to Jesus, you are at that moment a missionary, whether across the street or around the world. I still want those two signs out in front of the church. I haven't really said it, I guess, with enough force or conviction to get it done. I want a sign over as we leave that says, "Caution, you are now entering the mission field." We have the idea that someone who crosses the ocean or someone who goes up north is the missionary. We are just back here holding the fort. Folks, the moment we say "yes" to Jesus, we are a missionary, a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are on staff at the church, yes, they are ministers. They are paid full-time. But, folks, every one of us are ministers. We have the luxury of being paid by those we serve, but at the same time, we are all ministers and missionaries when we say "yes" to Jesus.

Well, on his first and second missionary journeys we saw in Paul what a missionary experiences. What can we expect as we surrender to Christ? We are not Paul, and we can't take his journeys and make them ours. However, there are certain principles that do flow along that line. One of them is the fact that we can expect hostility. Paul saw it on his first missionary journey, and he especially saw it on his second missionary journey. You see, when we are light, we irritate the darkness. Darkness and light just don't get along very well. We can expect hostility, but alongside of that, we can expect the fullest of joy knowing we are doing what our Lord has told us to do.

On his third missionary journey, we got into something else. We started looking at how others are blessed as a result of that man's surrender. That's what we need to focus on, because the darkness out there is going to be affected by the light that is in us. In Ephesus we saw how others were blessed by the miracles of God, the tremendous miracle of new birth. He even chose to do some extraordinary miracles among them. In Macedonia we saw how they were encouraged by the compassion of God as he exhorted them and came alongside them. In Troas we saw how they were instructed by the Word of God. So there were three blessings others received because of Paul's willingness to surrender to Christ.

Well, this time we find him still on his third missionary journey. We find him not in Troas, but in Miletus. Look in Acts 20:13. Look up

in the top right hand corner of your map. You will find his third missionary journey marked. If you'll start over on the right side and start coming left, about the middle of the square, you will see Asia. From Asia go left and a little bit north, and you'll find Troas. That's where we found him the last time that we studied. We are going to leave Troas and come down to Miletus. It is straight south of Troas on the coast of Asia Minor.

Acts 20:13 takes us there on the journey. Let's read together. It says, "But we, going ahead to the ship." Now, when it says "we," who is he talking about? We know the companions listed earlier, but it also includes Luke. Luke wrote the book of Acts and so, therefore, Luke is saying, "We, all the companions, including myself." There was another time when he was with Paul, and the companions went ahead. This time he is with Paul's companions. They go ahead of Paul by ship, and they "set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for thus he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land." Paul decided to go by foot. He just walked to Assos, which was south of Troas. The rest of them took a boat around to the same place.

Acts 20:14 continues, "And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene." That is an island in the Aegean Sea off the western coast of Asia Minor. In Acts 20:15 it says, "And sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios." They didn't go to Chios. They went right by the island of Chios in the Aegean Sea, "and the next day we crossed over to Samos," another island in the Aegean Sea, "and the day following we came to Miletus." Miletus is another seaport city, south of Troas, on the western coast of Asia Minor. As a matter of fact, it is exactly 37 miles south of Ephesus. Remember in Acts 20:16, he says he doesn't want to stop at Ephesus. It says, "For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost." To do that, he had to go right past Ephesus.

Acts 20:17 brings us into what we are going to talk about. Verse 17 says, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." For those of you who still wonder about the elder system, the term "elder," *presbuteros*, is in the plural. The term "church" has the definite article. It is the singular church that is there in Ephesus. One church, many elders; that was the leadership of the New Testament church.

In Acts 20:18-27, Paul shares his heart with these Ephesian elders. In sharing his heart we see some things about the life of Paul that gives great integrity to his testimony. What I want you to see is not really the point of what Paul is saying. It is something you just sort of glean as you are studying the passage. What we are going to see and what Paul tells them is the genuineness of his ministry. You see, it is one thing to say to somebody "I love Jesus, and I am a servant of Christ." It is another thing to be that when you are around them. Somebody told me a long time ago that your reputation is what you think you are; your character is what your wife and family and the people that know you best know that you are. These Ephesian elders knew Paul.

He shares some things with them that help us be challenged today concerning whether or not our own testimony is real. We live in the 20th century. We are living in a time and an age which I believe is the Laodician age spoken of in Revelation. It's a time when people have joined the church, but have not joined Jesus. We are living in the apostate age when people love to be associated with the name of Jesus, but they stand off from bowing down to Him and living it out among others in this world.

First of all, we see in Acts 20:18,19 that Paul was a consistent servant of Christ. I want you to see that. He was a consistent servant of Christ. Those are powerful words. Verse 18 says, "And when they had come to him, he said to them, 'You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord.'" Now, I want you to stop right there. "I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord." These elders in Ephesus knew some things about Paul. They knew beyond any shadow of a doubt that Paul was sincere and genuine. They had seen the consistency of his service to Christ among them. He was not on some emotional whim, and he was certainly not on some binge. A lot of people will take off and do something for the Lord for a period of time and think that must mark them as genuine and as true. No, sir. It is not how you start. It is how you finish. They knew Paul to be real as a consistent servant of Christ.

Look at that term "servant." He said, "I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord." The term "serving" is the Greek word *diakoneo*. It is the present indicative active verb of *doulos*. *Doulos* is the term "bond-servant." The term "bond-servant" means one who does what he does, not because he has to, but because he wants to. In other words, the service that Paul was performing and obeying for his Christ was observed by those Ephesian elders to be consistent, real and genuine. They knew him. Paul brings that to their attention. He says, "I have nothing to hide. You knew me when I was among you. You of all people know me."

Now, I want to ask you a question. Can the people who know you best say that about your life? Can they say you not only put in time, but that your whole life is a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? The present tense means continuous action. Active voice means of my own volition. Indicative mood means it was a historical fact. Paul was saying, "You saw all these things take place among you. You know exactly that my service to Christ is not my job. It's my life."

Now, folks, listen. Here is what spoke to me as I was studying this. If I want my testimony to have integrity to it, then Jesus must be my life. It's not just something I do on Sundays; it's not just something I do during the week as I go to the office. Jesus must consume my very being. Paul said to the Philippian church in Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ." "He is the very essence

of my being, the very purpose of my being here, everything that surrounds me. There is a sphere around me. I am in the midst of it, and I want everybody to know that it's real to me. It's not just something I'm playing with. It is not an option of my time." That's what gives credibility and integrity to the testimony we have before this world.

We sing, "I'll carry the torch." How in the world are we going to carry the torch if we are not sold out totally to the Lord Jesus Christ? Paul says, "I was with you. I was consistently a servant. You saw it. You witnessed it. I was a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now we know his calling is different from ours. Sometimes people confuse that. They say, "Well, we are not the apostle Paul. We can't do what Paul did." No, and we shouldn't even attempt it. But we have our own concern, gifts and calling. The same thing applies to us. We are all sent forth as Paul was sent forth. We are all possessive of the Lord Jesus Christ. We all have the truth within us. Therefore, we are just as accountable and just as responsible as Paul was. So, therefore, when we are consistently servants of Christ, that's what translates into others a genuine, true testimony.

I'm just glad I didn't know a whole lot when we had our children. If I'd have known some of the things I know now, I would have probably waited until I couldn't have had any. You always think, "Well, when we are ready, we are going to have children." You are never ready! Folks, listen. It's an adventure nobody told you about. One of the things I discovered was, I had to eat a lot of crow. I told everybody how it was going to be when I raised my children.

I remember telling someone one day before he and his wife had any children, "You had better tell every parent in this whole place how to raise their children before you get yours and before they grow up, because when they hit the teenage years, you are going to have to start preaching something else, like how to be a great senior adult or something. You will have to eat so much crow."

One of the things I have seen more than anything else from just having been there, if our walk was not consistent in our life, my kids knew it. I'm not talking about perfection. I'm not talking about living so godly that our kids walk around in awe of us all the time. I'm talking about something that is real from the time we come to church to the time that we go home. They understood from our lifestyle that Christ consumes us. When we fail, we go to the cross. When we have a problem, we go to the Word. They saw that. Through that consistency of living and through being a consistent bond-servant of Christ, the integrity is maintained in our testimony to our children.

One problem so often is our kids see the double standard in us. One morning about 6:00, in one of the cities I served in, my phone rang. When my phone rings at 6:00, folks, strange things happen in my mind. I am a late-goer. I'm sorry, but I am. Some of you are more spiritual than I am. You get up early, and the sun comes in as you are on your knees before the Lord. Well, I'm glad. I really am. I just applaud you. It's just wonderful. If God wants me to see the sun come up, He's going to have to put it at noon, because by the time I get to bed, I'm barely asleep when it comes up. It is just amazing. I am just a late-goer. I do my best work late at night. It seems like that's when my mind is alert and I am awake. So if somebody calls me at 6:00 in the morning, weird thoughts go through my mind like: "Where am I? What city am I in? What's going on?"

The lady on the other end of the line said, "Wayne!" Boy, you can always tell when somebody has had their quiet time in the morning and has been alone with God and has been touched by the moving of the Spirit. I said, "Yes, ma'am." You always say "Yes, ma'am" to a woman yelling at you at 6:00 in the morning. I know why Ezekiel ran from Jezebel. There are some mean women out there, folks. She said, "What have you been teaching these kids on Wednesday nights?" I taught the young people on Wednesday nights in that church as Youth Director. That morning, however, I couldn't even think what young people or what church I was in. I remember we had been talking about living the cleansed life. We had been talking about selling out to Jesus. She said, "No, sir. You've said something about music to these kids." I said, "I did not." I knew I hadn't said anything about music. I'm not stupid. She said, "Well, my son came home last night and took all of his rock tapes and rock records and put them in a big incinerator out back and burned them." I said, "Well, praise the Lord." Wrong! I should not have said that. She said, "What do you mean, praise the Lord?" I said, "Well, I just thought you could be rejoicing with your son." She said, "We spent good money to get those records for that kid." Then she asked me a question, and this was the catcher. She said, "Just how far are you going to take your Christianity?" Oh, I was awake now! The door was open big enough that I could drive a truck through. I said, "Ma'am, that is not the problem. It's not a problem how far I'm going to take mine. It's not a problem of how far your son is going to take his. The problem is, how far are you going to take yours?"

That's the problem. Are we consistent? Do your kids know that Christ is your life? It's not what you do for two hours on Sunday. It's not what you do when he's wrong, and you take the Word and beat him over the head with it. Does he know that you live by it yourself? Are you serving the Lord as true bond-servant, consistently before your family and before the people you work with? If you are, there is integrity to what you say. If you are not, you can hang it up. They have already seen the holes in everything that you are saying. You see, the genuine servant of Christ is one who is consistent in his testimony.

In Aradia, Romania, which is the largest city in Romania, there is the largest church in all of Romania and all of Europe. It's the Second Baptist Church. The first year I went under Ceausescu, we went in undercover. I remember that was one of the most difficult

times I have ever had in my life. You get used to it after a while. Well, no, you don't ever get used to it, but it gets a little bit better. That first time over there, there was a man by the name of Cornelius. He was a deacon at Second Baptist. He is now on the staff. He is one of the pastors now of Second Baptist Church there. His wife had leukemia. I remember when I came home we took up medicine, and we tried to help her out. The problem was, she needed a bone marrow transplant. That's one of the few things that gives hope to a leukemia patient. There were some churches that got together in America and even in Europe and decided to pay for it. They were going to give her that bone marrow transplant in France if they could just get out of the country. They told him this, and he was so excited. He got his wife and took all the papers they needed to get their visas to leave so that she could have that bone marrow transplant.

When they got down there, they put them off. The secret police treated them like dirt. They gave them five days to wait. Finally, they came back, expecting in their hearts to get those visas. When they walked in, they said, "Listen, here is a sheet of paper you must sign, or you don't get the visas." He said, "What's on this paper?" He read it, and it said, "You must denounce your Christ. You must stop witnessing to anyone and sign a statement that you have denounced Him before you can get a visa to take your wife out to get a life-saving bone marrow transplant." They said they didn't even blink hardly. They looked at each other, and his wife said, "You know, I'd much rather die for Christ over here with leukemia than I would deny Him and try to spare my physical life on this earth." He took the visas and handed them right back to the fellow and said, "No, sir. We love our Lord Jesus." Then they turned and walked out of the office.

Now, folks, I don't know what you think, but that added a lot of integrity to their testimony. Christ was their life. This is the problem we are all going through. Paul said, "I was among you the whole time, serving the Lord." He was a consistent servant.

Secondly, he was a contrite servant. By contrite I mean humble and broken. Look at what it says. It says, "how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord [that's **present tense**] with all humility." There is your key. The word "humility" there does not refer to how he acted, but to his attitude towards himself and his attitude towards God. The word is properly translated better in the King James than it is in the New American Standard. The New American Standard says "humility," but the word there is **tapeinophrosune (word study)**. It comes from the word **tapeinos (word study)**, which means "to lay flat." In other words, in your respect to God, you get as low as you can possibly get. If God were to manifest His presence to us right now, in all of His holiness, as it was with Isaiah at King Uzziah's death, we would all get down as far as we could get. That's the word; get down as far as you can. That's the word "humility."

But it's not just humility. Phren is another part of that word. It is the word for attitude or mindset. In other words, it's not so much that Paul did what he did with a big Bible under his arm. It's not so much that Paul did what he did with a solemn look on his face and a black suit on to show everybody he was humble. No, it was an attitude that he had that was inward and was sensed outwardly by those Ephesian elders.

Lawyers tell me that if you try to bring somebody to court on the basis of a bad attitude, that's the worst court case you can have. Even though it's obvious to everybody, it's the hardest to prove. You can't really put your finger on it. It's just an attitude that's inside someone. You can't fake it. It's either there or it's not there. Paul said, "I was with you serving consistently, but with all humility. There was an attitude that I had towards God and towards man that was sensed by everybody in my serving them."

Now listen to what I'm saying. Sometimes we can go through the motions and say all the right things, but your attitude behind it is picked up by everybody. You can't put your finger on the fact that it was said wrong. You can't put your finger on the fact that it was done wrong, but there is something missing. The attitude of humility is not there.

Sometimes the best way to know a word is to look at its opposite. That helps me. Do you know what an antonym is? An antonym means exactly the opposite. There are three words that are antonyms to that word for "humility." The first word is **alazoneia (word study)**. "Look in James 4:13, and you will find it. The attitude is so clear. This is an attitude towards God and what a man does in his relationship to God. James 4:13 says, 'Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet, you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.' But as it is you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.'" The word "arrogance" in James 4:16 is the opposite of what Paul was when he was there among the Ephesian elders. What does that mean? It means that he didn't come there with his own agenda. He didn't come there with his own program. He came there with the understanding that whatever he did was in response to the will of God. He would not do a thing if God told him not to. He walked, and he moved in the sphere of God's will. So therefore, he had a humble attitude, a humility about him towards God. That affects the way people do what they do.

It's incredible to me what's going on in America today. We've got so many programs, any church could grow, numerically. But I want to tell you something. Until we get down in our attitude towards God and realize that God has the plan and man doesn't and only if God wills will we do anything, we are never going to see Christ enabled to build His own church in our country. You see, a lot of people are arrogant. They go through the right motions. They are very conservative. They even say it the right way, but there is a

hidden attitude that you can't prove. You can't put your finger on it, but it's missing in their life. Are they submissive to God? Do they say, "God, I don't know. I can plan my way, but whatever You will, I am trusting You to direct my steps."? Or do they say, "God, I'm doing it. Come on, God. This is my agenda"? That's a total different attitude towards God. First of all, he had the right attitude towards God.

Secondly, there is another word, huperephania (see related word huperephanos). It is the word that means you consider yourself better than others. That's the best way to put it. The word huper means above, and phaino means to think yourself above somebody else.

One of the most damaging things in my Christian walk, I guess, over the years has been meeting people that I thought were famous, my heroes of the faith. To meet them face to face and to shake hands with them and then to find out they won't give you the time of day. I'll never forget being at the Southern Baptist Convention several years ago. I saw a very dear friend of mine, I thought, in the Baptist Book Store there. I have to be careful. Sometimes you befriend others, but they don't ever befriend you back. And I thought he was a friend. I was just milling around during one of the breaks, and I walked over to him to say something to him. He saw me coming. He looked up and saw my face, but he was talking to a big shot in the Convention and when I got near him, he just turned his back to me and walked away as if I wasn't even standing there. If God would just give me five minutes in the flesh one of these days, I would like to ask that person behind the building and say, "Just who in the world do you think you are?"

It's a hidden attitude, folks. It's nothing that you can take them to court about. It's nothing they are doing wrong. It's nothing they are saying wrong. There's just something missing. Something's missing. There is not a humble spirit that's there. Now, that's, to me, the integrity of your testimony. You've either got it or you haven't. You can't fake it. If it's there, it's out of a conscious attitude that you are nothing. God only uses people who understand that they are nothing. It's an attitude towards God and it's also an attitude towards others. Nobody is a big "I" and somebody else is a little "you." People are all equal at the cross.

I guess to sum it up, there is one more word phusiosis (see related word phusioo). It means to be puffed up like a cloud is puffed up. It's also the word for smoke. It can refer to people who just blow smoke. A lot of people are conservative. A lot of people say it right. A lot of people seem to be doing it right, even producing great numbers. Something's missing. What is it? That humility. You don't just serve the Lord, he says, "with all humility." It's an attitude one has towards God and an attitude one has towards man.

Well, thirdly, we see he was a compassionate servant. Look at that verse again. It is just so clear. It brings it right out. He says, "how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears." Now, you say, "Why were the tears there? Isn't somebody showing weakness when they cry?" You know, we are living in a day and age when we think that the men who don't cry are the macho guys. No, they are the weaker guys. The Son of Man, God's Son, came to this earth and wept as He looked over Jerusalem. He shed tears when He saw that Lazarus had died. He cared. There was compassion about Him. Listen, if Jesus is being Jesus in me, He is not going to change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. So the compassion He already has is going to be seen in and through me and in and through you.

You can't do what you do without compassion and love for the people you are doing it for. You see, you not only love God, but you love the people you are ministering to. In verse 31 he brings this up again. We will look at this more later on. "Therefore, be on the alert." He is talking to the elders. "I am worried about the wolves that are going to come among you. They will bring false doctrines and things that are going to distort the Word." He says, "be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one [How?] with tears." In other words, "My compassion and my burden was there. I had an attitude towards God. I have an attitude towards men. I don't think of myself more highly," he says. "I am not some person blowing smoke. I don't have my own programs. I realize that God takes nobodies and makes somebodies out of them. I've got to live that way. At the same time, if I love God, my love for Him will reflect itself in my love for the people I am serving." That is what he is saying. That gives integrity to your testimony.

When the people around you understand that you love them and you care about them, many times the tears will be there in our life. The word "admonish" means "to exhort, to warn." It always includes the Word of God. You say, "Now Wayne, here we go again. I am not Paul. How can you take Paul's life and force him into my life?" I am not doing that. I'm saying whatever you are burdened to do and however you are gifted, you are as responsible as Paul was. It will be seen differently in you. It will be seen differently in me. A mother who raises her children and loves God will love those children unconditionally. There will be tears shed around those kids because what she does, she does with a heart of compassion. She does it with an attitude of humility. She does it with a consistency that gives integrity to what she is. It's the same thing. You may not have thousands to speak to. You may not have a group to disciple. But I guarantee you one thing, whatever you do in obedience to the Lord is going to have in it an attitude towards Him and others and a burden, a compassion for those people you are ministering to.

You say, "Well, Paul didn't love everybody. He couldn't have loved the Corinthians." You know, when you think of his letters and all the churches he wrote to, the letter to the Corinthians was the one that you've got to question, because these folks were doing nothing right. They were doing everything wrong. I want you to see something in 2Corinthians 2:4. This really blessed me. When you

love the Lord, it doesn't matter whether people are doing it right or wrong. You still have a love for them. He is writing to these Corinthians and he says in verse 4, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you." You can't fake it. It is either there or it's not.

You say, "You mean if I go out and witness for Christ, and if I do the things He tells me in His Word, that may not be the integrity I am looking for?" That's what I am saying. It's not just what you do. It's the way you go about doing it that proves the fact that it is truly Christ in you, manifesting and ministering through you. That gives the integrity of ministry in our life.

Paul was a genuine man, a man who was a bond-servant. Consistently he served the Lord. Yes, he served people, but his motive was to serve the Lord. He did so with an attitude that you couldn't prove or disprove, you just sensed was an attitude of humility towards God and humility towards man. It was also an attitude of loving the people that he served. He did what he did with many tears.

Let me show you something. We sing a hymn which I want you to see the words to again. "I'll tell the world that I'm a Christian. I'm not ashamed His name to bear." Does that hit home with you? "Brother Wayne, you don't understand the real world." I hear this all the time. It makes me so mad. How do you know I don't? "Because you don't live in mine." Do you think yours is the only one that's real? People say that to me all the time. "You are not out there in the work place. You are not out there being bombarded every day." That's true, I'm not. What's that got to do with the price of eggs in Egypt? "I'll tell the world that I'm a Christian," whatever part of it that I'm in. "I'm not ashamed His name to bear. I'll tell the world that I'm a Christian. I'll take Him with me anywhere." I want them to know.

Young people, can you say that? I'll take Him to school with me. I don't care what they say about me. "I'll tell the world how Jesus saved me and how He gave me a life brand new. And I know that if you trust Him, that all He gave me, He'll give to you. I'll tell the world that He's my Savior. No other one could love me so. My life, my all, is His forever. And where He leads me, I will go." We sing it, but what's it going to be when we walk out of your home tomorrow? It's not just the motions you go through.

There was a church that Jesus had John write to. It was the church of Ephesus. What was their problem? On the outside they had it all right, doctrine, discipline. What did he say, "This I have against you, you have left your first love. Your attitude is gone. Your heart is gone. You are going through the motions, but as far as I am concerned, you are way off base. Go back and do the things that you used to do."

Well, I don't know about you, but this is eating my lunch. I can't point a finger at anybody. Can I just give you a thought? If you are doing what you are doing out of obedience to Jesus, and you are expecting appreciation from anybody that is involved in your doing what Jesus tells you, you are dead in the water. Let me ask you. Be honest with me. Is your discouragement or frustration because you are waiting on somebody to appreciate what you are doing for Jesus and it's not come yet and it's got you completely discouraged in the Christian life? You see, we prove our integrity, folks—I am saying to me, "Wayne, do you understand what you are saying?" Yes, I do—You prove your integrity by doing what you do for His sake and His alone. Don't get down and crawl into a corner because somebody doesn't pat you on the back because you obey Jesus.

Paul: The Missionary – Part 7

Turn with me to Acts 20]. You thought I was going to say Ephesians 1, I know, but you already know what we are doing. Ephesians 1:1 has a phrase in it which says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." That has been our spring board now for this our eighth study as we introduce the book of Ephesians. We may get there before the Lord returns. I don't know. We certainly are enjoying the adventure that we are in right now in the interlude.

We are looking at Paul in his third missionary journey. On his first and second missionary journeys we saw Paul as being a man surrendered. We looked into what a man who is surrendered to Christ experiences. When we got into the third missionary journey, we looked first of all at how people are blessed because someone surrenders to Christ. Remember, when you surrender to Christ, when you say "yes" to Him, at that moment you are a minister; at that moment, you are a missionary, whether across the street or around the world. Don't ever forget that. It's not that you cross the ocean to become a missionary. You are a missionary the moment you say "yes" to Jesus. We saw how people were blessed. At Ephesus we saw the miracles that God did. In Macedonia we saw the comfort that God brought through compassion and exhortation of Paul. We also saw at Troas how they were instructed by the Word of God.

In the last study, still in his third missionary journey, we began to look more at Paul himself, at the integrity of the man. He gets to Miletus which is south of Troas. It is actually 37 miles south of Ephesus. Now remember, Asia Minor at that time is now modern day

Turkey. On your map, it is up in the right hand corner. You can see Troas on the western coast of Asia Minor. Go directly south. You will come to Ephesus. Keep going directly south, and you will come to Miletus 37 miles south, which is a seaport city. It was here that Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus to come be with him. He didn't have time to stop at Ephesus because he was trying to get to Jerusalem by the Feast of Pentecost. He was hurrying on that journey, and yet he wanted to meet with those elders from Ephesus.

We also saw in the last study how he shares his heart with them. In Acts 20:18, he says, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord." You see, these elders at Ephesus knew him for a period of three years. They knew him like we would know one another if we lived together and were around each other all the time. It's kind of like the expression: Your reputation is what people think you are or what you think people think you are. Your character is what your wife and people around you know that you are.

The people in the area knew his reputation, but these elders there at Ephesus knew his character. These elders knew him all the way to his very heart, to the very root, all the way to what made up Paul. What is a genuine surrendered person to Christ? What is a genuine missionary? What is it that gives integrity to our testimony? Well, in the first phrase there, "I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord," we saw that he was a consistent servant of Christ. He was a bond-servant, *doulos*. It comes from the word *doulos*, which means a bond-servant. In other words, what he did he did because he wanted to, not because he had to. It was his life to serve the Lord, not his job. The people who were close to him knew that.

Not only that, we saw that he was serving the Lord with all humility. Not only was he a consistent servant, he was a contrite servant. By contrite, I mean humble and broken. The word humble here is the word *tapeinophrosune*. It is the word that means to get down as far as you can and have that mindset about yourself and your relationship to God. It is how you think about yourself and your relationship to God. It is not necessarily what you do or don't do. As a matter of fact, many people can do the right thing and say the right thing, but there is something missing in their attitude. There is no humility. They think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. They are puffed up. They don't have time for other people. You see, Paul had that characteristic of humility. Not only was he a consistent servant, but he was a contrite servant.

Then Acts 20:19 says, "and with tears." He was a compassionate servant. It says in 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," how did he do that? "with tears." He cared about the people he ministered to. You can't fake that. You can't fake humility. It is either there or it's not. Humility is not the color of the suit that you wear or how big your Bible is. Humility is an attitude that people know and sense when they are around you. If you are the big "I" and other people are "little you's," they can sense that about you. You may be doing it all right, but there is no humility and no love. What a beautiful picture of a man who had integrity in his testimony. Not only could he say things to others, but it was seen in his lifestyle.

Well, in this study we push on. There are two other things that I really want you to see. Remember, first of all, he was a consistent servant. Secondly, he was a contrite servant. Thirdly, he was a compassionate servant.

Fourthly, he was a contested servant. In other words, everything he did was contested and challenged by somebody. It was almost as if Paul could not get any freedom at all from people coming against his ministry. Look at what it says in verse 19: "serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews." Now, it is important at this time to understand that word "trials." That's the word we became very familiar with when we were studying the epistle of James. James 1:2 says, "Count it all joy, brethren, when you encounter various trials." I remember, when we were on that message, walking to church one day when my car would not start. Many of my church members passed by me and said, "Count it all joy, Brother Wayne." I think they were getting back at me. I don't know how many of them came to me and said, "Can't we get into some other book? Everything is falling apart in my life, and you are telling me to count it all joy." I wasn't telling them. James was telling them to, "Count it all joy when you encounter various trials."

Now what is a trial? The same word is used here in Acts 20:19 as is used in James 1:2: *peirasmos*. It comes from the word *peirazo*. It has to do with anything in your life, whether minute or big in scale, that forces you to make a choice between your flesh and doing the will of God. It is any time you make a choice. That is a trial and in that trial is the temptation to bail out and not do what God wants you to do. As a matter of fact, the word *peirasmos* doesn't really talk about the nature of the trial as much as it does our response to that trial. When you see the word *peirasmos*, you should think choice. Somebody is having to make a choice. What response are we making to the circumstances of our life? Paul says, "I was with you consistently serving the Lord with humility and with tears, but also with trials."

Where did these trials come from? They came from the religious Jews who were hung up in the system and followed him around consistently contesting everything he did. Well, it says "Jews" which means there was more than one. Look back in Acts 19:8. Remember, he is talking about his time in Ephesus, so we've got to go back to Ephesus to find out what he's talking about. It says, "And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the

kingdom of God. But when some were becoming hardened [the word “becoming hardened” is a progressive word; the more they heard it, the harder they got in their heart] and disobedient [they were unwilling to be persuaded by what Paul was preaching], speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”

Now what happened here? One of the first ways that these religious Jews, in the synagogue where he was reasoning with them in the Word, contested him was by publicly criticizing his message. Now, I don't know if you can understand that or not. You do not preach or teach. I guess because I do, I understand that. When you preach your heart out and love the Lord Jesus and that happens, it affects you. It wasn't as if they got before people and criticized him. They got before people and criticized the truth that he was declaring. There is nothing that can dig any deeper in your heart than when someone criticizes the very truth that you are seeking to proclaim.

Not only that, they also made a public mockery of it. Paul had to live with this, day by day, day in and day out. He had to face these trials. They contested him. Can you imagine? As he is preaching they are standing there saying all these things about the message that he is proclaiming.

Thirdly, they tried to plagiarize his ministry. I want you to see this. In Acts 19:11-13, something interesting happens. We have already looked at it once. “And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.” The word “extraordinary” here means “rarely ever happens.” You can't build a ministry on something that rarely ever happens. Why God chose to do that in Ephesus, I don't know. The next time you watch a television program and somebody is going to send you a piece of their handkerchief, turn it off. It happened at Ephesus; it is not something people do today to mimic what God did in Ephesus.

Acts 19:13 goes on to say, “But also some of the Jewish exorcists, 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.’” Now, you've got to get in to the flavor of this thing. They are going around watching Paul. Paul is seeing incredible things happen. Demons are cast out. People are healed. These were incredible, extraordinary miracles. The sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, started following him around and tried to mimic what Paul was doing. Is this the first time that's ever happened to him? Oh, no. Remember when he wrote the letter to the Philippians. He said, “There are many out there preaching the gospel out of envy and strife. They are not preaching error. They are preaching the same gospel I am preaching.” Why? “Because they want my crowds. They want my ministry.” But Paul says, “Praise God, the gospel is being preached.” He didn't care who was preaching it or why they were preaching it. God is not blessing their preaching, He is blessing the gospel that they are preaching. They weren't preaching error. Somebody was plagiarizing his ministry.

I wonder if you understand how that is such an appropriate truth for us to understand in the 20th century. How many of us have surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ and had somebody try to criticize our message? Not only that, they begin to plagiarize and copy our ministry and everything that we are doing. You say, “Now what happened? I don't understand that.” Are you kidding? I wonder how Dr. Stephen Olford and Adrian Rogers feel? These guys have studied and God has given them to them these messages. Then they go someplace, sit in a church and find somebody standing up and preaching the exact same thing that they have done. They use the illustrations as if they happened to them. They absolutely copy somebody else's truth, and copy somebody else's message. They take their outlines and their illustrations and try to transform it to somebody else. I had a man tell me one day that if Stephen Olford ever died, he would have to quit the ministry. You wouldn't believe how many people's studies are nothing more than a tape recorder and a pad and a pencil. All they are doing is mimicking or copying somebody else's ministry. They are trying to get the same results that God honored in a person's endeavor and walk with the Lord Jesus.

If that's not enough to cause you a little bit of confusion, listen to this. This really happened. We are living in a day that you have to copyright everything. This came to my attention when someone on our staff began to write a few things. Can you believe that? We are having to copyright it. I asked somebody one day, “Why do you copyright everything? Man, this is just for the kingdom of God.” I am a little naïve and sort of a Johnny-come-lately. They told me this story. This actually happened within the past several years. A man in our country preached a seminar, and it was so good. It was borne out of his life. He didn't think about copyrighting it. He had a ministry through a seminar and made it available to anybody that wanted it. Somebody heard it, liked it, and copyrighted it. Now the man whose heart it was borne in cannot even preach his own material. Somebody has plagiarized his ministry.

Here is the apostle Paul. He is a man who was called, “A man who consistently served the Lord.” He had to deal with these Jews, these religious people, who came along behind him, and stood up publicly and criticized everything he was saying. And if that wasn't enough, they were also following him around trying to mimic the things he was doing so they could have the same results and produce the same crowd. That's what he had to endure.

He said it was “trials,” which is in the plural. We don't know all of the story. The only thing we know about it is what he went through while he was there at Ephesus. But the question came to my mind as I was studying this, first of all to my own self and then to you.

What does it take to make you want to fold under the pressure of the trials that come around you, especially from religious people who are either trying to criticize your message or trying to plagiarize your ministry? I wonder.

You say, "Well, I am not in the pulpit ministry or anything else." Now, wait a minute. Get into your own situation. Suppose somebody is using what's going on in your life and trying to mimic it into their life so other people will think that it is theirs. They also criticize openly the very truth that you love and seek to obey daily.

Well, if that's not enough, in Acts 19:23-41, they discredited his motives. Now, I don't know three more severe things than for somebody to criticize your message, plagiarize your ministry and discredit your motives. Who was doing this to Paul? It was Demetrius. Remember when we looked at chapter 19, we saw that Demetrius was the guy who went around selling little statues of Artemis, the goddess of Ephesus. Demetrius called a meeting of all the businessmen and told them, "Here is a man coming into town and all he's trying to do is to kill our business." That's when they all ran into that amphitheater, 30,000 of them, and began to scream. They screamed for two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." Finally the mayor had to quiet the whole bunch down.

You know, it makes you wonder about all the trials that a man like Paul went through. Maybe they are not exactly like yours, but I want to tell you this, when you surrender to Christ, when you are fully obedient to what He wants in your life, there are going to be others to contest what you are doing. They are going to criticize your message. They will plagiarize your ministry. Whatever happens to you, they will repeat it. It is amazing how all this gets interwoven. They will discredit your motives.

Did that stop Paul? Look in Acts 20:20-21. Paul said, "how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." He continued to teach them publicly. The word for "publicly" there is the word *demosios*, which means "that which belongs to the public, a public place." He also taught them privately from house to house. He did not stop. He didn't go to the Greeks just because the Jews were giving him so much flack. He preached it to the Jews and preached it to the Greeks. He kept right on going regardless of how they contested what he was doing. He went right on doing what he knew God had told him to do. He was a contested servant. Yet, in the midst of all that contesting that was going on in his life, he was faithful to do what God had called him to do. Now, folks, when that kind of stuff does not alter you and you keep your mind on what God has told you to do in your life and in your walk, that's what gives integrity to your ministry.

I guess one of the greatest experiences I had in Zimbabwe several years ago was when we went up to Victoria Falls, which is on the Zambezi River right there by Zambia. We went up through the Nawangee Game Park. That was exciting. It took us about two days to get through that park. We could drive around the corner on dirt roads and there would be an elephant standing there. That just doesn't happen every day. It took us a while to get into a frame of mind to look for elephants instead of buses. It was just different. We saw rhinoceroses and lions. They were out in an open field. There were no fences. They have huge signs about every mile which read, "Stay in the car. Keep the windows rolled up." If you don't, you might become a nice meal for some animal that's on the prowl. It took us two days to go through that hot, dusty jungle. It was just incredible.

We finally got up to Victoria Falls and went out to see the Falls. People there say, "God practiced on Niagara Falls when He got ready to make Victoria Falls." It is the most incredible thing you have ever seen in your life. I mean over a mile long. I can't even begin to describe it to you. As we were walking to the Falls, the thing that impressed me was not the Falls. The thing that impressed me was the statue that was there at Victoria Falls, given by the government of then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, in tribute to a man by the name of David Livingston. He was a man who was contested on every front. He was so burdened and called that he didn't let anything in his life, not even trials, alter him off the course. He stayed true to the things that God had put before him, regardless of his trials, regardless of the flack. As a matter of fact, if you know anything about the history of David Livingston, you know that for five years he didn't see his wife or children. He did not even know that his father had died and been buried.

Folks, I'm telling you, you need to understand the Christ life to get the balance into your own life. You have to realize that it is not us but Christ. He's the one that brings balance to your family. He's the one who brings balance to your ministry. I can't sit back on Monday and say, "If I spend ten hours with my family this week, I am going to have a godly home." No, sir. If I surrender to Jesus, and I do whatever He tells me to do, then whatever that means, He covers the bases back in my home. Until you understand that, you are going to have a lopsided view of what being surrendered to Christ is all about.

David Livingston didn't see his wife and children for five years. Didn't even know his Dad had died. He came out of the jungle and went back home. He found out his Dad had died and fell down in the floor and began to weep openly. He had had such a close relationship with his Father and did not even know he had died. He went back to the jungle, but this time he took his wife with him. He was only there a short time and his wife died. Instead of coming out like most people would have done, he went deeper and deeper and deeper into the jungles, trying his best to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you go over to that part of Africa, they know David Livingston. It is almost like the demon who said, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" He was a man called, burdened, contested, criticized, and maligned by his friends, but he stayed true to his course. He didn't shrink back from doing that which was useful to those he was ministering to.

In the latter days of his life, he got very sick, but he would not leave the jungles he loved. They put a tent up and put a guard in front of it, out of respect to him, to let him die in that tent. The guard was there to keep the animals from getting into the tent. They said people would come from miles around just to be in the presence of a man who loved God like that. Even at the point when he could hardly talk, people would come and just stand to be in the presence of the Lord.

The guard witnessed his death. He said he heard something, a commotion, a scrambling on the cot that he was lying on and realized he had fallen down to his knees. He looked in and thought he was praying so he closed the flaps of the tent. He stayed there for a long time and realized no movement was going on inside at all and no voice could be heard. He opened up the tent and went back inside. Lo and behold, David Livingston had died prostrate in prayer beside his bed. He had always said, "When I die, I want to die on my knees talking to my Lord."

Now, I don't know about you, folks, but that gives a little bit of integrity to the testimony of Jesus Christ in a person's life. You see, when God called Paul, there was no turning back. I mean, he was in it for the duration. When he got into it, not only was he consistent, not only was he contrite, not only was he compassionate, but he was also a man very contested. But in all that contesting in his life, it says, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable." No matter the criticism, he stayed true to the calling that God had put in his life.

There is one more thing that I want us to share before we leave this particular subject about Paul.

Fifthly, we see that Paul was a compelled servant. Look at this. It says in Acts 20:22, "And now [watch the phrase], behold, bound in spirit." We need to understand the term "bound." It's the word *deo*. It is in the perfect passive sense. Perfect tense means something happened in the past that caused me to be in a state of existence in the present. When it is in the perfect tense, the word means "to be compelled to do something." It means "bound." It's not "bound in spirit," it is "bound in the Spirit." Passive voice means, I didn't bind myself. I'm not a self-motivator. I am bound. I have been bound since that happened in my life back there. I am under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit of God to do that God has told me to do. Paul was a man that was compelled in his service.

You know, I heard about the millionaire who was in a leper colony somewhere in another part of our world he just happened to be touring. He thought it would be interesting to see a leper colony. He went into it, and there was the most gorgeous, beautiful, blond-haired woman he had ever seen in his life working with these lepers. He said to her, "Honey, I wouldn't do what you do for a million dollars." She looked at him and smiled and said, "I wouldn't either." Well, why are you doing what you are doing? She said, "The love of Christ Jesus constraineth me." (2Cor 5:14-note) That's what it means to be compelled. When you are compelled, you are bound in the Spirit, passive voice. The Holy Spirit is doing something in my life.

Listen, I said in the last study, if we are going to have integrity to our testimony, Jesus must be our life, not just what we do on Sundays and Wednesdays. If we are bound in the Spirit of God, then nothing is going to alter us on the course which God has set before us, not even the unknown of what would happen.

Look at Acts 20:22 again. "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem," now watch what he says, "not knowing what will happen to me there." The phrase means "I don't know everything. I know a few things. I haven't got the full picture yet."

Go little bit further, in Acts 20:23. What Paul did know was not good, "except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me." You see, when a man is compelled by the Holy Spirit of God, the unknown that's ahead of him doesn't matter. When God has spoken to him, he does what God says. We are always going to have the unknown. We are always going to have those things we can't put together.

When I came to Chattanooga, God compelled me to come here. I did not even know my salary. I did not know what I would be paid. All I was told was, "We will take care of you." The church has taken care of me better than any place I have ever been in the ministry. God promised me in my heart that He would do that. He shared with me and confirmed it through the people. The thing that I had more than anything else was the compulsion of the Holy Spirit to go. That's all I had.

You know, I hear a lot of people saying, "Well, God is calling me to do something, but I've got to work it all out. I don't know what I am going to do with my kids, and I don't know what I am going to do with my house. I don't know what I am going to do with my money. I don't know all these things." You are never going to know all those things. A man compelled by the calling of the Spirit of God is a man who risks the unknown to do what God tells him to do. God takes care of the rest of it, even when it is bad.

The term "bonds" there is the same word we saw used for "bound in the Spirit." When it is in the plural, it refers to imprisonment. Oh, that's exciting. The word for "affliction" there is the word *thlipsis*. It means "suffering, pain." It comes from the word that means to crush, the word that means to hurt to the point of excruciating pain. Paul is saying, "I don't have the whole picture, but what I've got is not too good. However, I am bound in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem." You think that doesn't give integrity to your message?

Marilyn Lazlo was in our services a couple of weeks ago. She is a missionary in Papua New Guinea. She shared with us that she

hates bugs and snakes. When she was called to go to Papua New Guinea through Wycliffe Bible Translators to translate a language nobody had even written down, she said “yes” to God. Do you think there weren’t some unknowns in that? Why in the world would somebody leave a decent job in America with all the malls and shopping and neat times we have over here and go to a God-forsaken place like Papua New Guinea? I’ll tell you. They are compelled by the Spirit of God.

Folks, we need to learn to live that way, compelled by God’s Spirit. We’re bound. Shirley, Marilyn’s sister, was worse than Marilyn. Shirley said, “I was more afraid of bugs than Marilyn was.” Shirley has been there now for 14 years. Not only that, another woman from this church feels God is putting on her heart to go and share with them in the ministry over there in Papua New Guinea. There are many unknown things, but when you are compelled by the Spirit, it doesn’t matter. It can be good. It can be bad. It doesn’t matter. You can’t let that stop you from doing what God is saying in your life. That’s the whole key.

The best biblical illustration of course, is Abraham in Genesis. In Genesis 12:1ff God says, “Abe, buddy, I want you to get your wife and your family and don’t take anybody else, and I want you to follow Me.” “Where are we going, Lord?” “Don’t worry, I’ll let you know when we get there.” Can you imagine? Either he was a total idiot or God was doing something very special in his life. Of course, we have the Word of God to document this is God all the way.

Why do you get up and go to work every day? Why do you do what you do? What motivates you? Are you self-motivated or are you Holy Spirit-compelled to do the things that God has put before you? If God is moving you, then a little criticism and the other things that happen in your life don’t matter. You can continue to do the things that God has put before you.

Well, Acts 20:24 is the real summation of his attitude. “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order 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.” What a mouthful! What a mouthful! The word for “life” there is not really “life,” it is “soul,” psuche. That’s the part of man that relates to the world that is around him. It appears to me what Paul is saying here and what he said in another epistle is, “I have crucified myself to the world, and the world has crucified itself unto me.” In other words, there is nothing in me that is attracted to anything that the world has to offer that would keep me from doing the things that God has put before me.

He said, “I am going to finish my course.” The term “finish” there is the verb that means “I want it to be brought to a completion.” By the way, what do you think his course was? What was his course? What is your course? Look what he says, “I may finish my course and the ministry which I received.” The course was the received ministry God had given to Paul. Remember, we don’t preach an achieved ministry, but a received ministry. What has God given you as the result of your surrender to Him? Now, is there a worthwhile thing in your life stopping that from being fully accomplished and completed as long as you are living on this earth. That is the key. Paul said “Nothing in this world attracts me. I don’t count my life for any account. Only that my ministry is brought to its finished end.”

Well, he goes on to say, “to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.” Now be careful. What Paul is saying is, “I want my ministry which God has raised up in me to be brought to its fullest accomplishment, and I want that fact to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Do you know what testimony it is? The testimony, the good news, is this. Paul can say one day, “It wasn’t me, folks. It was the grace of God that this ministry was accomplished in me. It testifies to the gospel of the grace of God.”

Well, do you think his prayer was answered? Look with me in 2Timothy 4:6-note. Paul is in prison about to be killed and his ministry is over. His life on earth is over, as a matter of fact. Let’s just see whether or not this consistent servant had his prayer answered, his wish, and his desire answered. Was his course finished like it should have been finished? Verse 6 there says, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering [Paul says as he is in prison in Rome], and the time of my departure has come.” He is about to die. 2Ti 4:7-note says, “I have fought the good fight. I have [What?] finished the course, I have kept the faith.” Verse 8 continues, “in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will reward to me on that day; and not only to me [now watch], but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Do you know what that does to me? That opens a door for every one of us. If we are willing to die to self, surrender to Him, allow the Holy Spirit of God to daily fill us with His power and presence, and control us, then the course that God has set us on will be brought to its accomplished end. Regardless of how bad it gets, we will leave a legacy that will give integrity to the testimony of Christians that will last until the Lord Jesus comes back to this earth. It’s possible for you, and it’s possible for me. It all goes back to one thing. Am I willing to say “yes” to Him?

Folks, listen, one of these days we are going to get serious. I don’t know when it’s going to be. Individually, daily, say “Lord, I am sick of playing these stupid games. It’s all or nothing. Lord, I want You to reign and rule in my life. I want the received ministry You have given to me to be accomplished to its fullest end. I don’t care what happens to me. I only want Jesus to be glorified. I want it to testify of the gospel of the grace of God.” That’s a man whose life has fueled the integrity to the testimony of believers even until this day.

Related Resource:

[Acts 20:17-27 Commentary](#)

[Acts 20:28-38 Commentary](#)

This is our ninth study introducing the book of Ephesians. You say, “Acts is a strange place to be if you are introducing Ephesians.” The first phrase of Ephesians 1:1 says, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” We have looked at Paul, the man, and we’ve been looking at Paul, the missionary. This is our seventh study on Paul the missionary.

He’s on his third missionary journey. If you’ll look in the center of the map, you will see Asia. It should be easy to find. If you’ll look to the southwest of Asia, you’ll see Ephesus, which is a seaport city of Asia Minor. Then you see Miletus. That is where he is as we are looking at the Scripture in this study. It is a seaport city. Paul did not want to go back to Ephesus. He is on a time table. He is trying to get to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost. So, therefore, he calls the Ephesian elders to him at Miletus.

That is where we are, in Acts 20:17-24. In our last study, Acts 20:17-24, we saw some things that marked the integrity of Paul’s testimony. He was genuine. We saw some things that really added to his testimony to others. What were they? Well, in the last sentence of verse 18 it says, “he said to them, ‘You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord.’” That term “serving the Lord” is from the word *doulos*, which means a bond-servant. It is in the present tense. Paul, when he was among the Ephesian elders, was consistently serving His Christ, not because he had to, but because he wanted to. That’s the mark of a genuine servant of Jesus. He doesn’t do it because he has to, but because he wants to.

Secondly, he was a contrite servant of God. By contrite, I mean broken and humble. The word “humility,” used there in Acts 20:19, refers to an attitude that one has. Have you ever been around somebody who just seemed to do everything right, but there was something missing in their attitude? That’s what this word refers to. It wasn’t so much what they did, but how they went about it. The word is not *tapeinoo*, which is usually the word used for humility. That word means “in light of God, we get down as low as we can and have a proper estimation of ourselves.” The word used here is *tapeinophrosune*, which is the word that means “to think of yourself that way.” We live it out. It comes out in your attitude. Yes, you may do the same thing someone else does, but the way you go about it has a mark on it. You have a right relationship to go with the proper estimation of yourself. You do not want to please yourself. You want to please your Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, he was a compassionate servant of Christ. He says, “serving the Lord with all humility and with tears.” If you love the people that you are serving, you cannot fake that. It is either there or it’s not there. Paul had it. Paul said, “You know me better than anybody. You know these things were true.”

Fourthly, he was a contested servant of Christ: “serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials.” He was contested by the Jewish religious system wherever he went. He mentions that. He says, “which came upon me through the plots of the Jews.” They were constantly trying to subvert him even to the point of trying to assassinate him, which changed one of his missionary journeys. Paul said, “Listen, I have had many trials.” He was a contested servant. They were always coming against him.

Then fifthly, he was a compelled servant. This is found in Acts 20:20-24. Look particularly at Acts 20:22. He says, “And now, behold, bound in spirit.” Actually, it should be “bound in the spirit.” The word “bound” is the word which means compelled. It’s in the passive voice, which means “I have not bound myself.” Paul was saying, “This is not man’s ministry. This is God’s ministry, and He has caused me to be compelled to do the things that I am doing.” What an integrity to the testimony of Paul.

Well, now we move a little further. Beginning in verse 25, we want to see the integrity of his burden. One of the things to watch for when you are trying to learn about the Christian walk is when you see somebody like the apostle Paul begin to glean what makes them tick. When you begin to understand his burden, it will be a blessing to your heart and to your life.

Can I make a statement? Behind every true servant of Christ is a God-driven burden to protect doctrinally those that God has entrusted to your care. Can I say that again? Behind every true servant of Christ, there is a God-driven burden to doctrinally protect those who have been entrusted to your care. Whether it’s a mother with her children or a pastor and his flock, that is God built in. It is God-driven in your hearts.

Well, Paul has called the elders to Miletus from Ephesus. He has something on his heart. He has got a heavy burden on his heart, and he begins to communicate that to these precious men who are the leaders of that church. Look at Acts 20:25. He says, “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more.” There are two words for the word “know.” There is the word *ginosko*. God has given us varying degrees of learning skills. I use those learning skills

to acquire knowledge, either through books or through experience. That's the word *ginosko*. You learn it. You participate in it. You acquire knowledge.

There is another word for the word "know," the word *eido*. This word is the intuitive knowledge. I don't know why, but women seem to have this intuitive knowledge. I can ask my wife sometimes, "How do you know that?" She says, "I don't know. I just know." You know, ninety percent of the time, she's right. I don't know about that other ten percent, but ninety percent of the time, she's right. This intuitive knowledge is kind of like that. It is something that is in one's spirit. It's something that God enables a person to have that he didn't have to go and acquire. He didn't have to read a book to get. It's built in.

Romans 8:28 uses that word. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." That's the same word. We intuitively know it.

Well, that word is used in Acts 20:25 and in Acts 20:29. It is important that we understand what he is saying. Paul says, "I have a heavy burden on my heart. There are some things God has told me in my spirit that has caused me to call you from Ephesus to Miletus. We have got to talk." What does he know? Two things. One is in Acts 20:25: "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more." Paul, in his spirit, knows that where he is headed, he will not return. These people will never see him again. How does he know it? He just knows it in his spirit.

If you will go back to Acts 20:22, 23, you will see what we are saying here. It says in verse 22, "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem [Now watch], not knowing what will happen to me there." That doesn't mean he doesn't know anything about what will happen, but intuitively, spiritually, God has not given him the whole picture. The word for "not" there is a relative word. Paul was saying, "I don't know everything, but I know some things."

Look at the next verse, verse 23, "except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me." Paul says, "Listen guys. I've got a heavy burden on my heart. There are two things that the Spirit has told me. One is, I am leaving, and you will never see me again. But not only that, I have a burden on my heart that what is coming down the road won't be good."

Look in Acts 20:29 again. He uses the word "know" at that point. He says in verse 29, "I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." Now we are getting down now to the reason he calls these elders to Miletus. He says, "Guys, in my spirit, I know it. They are waiting for me to move out. They are going to move in on the flock. I had to bring you here. I had to caution you and warn you and instruct you, because in my spirit I know I am not going to return. I know that. I know in my spirit, as soon as I am gone, the false teachers are going to move in. I'm concerned about the integrity and the lives of the people of the flock of God." This is the biggest burden that Paul has.

You say, "Now, Wayne, it really wasn't that way. He wanted to be with his friends before he went into the trials that came." No. Remember Acts 20:24. "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order 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." In other words, Paul said, "I am not thinking of myself. Man, I want to get on with it. I want to see the course of my life completed. I want the finishing of that course to testify to the gospel of God's grace. I am not concerned about myself. I didn't bring you from Ephesus to Miletus to give a pity party for me. I brought you here because I am burdened for the flock and I am burdened for you. I want them to be protected doctrinally in the days ahead. False teachers are coming your way."

So, in that burden, I want us to see three things about the integrity of Paul's burden. Perhaps we can glean from it. You know, we are not the apostle Paul. I am not the apostle Paul. You are not me, and I am not you. But, you know, in all of those God has entrusted to our care, we are God-driven to make sure they are protected doctrinally so they can stay on the course God has put them on.

There are three things about the integrity of Paul's burden. First of all, we see in Acts 20:26-27 that he was not burdened for those who resisted the word of God. Now be careful to understand this. Look in Acts 20:26: "Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men." In other words, Paul was saying, "I am not guilty of their blood guiltiness, if they stand before God one day. I have done everything God has called me to do. I am not guilty of their blood. When they stand before God, they will have to answer for themselves."

Now, let me show you how that works itself out. The word "innocent" in Acts 20:26 is the word that is a familiar word if you know anything about the Greek language. It is the word *katharos*. It is the word that is sometimes translated "clear," sometimes it is translated "clean," sometimes it is translated "pure." It means that in the sense of being washed. It is also a word that means innocent. In other words, Paul was saying, "I am not guilty of anything. I am washed from that guilt. There is no stain of guilt upon me whatsoever."

In order to understand what he is talking about a little better, look back in Acts 18:6. This is really the key to understanding what Paul is talking about. Actually, if we will move back to verse 5, we'll catch the whole thought. Look what he says. "But when Silas

and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.” He would go into the synagogue and the Jews would gather around. He would take the gospel of Christ. He was clear and correct as he preached with conviction all that God had told him to preach.

Look at Acts 18:6. “And when they resisted [that’s the key!] and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles.’” The word “clean” is the same word we are looking at in Acts 20 but translated “innocent.” In other words, Paul says, “I have preached to you what God told me to preach to you. I am not guilty anymore. If you resist and you blaspheme God, that is your problem. God will not hold me guilty, He will hold you guilty. I am innocent of the blood of all men.”

Paul is saying, “I am called out. I am an apostle by the will of God. I am doing what God has called me to do and gifted me to do. I have done it. Therefore, since I have done it, I am not guilty of their blood.” In other words, they will stand before God on their own.

Well, he is saying the same thing, I believe, right here in the city of Miletus. He is saying, “When I was in Ephesus with you, I preached the Word of God.” Look at Acts 20:27. He says, “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.”

Have you ever been on a sailboat? I haven’t. I haven’t had the nerve to do that quite yet. I have always wondered about it. I know you get down with the wind. I have always wondered, how do you get back? Nobody has properly explained that to me yet. When you take a sail down, you bring the nets down, that’s the word that is used here for “shrink.” Paul was saying, “I did not retreat. I did not fold as a sail in the wind that just all of a sudden lost its ability to sail. I didn’t do that. I stood in there. I took all the contesting of the Jews. I did exactly what God told me to do. Therefore, I am not guilty of the blood of men. I am innocent of the blood of all men.”

As a matter of fact he says in Acts 20:27, “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.” Now the word “purpose” there is the word *boule*, which means “the counsel of God, the decisions of God.” Boy, did you see what he is saying? He is saying, “Listen, when I was among you, I did exactly what God called me to do. I didn’t preach to you man’s gospel. I preached to you God’s gospel. If you have rejected me, you didn’t reject me. You rejected Him. I am innocent of your blood. You’ll stand before God for what you have done. I am not burdened about those who resisted. I am burdened for those who have received the Word of God.”

I wonder how many of you are like me at certain times in my life. All of a sudden you begin to feel guilty because you are not burdened for those who don’t care about the Word of God. Have you ever gone through that? Somehow you think it is your responsibility. One person who has ministered to me is a man by the name of Roy Hessian. When Roy Hessian came to my house years and years ago, I remember at least three different things he told me. One morning I was talking with him, and I said, “Brother Roy, I am having trouble with some of my thoughts. I can’t seem to get victory over them. Can you help me?” Brother Roy said, “Oh, son, victory is not you overcoming sin. Victory is Jesus overcoming you in His Word.” That turned a key in my understanding. From that point on, I began to be able to walk and live like I should. I stopped dealing with sin. Oh, no. I still confess it, but I stopped focusing on sin and started focusing on the Lord Jesus and His Word. It is incredible the victory that comes.

He shared with me one day not to get into full-time conference work. He said, “I know God has burdened you for conference work. I know that God has put that on your heart.” Brother Roy said, “Don’t get out of the church. Do both together.” I said, “Why?” He said, “Wayne, you need the church. It is your school of brokenness. It is the way in which God is going to keep you fresh so that when you do your conferences, it will flow out of what is fresh and not out of that which is stale.” I have never forgotten that.

Well, he told me something else. I said, “Brother Roy, I am having trouble. I study, and I pray, and I preach. I love the Lord. I am trying to live it, but I’ve got a bunch of people in my church who just don’t want to hear. Brother Roy, they will shake my hand, walk right out and cut everybody to pieces with their tongues. They just don’t care about God’s Word. What do I do about that?”

I had already begun to weaken my sermons to make them a little more communicative and to try to make them simpler so that everybody could get into them, which was a huge mistake. Some nights I would come in from a conference, and I would preach the next day, and I had not even studied. I would come in and take somebody else’s outline. It wasn’t even mine. I would rework it with my wording, put in a bunch of illustrations and make it as simple as I could. The people loved it. They would line up to tell me how much they loved that particular sermon. I had gotten tired of preaching and digging into the Word and people not liking it. I kind of enjoyed people walking up and saying, “I liked your sermon.” I was kind of turning that way. It was more fun to do it that way. Hey, a few more jokes, a few more illustrations, everybody loves it. Nobody is convicted. Everybody leaves as ignorant as they were when they came into the service. I started trying to do that.

Do you know what Brother Roy told me? He said, “Wayne, you are making a huge mistake. Nowhere in Scripture does it tell you that you are responsible for people who will not eat. Nowhere! You are responsible for those who are hungry. You set the table and quit worrying about those who resist and blaspheme God. You are innocent, in effect, of their blood. You do what God has called you to do.”

That set me free from that day until today. I am not worried about it anymore. I’m not burdened about it anymore. You will stand

before God. If you are not going to live the Word of God, I am not guilty for you. I have done what God has called me to do. I am going to keep right on, by the grace of God, doing it. My burden is not for those who resist the word. My burden is for those who have received it.

You might need to hear this. Maybe you are going around fretting over people who don't care anyway. He didn't say he wasn't concerned. That is not what I am saying. Oh, you can pray for them, but friends, don't let it caught up into your burden. The burden of a man that is a true servant of God is not for the people who reject it, but for the people that have received it.

Secondly, he was burdened for those who had responsibility for the flock of God. We begin to see it come to the surface. Why did he bring them from Ephesus to Miletus? Acts 20:28 says, "Be on guard for yourselves." Notice first, he said to these elders to be on guard for themselves; "and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Now, these men were called "elders." Look back in Acts 20:17: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." These elders were assigned a two-fold assignment. One, guard yourself; two, guard the flock. Do yourself first; how can you keep the flock on line if you are not on line. Secondly, guard the flock.

Now the picture that we usually think of for "guard" is a picture of a sentry with a rifle standing over or watching over a particular area. That is not the word used here. The word used here is *prosecho*. It is the word which in this context means "to care for or watch over." It is also used as a nautical term for those who navigate on the waters. It means to hold a ship in the proper direction, to make sure the ship stays on course.

Now, who are these elders? Who are these people? It is mentioned in the plural. There is a plurality of elders. The church is mentioned singularly. There is one church, but there are many elders who were appointed to make sure the ship sailed in the right direction.

Well, there are three terms used in Scripture to describe the same man. One describes his office, one describes his ministry, and one describes his heart as he goes about doing the things God has told him to do. They are all found right here. The first one is kind of humorous, because the first one is in verse 17. That's the word *presbuteros*. "Oh, don't you mention that to me. That's Presbyterian."

I remember when we first began to introduce the concept of elders to our church. We have the elder system here. We certainly are not ashamed of it. We believe that is what God teaches. Back when we began to introduce it, some people would come to me and say, "Oh, that sounds Presbyterian to me, man. I don't know. That's not Baptist." Well, now folks, the word is *presbuteros*. Whether the Presbyterians took their name from that word or not makes no difference.

There is another word which describes the office, and it is in Acts 20:28. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." What is that word "overseers"? *Episkopos*. "Oh, no; that's Episcopalian. We are Baptist. Quit telling us about these words that we don't like to hear." The word is *episkopos*. It means to oversee something. As a matter of fact, if you are in the position of leadership in your family, Dads, you oversee. You do the same thing. You oversee your little flock that God has given to you. That is your responsibility to make sure that flock stays on course and the ship goes in the right direction.

Go on to the next thing that he mentions there. Right after "overseers" in verse 28, he says, "to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Now that word "shepherd" is *poimaino*. It's the word we get the word "pastor" from. "Do you mean to tell me the elder is the man?" That's right. "Do you mean to tell me that overseeing is his responsibility?" That's right. "Do you mean to tell me he is supposed to do it like a shepherd would oversee his own flock?" That's right. He cares about his flock.

In another place it mentions all three of them in the same place. Look at 1 Peter 5. This was the biblical way of making sure the ship stayed on course. You don't put one man in charge of it. No. The word "pastor" in the singular is found once in the New Testament. "Elders" in the plural is found 70 different times. Why? Because one man does not have it all together. Folks, I tell you, the beauty is in the plurality of those men so that they can check and balance one another. That's what it is all about. That's the safeguard for the flock. Well, in 1 Peter 5:1-note, look what he says. "Therefore, I exhort the elders [*presbuteros*] as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight [*episkopos*], not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness [now, look in verse 3], nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge."

Watch this. The word means and implies that the elders are there to steer the ship, but there are others on the ship beside the navigators, the ones making sure it is going straight. He says don't overlord the flock; don't do for the flock what the flock is designed to do. If you find a church where the staff is doing the work of the ministry, you've got a perverted situation. If that is going on, it is not the organism of Christ. It is an organization. It is upside down. It is not what God says in His Word it is supposed to be. God raised up certain ones, who are gifted and called. What are they to do? They are to give doctrinal guidance. They are to steer the ship. They are to equip the saints so that they can go about their ministry, biblically and find the joy that they can find. That is what a

church is supposed to be. It is a body. What we have done to it in the 20th century has nothing to do with what the New Testament says. If we didn't have the 20th century, then what would the New Testament say? You have to go back to that; it is "what does the Word of God say?"

Well, we see then that these men are elders. They oversee and they shepherd or pastor the flock that you have. Now, what is the primary difference between a deacon and an elder? That is one of the questions you always ask. "Well, we didn't come from that kind of system. That's just not Baptist to me." What's the difference in a deacon and an elder?

Well, let's just look and see. 1 Timothy 3:2 shows you the major difference between the two people. It doesn't mean one is better than the other. It only means one is different than the other, gifted in a way that the other is not. This is not supposed to be a series on elders. I just want to acquaint us with who these men are. 1 Timothy 3:2-note says, "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife [that term means a one-woman man], temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable." Look at the next phrase. If you have a King James Version, it says "apt to teach," if you have a New American Standard, it says "able to teach." What does Paul mean by that? The word for "to teach" there is the word *didaktikos*. It is not the word which means to teach from the pulpit necessarily. A person doesn't have to have the pulpit preaching gift, but he has got to be able to communicate the doctrine of God's Word to the flock. Why? Because he is responsible for keeping the ship on course.

Paul says, "Listen, I am burdened, guys. I am leaving, and I'm not going to be back. When I depart, there are going to be people in here to try to get this big ship at Ephesus off course. I am trying to help you realize you are to guard yourself. You stay on course so that you can keep the ship on course. Then it can be what God wants it to be."

Well, Acts 20:28 tells us it is not their flock, and it is not their congregation who elects them. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." The word "made you" there is the word *tithemi*. It means He put you there. He set you there. Man didn't set you there. When it comes to deacons, the church elects them. But when it comes to the elders, the Holy Spirit sets you there. Why would the Holy Spirit bother to do that? Because the flock is not man's, it is God's. To shepherd the church of the Lord, or the church of God, is the rendering there.

So Paul is burdened for these elders. He is not burdened for the ones who resist the Word and blaspheme. That's not on his heart. He is innocent of their blood. But he is burdened for the flock and for their leadership that the ship stays on course.

You know, one of the things that I have loved about being at this church is we finally moved into the elder system. We are not where we ought to be and we know that, but I tell you what, we are at least headed in the right direction. We are men, and we are fallible. We have feet of clay, but at least God has honored that in ways in which I don't believe our church fully understands yet. There is a unity that is produced in a church that honors God that is incredible. Remember, Ephesians never says that you can produce unity. No, sir; you can't do things that people want you to do and think that unifies. No, Ephesians does not say "produce it," Ephesians says "preserve it" in the bond of peace.

Just from having been a pastor in other places, I have seen a uniqueness here that I have not seen in other places. We don't have any of those shoot out at the OK corral business meetings any more. When people come with an agenda, it's incredible the horrible bitterness and criticism it creates. There always seems to be people who don't like this and don't like that. Listen, we have not seen any of that now in four years. If it is here, it is at least under the umbrella of something else. We don't ever want to think that it is not here, but at least it is not to the point that it has caused the unity to be totally broken up. God is allowed to be free to unify His people. That is the thing that has blessed me more than anything else.

Well thirdly, he was burdened about those who would ravage the people of God. Now look what he said. It is interesting the way he phrases this. Acts 20:29 says, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."

Now, I don't know if you are an outdoorsman, or if you like things like this, but I like stuff about wolves and especially bears. I love things about bears. I've been reading about them for years. When we went to Alaska, that is all I wanted to ask about. I made the mistake of buying the three books that are written by Alaskans for people like us who go up there so we will not be so ignorant as to what we are facing when you go out in the woods in Alaska. I read them on my way to Greece. That's why I didn't sleep on that trip. I kept looking around for bears crawling around the plane. It was an incredible book.

I also asked them about the wolves. "Are they still a problem? Are they fading out?" They said, "Oh, no, man. They are still a problem up there. Especially to people who have cattle." Can you imagine somebody going to Alaska and trying to raise cattle with the grizzlies and the brown bears and the wolves? I mean, that would be just like throwing a banquet for them. He said, "They still have problems with these wolves." One of the things that he told me about them was that they still travel, not singularly, but in packs.

Notice what Paul says here. He says, "There are going to be savage wolves." He didn't say a savage wolf, but savage wolves. They come in groups like all wolves do when they prey upon something. Now, the term "savage" caught my attention. What does that mean? Well, it can be translated savage or fierce, but it is the word *barus*. It is the word that means "burdensome." When you use it

as a metaphor, it means a burdensome teaching, a teaching or a doctrine that burdens somebody down.

I think there is a thought here that we need to look at. To me, these savage wolves are the legalists that Paul fought everywhere he went on all of his journeys. These were the people who would come in behind him, not to his face, oh, no. When he would depart, they would run in and take the message of grace and make it law. They would put the people back up under that awful bondage of the Law, saying if you don't obey the Law, then you are not spiritually right with God. To me that is a savage wolf who preys upon those tender people who have been birthed in the kingdom. They have been saved out from under all of that. Now they are trying to put them back up under that bondage.

God did not do away with the Law, but He fulfilled it in Christ. When I obey Jesus in the freedom I have to obey Him, I am free from myself, and the Law is taken care of by that act of obedience. Freedom is not the right to do as I please. It is the power to do as I should. When you start putting people back up under a set of rules, look out. To me, those are those savage wolves that he is talking about.

Paul puts them in the plural again because there is more than one. In Acts 20:29 he goes on to say they will "come in among you, not sparing the flock." Now the word, "sparing the flock" there means they will show no tenderness at all. They will prey on each and every one of those tender ones in the flock.

How are they going to do that? Look at verse 30. He says, "from among your own selves, men will arise." Peter says the same thing, so we know we've got a principle here. In other words, Paul is saying, "Those wolves are not going to be coming in from the outside. They are already there on the inside." The word, "they will rise up" means they've been laying down and now they are going to stand up. That is just like a wolf. Wolves have been known to lay down for as much as two days without ever making a move until their prey gets into that right position. Then they pounce on them. Paul says, "They are right here among you right now. They are waiting on me to depart, and then they are going to step in and prey upon the flock."

Well, what are they going to do? It says, "and from among your own selves, men will arise, speaking perverse things." Now what does "perverse" mean? "Perverse" means "to take something and twist it."

Do you remember back when the liberal-conservative thing was going on in our convention? I think the conservatives have pretty much surfaced now, and the convention is going to stay that way. Back in those days, it was ugly. I've been a conservative since I've known the Lord and since I have understood the Word. All of a sudden, overnight, I was called a fundamentalist. I don't even know what that is yet. Someday someone is going to explain that to me. That was a term which was used as a snide remark because it didn't have a real good ring to other people who had never heard it before and didn't know what it meant. So now, the people who were simply conservative are now fundamentalists. Those who were liberal, now they became the conservatives. I don't think they are liberal. I think they are lost. They used the term "conservative" not in the sense of doctrine, but in the sense of conserving the denomination. They began to disarm our whole flock. They began to make people sitting in the pew think that if you preached the Word as inerrant and true, you were a fundamentalist, and we don't like the sound of that. In reality, they had taken a word that everybody thought meant one thing and just simply twisted it like a plastic word.

You know, you have to heat up plastic. When you heat it up you can do anything you want to with it. That's what these teachers were going to do. They were going to make it sound like what they had heard, but very skillfully take it and put the people back up under bondage. That is when they speak perverse things. Sounds great. It is the quickest way to bondage.

Well, why would they do that? Verse 30 says, "to draw away the disciples after them." There was a lot of jealousy here. They wanted those disciples to start following them instead of the doctrines that Paul had preached. So they are going to distort and use twisted words to put people back up under the Law.

Acts 20:31 says, "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." In other words, Paul says, "Don't throw away what I did among you for three solid years. Stay on the course that I set you on. You have been called and set there by the Holy Spirit to keep that church on its path and on its course."

You know, the sad thing is, you can go to five Baptist Churches and find five different doctrines taught. Who is checking anybody anymore? It is very difficult even as far as our church has gotten, knowing that these folks are going to be among us. That is what Paul says. That is what Peter says. We know we have had people come in and join us who are not of us. They are just waiting on their opportunity to get us off track. That is why we have elders. We are trying our best. We can't go to every Sunday School class. We can't go to every committee meeting. We can't. We have to do the best we know how to do and trust the Holy Spirit to lead us.

I tell you what. When that false doctrine gets in, it will pull you right back to the old performance works mentality. It will rob you of every bit of joy you ever had and the freedom of walking and trusting the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may disagree with me, but I am going to love you. We've got a course this ship's on, and by the grace of God, we are going to

hold on it. Years ago I preached on 1 Corinthians 12 and remember we talked about tongues and the interpretation of tongues. I came into church with a riot helmet and a bullet proof vest. I remember my daughter was sitting out in the congregation and some little girl who was visiting said, "Who is that? Who is this guy?" She said, "I don't know." She wouldn't admit she was my daughter.

That particular morning I made a statement. I said, "The message this morning is going to make you sad, mad or glad. You will not be in neutral when we finish." I said, "Some of you are going to want to fight." That's when I put on that big old bullet-proof vest. That thing was heavy. It was yellow. The people started laughing. I stuck that riot helmet on. I had gotten a policeman to bring that and hide it in the pulpit that morning. I put on that riot helmet, and for ten minutes it was the funniest time I have ever spent since I have been the pastor. I have never seen people laugh so hard. I think a lot of it was just the tension being released.

When I finished, I said this, "What you do in your prayer closet is between you and God. I will not interfere. I will not bother you. You can stand on your head and stack BBs for all I care. That is between you and God. I have nothing to do with it. But don't you come into this congregation and say to somebody else, "They didn't get it all when they got Jesus, and there is something else out here they need to have." I said it then, and I say it now, "I will call you out by name, publicly humiliating you and mark you as a person who causes division if you start doing that in this congregation." Now, the strange thing about it is, a lot of folks that disagreed with me are still at the church. I love that. We can agree to disagree.

If somebody is steering the ship and you are a passenger on the ship, you can't go up and tell him how he to steer it. We've got people who God has set up to put this ship on a course, and we are going to keep it on that course by the grace of God. That is what elders are all about. That was the burden Paul had.

Paul: The Missionary – Part 9

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Acts 20:17-27 Commentary

Acts 20:28-38 Commentary

Turn to Acts 20. This is message number 10 introducing the book of Ephesians. We may get to the book of Ephesians before the Lord comes back. Who knows? But we sure are enjoying the introduction. We have been looking at the life of Paul. It says in Ephesians 1:1, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." We picked up off of that. It was a spring board. We took it apart. We explained it. We looked at Paul, the man, and now we have been looking at Paul, the missionary. He is in Miletus. If you will look in the middle of your map, you will find Asia. Look down below Asia to the left on the map, and you will find Ephesus. Right below Ephesus is Miletus. That is where he is.

He is on his third missionary journey. He bypassed Ephesus because he is trying to hurry to get to Jerusalem, but he calls the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him in this seaport city by the name of Miletus. Remember, Asia Minor of that day is modern-day Turkey. So you can get an idea geographically where Paul was.

Well, by meeting with these elders, he has opened himself up and given us an inside look at the man once again. Really, we have looked at Acts 20:17-24, and we have seen the integrity of his testimony; we have looked at Acts 20:25-31, and we have seen the integrity of his burden. That was in our last study together. Now we want to look at Acts 20:32 and look at the integrity of his message. I confess to you that when I study I find more gems trying to hurry through something than any other way. I didn't plan it this way, but when I got into it, it just leaped up before me. It grabbed me, and I want to share it with you now.

There are three things we are going to look at in Acts 20:32. First of all, about this message that Paul preached, I want us to see the definition of the message that Paul preached. What was it that Paul was so concerned about? In the message he preached that the savage wolves would come in and prey upon these believers and seek to destroy what Paul had said. Now, to reflect and to remind ourselves, let's go back to Acts 20:29. This is all in the flow of what he is saying to these Ephesian elders. He says in verse 29, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves, men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."

Now the word for "savage," when it says "savage wolves," is the word *barus*. We get the word "burden" from that. When it is used metaphorically, as a word picture, it is the word that refers to burdensome teaching. In other words, it is a teaching that is grievous or a teaching that is oppressive. Paul knows something in his spirit. The term he uses there is that intuitive knowledge. He doesn't understand the whole picture, but he knows there are some people out there in the congregation at Ephesus. He is warning these Ephesian elders. He says, "There are people out there that are going to seek to destroy the message that I am preaching. They are

going to seek with oppressive teaching to come in and put the people back up under bondage.”

Have you ever studied anything about wolves? I doubt you have. I just like that kind of thing. If you have ever studied anything about wolves, you know they attack in a pack. It is never one at a time. It is usually in a group. They have even been known to lay around something they are about to attack for up to two days and just be quiet as a pack. They will lay there until the moment is right and the moment is ready, and then they move upon their prey.

Paul pictured these false teachers just like a pack of wolves. He says to those Ephesian elders, “I am burdened.” He says, “There are some people in the congregation right now. They are there, and they are like a pack of wolves. They are waiting on me to depart so they can move in and prey upon that message I have taught you.” Paul knows they are going to try to inflict Law back on people who are up under grace.

Look at Acts 20:32 again, and you will see his message. He says, “And now I commend you now to God and to the word of his grace.” Now there is your key. What was the message that Paul preached that he was so worried these savage wolves in the congregation would seek to destroy the moment he was off the scene? It was the message of God’s grace. Now, I want to tell you, as we have studied through the life of Paul, we have seen him before and we’ve seen him after. And it has done something inside of me to help me understand why he had such a fear of these savage wolves coming into that church. Paul used to be one of them! Now, folks, we must understand that. You can see it so clearly in what he is saying here. Paul had been a legalist. He had been one to say if you obey a certain set of rules, that somehow will make your spiritual and right before God. “If you do this, and this, and this, you can enter the kingdom of heaven.” He used to be one of those legalists and so, therefore, he could spot them wherever he would go. He pulls these Ephesian elders aside and says, “Listen, they are in your congregation, and just as soon as I’m off the scene, they are going to step in with this awful burdensome doctrine that is going to oppress the people and take them out from under the message of grace.”

As a matter of fact, go back to Philippians 3 to remember how Paul used to be. Paul gives a little bit of his testimony there. He is in Philippi. You know, a lot of people wonder why he went outside the city. Acts 16 says when he got to Philippi on his second missionary journey, as he has gone over into Macedonia, he got there and had a prayer meeting outside the city. Why didn’t he go to the synagogue?

Well, when I was there in Philippi this summer, I asked about that. I said, “Where is the synagogue?” The man said, “As far as we can tell, there is none here.” You see, you had to have so many people to have a synagogue. Evidently, there weren’t enough real Jewish people there to have a synagogue. So Paul goes outside the city of Philippi and has a little prayer meeting there by the river, which to us would be nothing more than a little creek.

In Philippians 3, look at what he says. He gives a testimony of where he had come from. He says, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” That term “rejoice” is in the present tense which means keep on rejoicing. Now how were they to keep on rejoicing? He says, “To write the same things again to you is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.” Phil 3:2-note continues, “Beware of the dogs.” The term “dogs” does not refer to the Georgia football team. He is talking about those people who prey upon flesh.

You see, the dogs back in that day were like wolves in our day; they traveled in packs. They were scavengers. Even little small infant children were tender to their attack and always were prey to these savage dogs. They preyed upon flesh. They fed upon flesh. So Paul picks up a term the people could understand and attaches it to the legalisms of that day. It is interesting to me, in the Gospels the Gentiles are called dogs; now Paul is calling the legalizers, the Jews that will not respond to the gospel of grace, the same term, dogs. He says, “beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision.” Paul is saying, “Here are people who are saying that you do something externally to make you right with God.” He says, “That is a false circumcision. We have been circumcised of the heart. We are the true circumcision of God.” It is not what a man does on the outside. It’s what God does on the inside of a man that qualifies him to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Then he goes on in Phil 3:3-note, “for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.” Paul is talking about this false doctrine that is getting into that church at Philippi. He goes on to say, “Now listen, if that was the right way, if these people were telling you the truth, then I would personally have a whole lot more right than anybody else to put confidence in my flesh.” Look what he says in Phil 3:4: “although I myself might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more.”

Then he says in Phil 3:5-note, “circumcised the eighth day.” Talking about external works, this was what a true Jew would do. They always took the male children on the eighth day, and they were circumcised. Our Lord Himself on the eighth day was circumcised. It was something that meant that you absolutely were genuine Jewish. You came right out of that particular mold. Look at what he says, “of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin.” To know which tribe you were from would be like today in America to have a name like Smith and all your friends call you “Bubba.” I mean, you know you are from America. There is no problem with that. When they came out of Babylon from captivity, they had lost the records of the tribes. How does he know he was originally tracked back to

the tribe of Benjamin? Well, he was just true blue, folks. He was genuine. He was one. He had a pedigree. He says, “a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee.”

Now do you know who these dudes were? The Pharisees were the police force of the Scribes. They were the ones who had made such a mess out of what God had done with the Ten Commandments, that when Jesus came, He had one battle after another with these people. They had taken the Ten Commandments and made 631 laws out of them. To make it even worse, the more you obeyed the Law, the more spiritual you were. I can just see Jesus pointing to one of these Pharisees one day and saying, “Your righteousness better exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, or you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” I guarantee you, one of those guys walked by. Every time they would obey a law, they would put a little thing inside of a box called a phylactery. Sometimes they wore them on the wrist, but most of the time they wore them on their forehead. The bigger that box got, the heavier the head would get. I mean, these were the spiritual ones like some people that we see only come to church on Sunday morning, with a big Bible about 72 pounds. They have a black suit on and come walking in. That is the way they look. They had to hire somebody to walk around and hold their head up for them. I believe one of those dudes walked by, and Jesus said, “Hey, see that man out there. If you are going to enter the kingdom of heaven, you had better have more righteousness than he does.”

Paul said, “Listen, I lived in a day that I felt like the more laws I obeyed, the more qualified I became to enter the kingdom of heaven.” He said, “Listen, these people who teach you this are dogs, and they prey upon the flesh. They don’t understand the message that I preach.”

Well, look on in Phil 3:6-note. He says, “as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.” To whom? God? No, to man. Men would look at him and say, “Oh, I wish I could be like Paul. Man, he just does everything so right.”

Look at Phil 3:7-note: “But whatever things were gain to me [I love these words], those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”

He says in Phil 3:8-note, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.”

Isn’t it interesting? He said, “I counted them as loss,” and then “I suffered them as loss.” I’d much rather count them first then suffer them. He says, “and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.”

Look in Phil 3:9-note at the change in this old savage wolf who has now been completely and dramatically changed by the message of grace. He says, “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law.” Do you understand what he is saying? This man came out of that system, and he says, “Listen, all that I did was rubbish. Now I have met Christ, and I have been radically changed, not on the outside, but on the inside.” He says, “not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith [you can never separate obedience and faith] faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

Boy, I’m telling you. You’ve seen a radical change in this old savage wolf. He was the man who preached Law and the man who preached works. He was the man who said, “By your self-determined effort you can make yourself qualified to enter the kingdom of God.” However, God met him on that Damascus Road and suddenly blinded him. It didn’t take him any time to realize, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” From that point on, he realized the message of grace was where it was. That is why Paul is so concerned about this congregation.

So he tells the elders, “Oh, guys, there are savage wolves in your congregation. As soon as I’m off the scene, they are going to put you back up under that old oppressive, heavy, weighty, bondage teaching. I don’t want you to have it.”

As a matter of fact, if you want to see a little bit of what we are going to be looking at, look at Ephesians 1:5-8-note. This will just give you a preview. Look at his message, this savage wolf. I can’t wait until we get into the epistle to begin working it all out. What a difference it makes in a man when he is touched by the grace of God, and he realizes he could not transform himself. God had to transform him. He didn’t deserve a bit of it. “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will [look at the whole motive of God in this], to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood [it was not in our works or self-determined effort], the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us.”

If you really want to see the message, look in Eph 2:1-9-note. He says, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too [Paul puts himself in the same category] all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God,” what a powerful phrase! “being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our

transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Look at Eph 2:8-note, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” Paul was a changed man. He was the man who had put Christians to death, the man who had rejected Christ as the Messiah. But he was also the man who was radically met on the Damascus Road by the resurrected Lord and completely changed. He used to be a savage wolf, but now he preached the message of God’s grace.

Well, that phrase back in Acts 20:32, “and to the word of His grace,” literally “the word of the grace of Him,” is only found one other time, but it shows you who he is talking to. If you will go back to Acts 14 on his first missionary journey, that same phrase is used when he is there in Iconium preaching. Remember, he had all kinds of opposition in Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium and all the way down. Let’s go back to verse 1 so we can see where he is. “And it came about that in Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews.” Now that is where it all happened, folks. That’s where the debates went on in the Word, “the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed,” responded to the message of grace, “both of Jews and of Greeks.” Now watch this in verse 2. “But the Jews who disbelieved.” Oh, they hated this message because they had already worked their way up the ladder. They had seniority. They have already obeyed the Law. Certainly they will enter the kingdom of heaven. They hated it when he said you could only come through a man, Christ Jesus. “But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and embittered them against the brethren. Therefore [What did Paul do? Run? No.], they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.” Even through the miraculous God was trying to let these people understand, “You had better listen to this man, because what he is preaching is the message that will get you into the kingdom of heaven.”

Paul is a concerned man. Paul used to be a savage wolf, now he can spot one 100 yards off. And Paul is saying, “Oh, you elders, watch out. They are out there. They have never responded to grace. They are out there ready to put the people back up under the old bondage of the law.”

Do you attend church out of grace or out of Law? The whole key is why you go. “Well, it is Sunday, and we always go to church on Sunday at 11:00. We can’t go at 9:15 because no where in the New Testament does it say to go to the early service. We go at 11:00 because if you come at 11:00 they have the choir. Don’t you know that? If you don’t go to church, it is going to hurt you in your rewards in heaven one day.” Oh, dear me, folks. Get up under the right message. We are saved by grace. What you or I do or don’t do is not the issue. Listen, the key is, have we responded to that which Christ has done and wants to continually do in our life.

So what is his message? The message of grace. That is why he is so concerned. It is so radically different from what they have heard.

Secondly, a description of how this message would benefit those who would obey it. No wonder Paul is so concerned. Acts 20:32 says, “And now I commend you to God.” The word “commend” there is the word *paratithemi*. It means “to place you near something.” It means to put you in his hands. Paul says, “Listen, I am leaving. I probably won’t return. You won’t see my face anymore.” He has already done his homework. Acts 20:31 says, “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.” He was saying, “I have already done my work. I have already taught you the message for three years with compassion in my heart. I have taught you, instructing in the Word. Now I am turning you over to God. I won’t be here. You can’t call me. Listen to what I’ve said. Protect the message.” He was telling the elders, “You had better protect the message.”

Well, in Acts 20:32 he goes on to say, “and to the word of His grace [notice what follows] which is able to build you up.” Now that throws you immediately. The term “build you up” is literally “to build.” It is like building a house. Adding “you up” takes your mind in a different direction. Think of it as just simply to build, to add to something. First you have a foundation, and you begin to add something to it. You begin to put things on it. It begins to build up, “and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

There are two things the gospel of grace does. It is His unmerited favor which He gives to men who respond by faith to Him. It is also His transforming power. You can have a set of rules over here and try to live up to them so somehow you’ll become like Jesus. No, you don’t become like Jesus by obeying a set of rules. You become like Jesus by responding in absolute surrender to Him, dying to yourself. Then He, inside of you, transforms you into the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the Law was never meant to give righteousness. The Law was meant to show man that he couldn’t be as righteous as he determined to be. It was meant to lead man to grace.

So Paul says this message of grace is able to do two things in your life. First of all, it is able to build up, not the individual, but your inheritance. Now let’s talk about this inheritance for a second. The word “inheritance” is added here. What inheritance is he talking

about? It's able to build it up, and it's able to assure that you get it. Now what inheritance is he talking about? Well, let's just look at "inheritance" in the New Testament and see if we can glean from it.

Galatians 3:18 says that it is an inheritance founded on grace, not on Law. No wonder these Pharisees hated it. No wonder these religious Jews hated it. "Why, I gave out 75,000 tracts three days ago. You mean to tell me that is not going to make sure that I get a better inheritance?" Not if God didn't tell you to give out those 75,000 tracts. You see, the key here is not so much what you do, it is why you are doing it. Don't think I'm talking about perfection. Don't think I'm talking about passivity. Listen, when you start responding out of grace to Him who already loves you, who has already accepted you in the Beloved, He'll burn you slap out. But it is the best burn out you have ever had in your life, because you don't have to worry about the results. It's all His power.

It's all His leading, all His guiding. It's Jesus in you transforming you, leading you, guiding you, taking the Scriptures and putting it into your life practically every day. Therefore, there is an inheritance at the other end. That is what blows me away.

"You mean, God saved me by grace and now He wants to use me? He invites me to get in on what He is up to by the crises of my life? You mean that one day, because of my response, my proper response, there is going to be an inheritance for all of that?" Yes. But I tell you what. We won't keep it long. I believe that is what we will turn right around and give right back at the feet of Jesus. Who in the world would ever be dumb enough to keep it when they realize that salvation is His and not man's?

Ephesians 1:14-note says the Holy Spirit is the earnest of that inheritance. "How can I be sure that there is going to be some kind of inheritance?" Well, if you have received Christ, you have His Spirit in you. That is the earnest. That is the down payment. Full payment is going to come later on.

Ephesians 5:5-note says that no man who is immoral or impure or covetous or idolatrous as a lifestyle will get this inheritance. That means you must be born from above.

Colossians 3:24-note says that Christ whom we serve will give us this inheritance one day. Boy, what a great day that is going to be.

Hebrews 9:15-note says it is an eternal inheritance. It is going to affect us for all eternity.

1 Peter 1:4-note says that it is reserved in heaven where nobody can touch it, for those who are born from above. There is an inheritance here.

"Well, now, hold on. Hold on. I want to get serious about this whole thing." No! No! You don't do what you do so you can get an inheritance. You do what you do because you love Jesus. That is the whole key in getting your inheritance. Get your mind off the inheritance. Get your mind back on Him and the message of grace. If you will focus on that, as Christ is able to work in and through you, that determines the inheritance one day that you will get. His grace is able to add to or build up your inheritance.

Romans and 1 Corinthians talk about how we are going to be judged according to the deeds done in our body. Do you know that one day we are going to be judged as believers? Our works are going to be either wood, hay and stubble or precious stones. A thought hit me one day when I was studying that. Wood, hay and stubble take up the most room. So the people you think are going to get the bigger reward may get the smallest because they are doing all of this on the outside to impress men and to impress God. The precious stones can be held in your hand.

It says they are either going to be those things which God has done through you, as you have responded to His transforming message of grace, or they are going to be those things that you done for God, hoping to impress Him. The latter are going to burn. God says, "It is what I do in and through you as a result of your surrender to me."

You see, the message of grace is not just when you get saved. The message of grace takes us all the way through salvation. The gospel doesn't mean just that He died for us and that we can receive Him and be saved from above. That's part of it. That's step one. That is not the end. It is the beginning. The message of grace must motivate us all the way through our entire life so one day when that inheritance comes, it won't be based on what I did for Jesus. It is what I allowed Jesus to do in and through me while I was here on this earth.

You'll know where I am when all the rewards are given. You will see the smoke for about 40 miles. I just hope there is something left in the latter years of my life to just let Jesus be Jesus in me and do what He wants to do in and through my life. I've done enough things for Him that I thought impressed people and impressed God. Do you understand the difference? One is nothing more than a form of religion, the other is the power thereof. When you submit to it, you don't worry about the inheritance. It will take care of itself. You just enjoy the one who is transforming you through whatever you are going through in your life.

Lord, have mercy! We are going to stand before Him and see it as clear as a picture. You see, I have a thought. I have them periodically. I think a lot of people do not want to hear the message of grace. The majority want to hear the other. Why? Because they don't want to be related to God on an intimate basis. They don't want to deal with their prejudices. They don't want to deal with

their covetousness. They would rather give a big gift. They would rather come carpet the church. They would rather go out and spend their life on a mission field somewhere. Why? So that they can impress God. They don't want to walk holy before Him. Some of the rudest people I think I have ever met in my entire life have been doctrinally straight as an arrow, but there was nothing inside of them except death. Why? Because they are doing it all for Him. They know it. There is no life doing it through them. It builds your reward. It assures your reward.

What did Paul say in Galatians 2:20? "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Paul was saying, "No, sir. When you see me, you don't see me. You see somebody else: Christ liveth in me." Then he goes on in verse 21, which we never quote. You know what he says, "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." You see, folks, Paul was concerned about a message he had been radically transformed by. So he tells these elders, "Look out. Look out."

We see a definition and a description. There's one more point and we have finished the verse. It is the deduction we can make. What deduction can we make? We know what He says. We know that this inheritance is going to be among those who are set apart and sanctified. We know that it is going to be built by that which God is able to do in and through us. What can we deduct from that? These people were elders. Paul wasn't speaking to the Ephesian congregation. He was speaking to the Ephesian elders. He said, "I want to tell you something guys. I am gone. I am putting you in God's hands. You had better protect the message that you have heard and been transformed by. In your congregation there are people who are like savage wolves. They've dragged in their baggage they have been living under. Misery loves company, and they are waiting on their opportunity to take the people walking by grace and put them right back up under that old bondage of the Law."

He tells these elders, "Protect the doctrine." But don't protect the doctrine only. Do you realize something? Doctrine frames a philosophy of ministry. You can't separate the two. So he tells these elders, "You had better watch it like a hawk. You don't want to get people in here "doing" for Jesus. You want people in here dying to the old stinking flesh and letting Jesus do in and through them."

There is a big difference. You have got to have a walk or you have no results. Let me just say what I have deducted from that. I am an elder at this church with some other men. I think God is telling us, "You protect the doctrine of the message of grace with everything in the fiber of your being and protect the philosophy of ministry." It will sneak in. Folks, it comes in through well-meaning people. It comes in from people who have been geared by a performance mode, who are self-determined to do something for God, rather than dying to self and letting God do something through them.

Paul said, "You imitate my faith because wherever I am going, God is leading me. If you want to be where the rewards are, you do as I do. Don't imitate me. Imitate my faith. I used to be a savage wolf, but I have learned. I learned the death that is in it. Now, I've got a message of grace and you, elders, watch it. Watch it. Watch it."

Well, aren't you glad we are not responsible for the results, just the surrender? Lord, I love that song, "Jesus be Jesus in me, no longer me but Thee. Resurrection power, fill me this hour, Jesus be Jesus in me."

Paul, the Missionary – Part 10

Related Resource:

Acts 20:17-27 Commentary

Acts 20:28-38 Commentary

Turn with me to Acts 20. As a matter of fact, after we finish this study, Paul will be moving on to another place. He is in the seaport city of Miletus. Find Asia on your map and go down to the left. You will find Ephesus. Right below Ephesus is Miletus. So far we have seen him as a man and as a missionary. We have examined his integrity and his burden. We have looked at other things that are in this chapter.

There is one thing we have not done. If you have a pencil you might want to write these things down. There are some dates you need to have. Now we cannot document these dates. However, so much of scripture has been documented historically. Obviously, it is historically true. There are some dates you can pinpoint.

Most scholars believe that Paul was born in AD 2. Most of them believe that. He was born again in AD 35. This will give you an idea of where we are right now as he is there at that seaport city of Miletus. He was born again in AD 35. We cannot document that date for sure. However, we do have the account of his being born from above in Acts 9:1-7, Acts 22:3-16 and Acts 24:4-18. All of those

give an account of his meeting the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road.

We studied his first missionary journey in Acts 13:2-14:28. It most likely began in **April AD 48** and went through the fall of AD 49, which would have made him about 47 years old when he finished that journey. It was right after he returned to Antioch of Syria. Remember Antioch of Syria was his home base. There is where most people believe he wrote the book of Galatians. That makes a lot of sense, because right after that, he goes to the Jerusalem council and argues that Gentiles do not need to be circumcised and be back up under the Law. They are saved by grace. That takes us through his first missionary journey and up to **AD 49**. He would have been about 47 years old.

His second missionary journey we find in Acts 15:36-18:22. It probably began in the spring of AD 50. Remember, this is the one where he goes over into Macedonia. It lasted through the fall of AD 52. Now from Corinth, he wrote, in the summer of **AD 51**, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Remember, he went to Thessalonica, and then he came back and wrote those two letters to those believers. Well, he was there then. He had been there in the fall of **AD 50**, and so his second journey started there in the spring of **AD 50** and goes through the fall of **AD 52**.

His third missionary journey that we are currently studying is found in Acts 18:23-21:14. You realize we have got 14 more verses, and then we will be through with his third journey. Then we will see him go into prison. It began probably in **AD 53** and lasted until May of **AD 57**, which would have made him 55 years old at the end of that. He begins in Ephesus where most think he wrote 1 Corinthians, probably in **AD 56**. Remember he was there for three years, **AD 53 to 56**. Now, he went to Macedonia later in **AD 56**, and there he writes, most people believe, 2 Corinthians. First Corinthians was written in Ephesus, and 2 Corinthians was written in Macedonia. Then he went to Greece and then Corinth where he stayed for three months. Most people believe that it was in Corinth that he wrote the book of Romans. Now, from Corinth, he hears about a plot to kill him. He is going to make his way right over to Jerusalem but finds out about a plot to kill him. So he goes north, goes up to Philippi, crosses over to Troas and comes on down to Miletus where we find him in Acts 20. We will be looking in verses 33-38. This probably is in March or April of **AD 57**. Paul was probably about 55 years old.

Well, we have looked at the integrity of his testimony, the integrity of his burden, and the integrity of his message. I want you to see something that I trust will bless your heart. The integrity of his desires. You know, a missionary is just someone surrendered to Jesus, whether it is across the street or around the world. Don't ever think that just because a person has gone overseas that qualifies him to be a missionary. No, sir. Every one of us are missionaries when we say yes to Jesus. We are all ministers when we say yes to Jesus. Here is the question: How does a missionary, a surrendered believer, deal with the desires to have the things of this world? I want us to look at that. How do they handle that?

You know, I am so grateful to have furloughed missionaries living in our mission house. It is so much fun to see them just enjoy what God has done to provide that place for them to live in. You have to realize what they don't have back on the mission field. What a joy to know that we can provide a place for them like we have here. The question would come to all of us: Are they going to be ready to go back to the field? How does a missionary handle it? How do they handle the desires of this world?

I was talking to our Romanian missionaries when they came over. He said he just kind of looked down his nose sometimes at Christians because he saw us have so much over here. He said it wasn't six months until he was in the same rut that we are in, wanting this and wanting that and having to have this and having to go over here. How do you handle that? How do you deal with something that is very real to all of us? For a person to say they never have a struggle with it is for a person just to be dishonest from the very beginning. All of us have it. We live in a world that has things. How does a missionary handle his desires towards the things of this world? How does a surrendered believer like Paul handle that desire?

There are three things in Acts 20:33-38 that I think will be a blessing to your heart. We are not Paul, and it may work differently in our life, but at least we can look at him and how he handled this very difficult area of his life. First of all, in Acts 20:33, he did not covet what others had. "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes." That word "covet" there is the word you will be familiar with. It comes from *epithumia*, which is actually the noun. It's a verb in Acts 20:33. "I did not covet." It is the word translated in many other places as "lust." It is the word that means to set your affections on something. It is the word that means to set your mind so much on something that it takes a hold of you, and you have to have it.

This kind of covetousness is that like an 800 pound parrot that says, "Polly wants a cracker. NOW!" That is exactly what coveting is. That is the best way I know how to explain it. It is something that drives you; it compels you; and it absolutely obsesses you. How did Paul say that? He said, "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or their clothes."

Well, you may be surprised to know that Paul had some weaknesses in his flesh. Most of the time when we read about biblical characters, we tend to think that they have arrived, especially the apostle Paul. We think of him as being somebody that none of us could ever reach as far as his lifestyle. I want to remind you that even Peter said that God has given us a like faith. We have exactly the same thing that Paul got, that Peter got, that all of them got in the New Testament. It is helpful sometimes to know that these

were men. They had a heart of iron, but they had feet of clay, and they did have weaknesses just like you and I have weaknesses. You say, "Now, wait a minute. Paul is my hero. I didn't know that he had any weaknesses." Well, he did, but he allowed the Lord Jesus Christ to be his strength in that weakness.

Look back in Romans 7:7-note. Now remember, Romans was written in AD 57. That is important. Paul exposes something about his life. He is talking about the Law and how the Law came and how the Law exposed sin in his life. That is what the Law was for. The Law was to expose sin. He said when the Law came to him, something happened. Let's look at that. "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would have not come to know sin except through the Law." This is why it is so important to understand why that old covenant and that temporary covenant of Law was there. The old covenant, being the Abrahamic Covenant, was an everlasting covenant. But the people of Israel continued to rebel against God, and God dealt with them. He covenanted with them, and they said, "Oh, Moses, go up on the mountain and tell the Lord we will do whatever He tells us to do." That hung them, because once they were bound in that covenant, that covenant then revealed the fact that they were spiritually dead and sinful and unable to ever enter into the kingdom of God apart from His grace.

Well, look what it says, "I would not have come to know the sin except through the Law [now watch], for I would not have known about [What?] coveting." Now, why would Paul pick out that one area in his life? I suggest to you that that was the weakness that Paul had. Paul was born, you know, over in Tarsus. He was a man who had an affluent lifestyle. He had the greatest of teachers. Watch what he says, "if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" He said, "I all of a sudden realized I am coveting." How did he know that? God's Law came to him. The Word of God came to him, the Law of the Old Testament.

Ro 7:8-note says, "But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law, sin is dead." Now can you imagine Paul at the time that this came into his life? Can you imagine him thinking like people think today? Can you imagine him thinking, "Well, I tell you what, if the Law says I am not going to covet, then I am not going to covet."? He wakes up the next morning and covet, covet, covet. "Now hold it. What is wrong with me? I can't stop coveting." He comes back, and he asks God to forgive him. He says, "I am not going to covet anymore." Covet, covet, covet, covet. That's exactly what happens. You can't stop sinning in your life like that. Victory is not you overcoming sin. The covenant of grace teaches us victory is Jesus overcoming us. Boy, I am telling you, if you are still up under the Law, you are one miserable dude. You cannot whip it, but you can come to Jesus and admit it and confess it. The Lord Jesus in you will overcome you. Then you can begin to dismiss that urge that your flesh has to do those unlawful things.

Well, look in Romans 7:13-note. Something happened to Paul. The Law came to him. "Thou shalt not covet." He said, "Well, I think I will just quit coveting in my life." Covet, covet, covet. He couldn't do it. In verse 13, look at what he says. It's a little bit different. Something is going on in his life. He is beginning to see some victory here. Hey, he can't stop it himself, but he can just love Jesus, focus on Jesus, and then Jesus in him can overcome it. It says in verse 14, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Now, he didn't have that before grace. He didn't have that before he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust. Now, why didn't they translate that coveting, because it is the same word we are dealing with? It means to make no regard, to make no place for it.

You know, over in Galatians 5, he says, "If I will just learn to obey the desires of the Spirit, I won't fulfill the desires of my old flesh." He didn't say you won't have them. Now, isn't that good news? I think I wanted to stand up and shout when I found out that the temptation to sin was not the sin. Glory! Hallelujah! Man, I thought I hadn't gotten anywhere. I thought I was backing up instead of going forward. These things would come into my mind. The world is like a magnet over a box of nails. When you put that magnet over those nails those nails go right up to it. That is the way our flesh is when the temptation of the world gets around us. Thanks be unto God, we don't have to focus on that magnet of temptation. We don't have to focus on those old lusts that are in our flesh. We just have to focus on Jesus and say, "Jesus, I can't overcome sin, but I thank you that you can overcome me!"

I am going to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The more you obey Him, the less you are going to fulfill the desires of your flesh. Well, Paul had seen that there was real victory in this area of his life. The Law came and revealed coveting in his life. Can you imagine the apostle Paul coveting? Folks, he was just like you and me. He was the same way. He got the same thing we have gotten. But now in Romans 13, he says, "put on the Lord Jesus." I have learned something here.

Now look at Philippians 4:11-note which was written in AD 61, even later than what we are studying right now. It is beautiful when you understand where this falls. You know this verse. I want you to notice very carefully what Paul said, because I believe it is important to our text. In verse 11 look at what he said. This is years later. He is in Miletus around AD 57. This is AD 61 at least. He says in Php 4:11, "Not that I speak from want; for I have learned." Boy, I love that. I have learned something. God didn't zap me in a meeting and make me spiritual. I had to learn this thing. I have learned it down through the road. What has he learned? "to be content in whatever circumstance I am in." That word content means "self-sufficient," but not in his own self. That is not what he is saying. He is saying, "There is one who lives within me. I don't have to go outside of him to see my needs met. I have learned to be self-contained. I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am in." Here is a man who when the Law came had revealed

in him the biggest weakness of his life.

You know, somebody has said, and I have not yet found scripture to refute it, first of all, that there are three areas of sin that everybody has. I have never found it to be any different. One is immorality. A lot of people have that. They struggle with it from the time that it seems like they are children to the time they die. They go to the grave with it. All of us struggle with it, in some sense of the word, but some people with much more intensity.

Secondly, there is an area of rebellion or critical spirit, a bitter, bitter, anger. That is totally different from the one who has immorality. Remember when the prodigal son left and rebelled. When he came back out in the fields was his brother. What did his brother do? "Huh, I am not even going into the house. You did those things."

Well, thirdly, there is the area of covetousness of material things. Now, I don't know, maybe there are other areas, but it seems like all scripture, every time I see sin of any kind, it is sort of falls in one of those pockets somewhere. Well, here is a man by the name of the apostle Paul. He has his problem in that third area, in the area of covetousness, but he has learned in the covenant of grace, much different from that under Law. The Law came to him as a Pharisee and as a Jew. He couldn't stop it. Now, being saved by that message of grace, he is learning to let Jesus handle that area in his life. Years later, he says, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am in."

So Paul shows how this desire for material things. Yes, it is always resident in his flesh, but it has been conquered by the Lord Jesus. To give testimony to these Ephesian elders, he says, "When I was among you, you know and bear witness of the fact that I have coveted no one's silver and no one's gold and no one's clothes." For somebody else who had a problem with immorality to say that is no big deal, but that was the main area that Paul dealt with, and God had given him victory in that area.

I wonder how many of you have a problem in that area. That is one of the root problems in your life. Oh, you love to find somebody that has been divorced. You love to point your finger at them and say, "Look at those people. Look what they've done." Watch out, buddy, there are three fingers pointing right back at you. You might be the biggest person in the world looking out for these material things. You've got to have a certain kind of car, got to live in a certain kind of house, and got to make a certain kind of salary. You think that's what God is impressed with. Are you kidding me? That might be your problem, like Paul. Now, I can't point a finger at you nor could you point a finger at me. We've all got our difficulties. Hebrews says to "lay aside the sin that does so easily beset you." What is your sin? What is your area of difficulty? Paul had found victory. He said, "I have coveted no one's silver or no one's gold."

Well, not only did he not covet anything that any man had, secondly, he was careful to make his own way. Paul did not ask for anything from anybody. Verse 34 says, "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me." When he talks about these hands, he talks about his own hands. What does he say? He is saying, "Listen, when I was among you, I coveted nothing that you had, and I didn't ask for a single thing. I didn't take a dime for anything that I did. These hands supported me and my men while I was there."

If you will look in Acts 18:1-3, you will see what it was that he did with his hands. This is on his second missionary journey. He has gone down to Athens, and then he goes over to Corinth. Verse 1 says, "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth." He is waiting on Timothy and them to come meet him, "and he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife, Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them and because [Watch] he was of the same [What?] trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers." They were working by trade. They were tent-makers.

Most people believe, and I am one of them that believes this, that Paul wasn't a tent-maker until he became an apostle of Christ Jesus. He learned tent-making. You see, Paul was a man who knew his weakness. One of the reasons he was a tent-maker was to make his own money. He worked hard for it, because he had conquered that one area in his life. It wasn't just because he didn't want to be a burden to the churches. That worked in his favor and for the blessing of his testimony. To me, there is something even beyond that. Paul had learned something. "If I'll go on and stop looking for them to give to me, I'll just become a tent-maker myself." God continued to give him victory in that area. He chose not to ask for money, but to work with his own hands.

Now, before you get ahead of me and say, "Well, that would be a good thing for you to do." Would you look in 1 Corinthians 9:1ff. I don't want anybody to get any ideas. "Oh, that's great. Let's just let the staff do the same thing." Now, hold on, hold on. This is Paul. That is not me. 1 Corinthians 9:1-19, he lays it out here. I am going to read it. It will tell its own story. He is talking about liberty, the liberty you have in Christ. He says, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?," which was one of the prerequisites of an apostle. "Are you not my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." He says in 1Cor 9:3, "My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" Peter takes his wife. What about us? Do we not have the right? It doesn't say he was married, he just asks the question. Don't we have a right to do that? 1Cor 9:6 says, "Or do not only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Who at any

time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the law also say these things. For it is written in the law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.' God is not concerned about oxen, is He?" That is not the point of the Law. He says in 1Cor 9:10, "Or is he speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope." What hope? Of getting paid, of sharing the crops.

"If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much that we should reap material things from you?" Paul was just documenting the fact there is nothing wrong with that. He says, "If others share the right with you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right." Now, there you go. Even though we have the right, he says, "Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ." One of those hindrances could have been that weakness of covetousness that was deeply embedded in his own flesh.

"Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaimed the gospel to get their living from the gospel. But I have used none of these things." Paul says, "And I am not writing these things that it may be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one." "See, God has told me to do something. He hasn't told everybody else to do that." "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me, if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more."

In other words, Paul says so beautifully and so clearly that he is not everybody else. There is nothing wrong with a person getting the material things when he gives the spiritual things. But Paul said, "In my case, I am just different. I have chosen not to." Not only because he could get the gospel to more people without charge, I believe personally, but because he had a weakness of his own in his flesh. God had directed him that way to work for what he did so that he would not be caught in that trap of wanting what everybody else wanted. So first of all, Paul did not covet what others had. Secondly, he was careful to make his own way. But then, thirdly, he chose to give rather than receive.

Now, go back to our text now. We'll begin there in verse 35. He says, "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Paul had been a great example to these Ephesian elders.

I want to take that verse and look at several phrases. It will draw a picture for you. The Greek word for "I showed you" means "to show forth plainly, to exemplify as by words or actions." In other words, Paul says, "By my actions and by my testimony, I have been your example of the fact of what I am doing."

The Greek word for "working hard" is a good word to know. He said, "that by working hard in this manner." What manner? Working with his hands to support himself. It is the Greek word which means "labor that causes one to be worn out and fatigued." Paul worked with his hands to support himself and his men. This required a tremendous amount of effort. You can see the wisdom here, the divine wisdom, that supersedes the fact that he can give the gospel without charge. The wisdom is that, when you are working hard for what you get, you are not going to want what everybody else has. You are not going to covet what everybody else wants to give to you.

He says there is Acts 20:35, "in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus." The word for "help" is the word which means "to take hold of somebody by the hand and assist him in any way you can assist them." Boy, there is something developing here. Do you see it? Are you asleep? Do you see it? It's coming.

He uses the word "weak." What is the word "weak?" The word "weak" is the word that refers to those who are distressed by want. Oh, me. I hope you see what I am seeing. When I was studying this, I just wanted to shout. Man, here it is! Paul found out that instead of me wanting everything from everybody else, I am going to work hard as directed as by the Holy Spirit of God. He made the choice that God told him to make which is making his money. He found out, not only could he help his men, but he could end up helping others who were poor and needy at the same time.

What an ingenious wisdom that God had given to him. A man who has trouble with coveting is a man who needs to take heed to what Paul learned, to be content now in everything that he had. He had gotten his eyes off of what others had. He had gotten his eyes off of what he didn't have and had gotten his eyes on what the poor and needy needed. He had committed himself, not for himself, he was working; he worked for his men, and he was able to assist those who were weak and who were poor and who did not have anything. What a worthy thing God put in his life. Paul's example to these Ephesian elders was, "I have worked hard with my hands to support my men as an example to you."

You see, one of the problems that he had in his ministry was churches that didn't want to help him. Some churches were rich and didn't want to help him. One of the blessing he had was the churches over in Macedonia. It doesn't say he didn't take it, because sometimes they gave him a gift. That was the reason for the writing of Philippians. He never asked for it. The thing that blessed him more than anything else was that the poor churches always gave to him. The rich churches wouldn't give him a dime. That is why he wrote what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:1-19. That was one of these rich churches. They didn't want to give an ounce of anything because it was theirs. They had the same problem Paul had had. Paul was so conscious of what Jesus had said. It says in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than it is to receive." Do you know what the word "blessed" is there? It is the word makarios. It means "fully satisfied."

Paul said, "I used to have trouble coveting. The Law came and just wiped me out. I wanted to do what God wanted me to do before I understood the covenant of grace. I got up one morning and said, 'Oh, God, I am not going to covet today.'" He walked outside of his little house, and he just coveted, coveted, coveted all day long. "What's wrong with me?" He began to beat his breast. He came back and said, "Oh God, tomorrow morning I won't covet." Covet, covet, covet. Then he was transformed by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he started learning that when you put on Christ, His heart in you starts beating; His eyes in you start seeing; His hands in you start giving; and all of a sudden, Paul has got his eyes off himself. Paul has got his eyes off the world. Paul started seeing other people around him who were needy.

Paul began to realize, "Hey, if I take money from these churches, it is my right, but why would I do that? It sort of hinders some people who think that I am just out to clean them out. I am just going to make my own way." He began to make his own way, and he said, "Man, I am a man that is fully satisfied."

You know, it is funny, but I have had that desire many times. It just scares my wife to death when I have it. Wouldn't it be just wonderful to step out on faith? Take your salary and say, "Here. You can have it back." Just walk and trust God. The only problem is I have six other guys. I would probably shoot them in the foot if I did that because I can't do it for other people. I have had that desire so many times in my life. It is so much better to give than it is to receive.

Listen, if you are having trouble with covetousness and you don't want to go the route of Paul, at least you can take one thing with you. Why don't you start praying about who it is that you believe God wants you to give something to? What don't you get your giving in check? I'll tell you what. When you start getting your giving in check, you can say like Paul said, "I used to want the Mercedes. I used to want the BMW's. I used to want the big houses. I used to want all the big salaries, but now I am fully satisfied because I have learned to make my own way. I just want to give it and give it, just as our Lord said. I am more fully satisfied in helping the poor and giving it to others than I am in keeping it for myself. What a way to whip covetousness in America. Just say, "What have I got that I can give away?"

When God speaks, we step out. I tell you what. The people in our church have so blessed me. I guess I am saying this because there are obviously people here in this church that have learned that great truth in their life. "It's better to give than it is to receive." I wish I could just start calling names of the people that have been a blessing to my life. Thank you, not only for how you have been a blessing in my life, but how you have shown me how I need now to be a blessing to other people's lives.

You help out others who have needs. Listen, that doesn't mean all the time you give to the budget. No, you take care of people that are in need. If you start living that way individually, and we start walking that way corporately, we are going to touch this world for Jesus. We are going to have a message that is impeccable in this age when shame is being brought on everything by what men who call themselves God's men are doing. We are going to have a message and a testimony that is going to be a light that this whole world can understand.

Paul was a covetous man. Paul got victory over covetousness. In the later part of his life he said, "I have learned to be content with what I have. I've learned to be abased."

I love it when I am abounding, but I don't like it when I am abased. I love to go somewhere, and somebody says, "Here is your room to stay in this week." It's a nice room, and I like it. I do. I do. I love it. I enjoy every second of it because I know the next time it will be roach heaven. It is always one or the other. If He takes you to the nice one, enjoy it. The next time you may wear your shoes all the time.

Paul said, "I have learned to be content." No wonder they loved this guy. Look what they do in Acts 20:36. They loved Paul. They loved his testimony. It says, "And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all." Acts 20:37 says, "And they began to weep aloud and they embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship."

Now that is a testimony, folks. That is somebody who didn't just say it. He lived it. Where are you right now? What are you hung up in? What is your area? What is the thing that is bugging you the most? If you are out pursuing things, woe be unto you. If I were you,

I would give it away tomorrow. If you are pursuing God and God throws it in, enjoy the thing, man. Let me borrow it! Don't worry about what you have. It is what has you! That is the whole key.

We are always saying, "Well, I've got to be humble. I've got to give something." No, man, just love Jesus and do what He tells you. I guarantee you He will keep you from all that garbage in your life.

Do you have a problem with things? Have you learned to be content with whatever you have? Do you desire to pay your own way and not beg from others? Do you desire to help the poor by giving to them? Then your desire to have earthly things probably is under control with not a problem whatsoever in your life. I love ole Paul. After I see Jesus and bask in His presence for a million years, I am going to sit down with Paul for the next million. I want to pick his brain. Man, there is just something about him that just blesses my socks off. If you have ever had a problem with getting, turn it around. Use the same energy to give.

Paul: The Missionary – Part 11

We have been looking now for several studies at Paul, the missionary. In this study we will see his Third Missionary Journey come to an end. Of course, a brand new adventure begins in Paul's life. We are going to be looking at Acts 21:1-14. I guess you could call this study, "Wherever He Leads, I'll Go." We often sing the song, but there is a lot more to it than just singing the song.

In Acts 21:1-3, he is leaving Miletus. Look at your map. When you come to Asia Minor, down to the left on the western coast is Ephesus, and 36 miles below it is Miletus. That is where Paul has been now for the last couple of studies as we've been looking at his life in Acts 20. Now he is leaving Miletus on his way to Jerusalem. Everything he does now is just simply going south.

Acts 21:1, "And when it came about that we had parted from them [at Miletus] and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos." Cos was an island between Miletus and the island of Rhodes. It says, "we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes." I had the privilege of being there. It is just so interesting to be where these places are mentioned. "And from there to Patara." Patara was a seaport city in the province of Lycia in Asia Minor. He's still on the coast of Turkey. Then verse 2 continues, "and having found a ship [they changed ships] crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail." Phoenicia was on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. We are getting closer now as he has made the curve. He is coming on down to Jerusalem.

"And when we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre," Tyre was a Phoenician city, a seaport city on the land which today we call Lebanon, "for there the ship was to unload its cargo." While they were in Tyre, they stayed there seven days and ministered to the disciples who were in the area.

Before we go on through Acts 21:14, we are going to look at that verse. Let me set the stage for what we are going to be talking about. As a Christian you are learning, as we all are learning, to walk in your journey with Him. How exciting and what an adventure it is. We must be willing to be led, though. God has a direction, a purpose for each of our lives. He has a direction and a purpose for churches, just like He has a direction and purpose for individual's lives. As we are willing to be led, as we are willing to surrender to Him, then God uses us. Our lives are like conduits. He does through us and in us what we could never have done for Him. He does it through our lives. However, in order to continue walking with Him, in order to continue the journey, we've got to learn to accommodate ourselves to what God says to us. Those accommodations are where the challenge really comes. We have to bend to Him. God never bends to us in the sense of changing His mind. We bend to Him. As we bend to Him, then we begin to make sacrifices in our life. We begin to pay a price in our life. We find out who really wants to walk with Jesus when it comes down to having to make a choice, when it comes down to something that costs us. If we are going to accommodate ourselves to the Lord Jesus in His leading us, we've got to come to the attitude, "Lord, it doesn't matter to me what may or may not happen to me. I just want to be a part of what You are up to." If you haven't made that decision, then fear will literally paralyze your life.

You may want to go on with God. You love talking about Him. You love being around people who are going on with God, but God has laid something in front of you that now you don't want to make the choice in order to proceed; something that has caused you to fear. You see, faith is not sight. When you step out on faith to do what God has said, you don't get the luxury of all the feelings and all the joy of it happening the way you want it to happen.

I remember in a church which I served in another place, there was a lady there whose son was very surrendered to the Lord Jesus. As a matter of fact, he was one of the finest kids you would ever want to be around. Well, coming back one night from a meeting he was killed tragically in a car wreck. His younger brother saw that. His younger brother made a drastic turn in his life and began to live for his own self for years. He turned away from the Lord, just turned his back to Him. Come to find out what had happened to him was, he saw what happened to his brother and wrongly concluded that if he surrendered his life to Jesus, he would have to be killed tragically. He didn't want to pay that kind of price, so he turned and went the other way. So often fear of what will happen to us, fear of what it will cost us, paralyzes us and freezes us in our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

No wonder people say there is no specific will of God. You start getting specific and, folks, it takes you to the cross. You die to the flesh, and you have to do things you ordinarily would have never set as an agenda before yourself. This is where the rubber hits the road. This is where you find the people who really love the Lord Jesus. Are you willing to say, "Lord, it doesn't matter to me what happens. It doesn't matter what it costs. I am going to follow You. Wherever You lead, I will go"?

Well, we have a man by the name of Paul who was single-mindedly a servant of the Lord Jesus. What he did was an absolute abandonment to the will of God in his life. The thing that impresses me about him, though, was that Paul did not have one single thing that I don't have and that you don't have. He was gifted differently, yes. Maybe he had some training, yes. But as far as what it took to walk this Christian life, he had the same package you and I got when we received the Lord Jesus Christ. Even Paul's buddy, Simon Peter, made the statement in his epistle, "You who have received a like faith such as ours." There is no difference. The key is how we respond to that which God has given to us.

Well, three times Paul had been told by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. We will see that later on in our text. Three times the Holy Spirit witnesses to his spirit through others and also privately that when he gets to Jerusalem, it is going to be bad. Bad things lay ahead in Jerusalem for Paul. Well, he already sensed that, because when Jesus went to Jerusalem it was bad. That's where law and grace will always conflict. Jesus went to the cross because of what went on in Jerusalem. Paul sensed in his spirit something bad was going to happen. The Holy Spirit affirmed, "Yes, you are right. It is going to be bad."

This is difficult. When you know what God says and you want to know His will, then you begin to sense that what is going to happen is going to cost you if you do it. The Holy Spirit, through others and through His own witness to you, affirms, "Yes, it's going to cost you if you obey what God has told you to do." That's where it becomes very difficult.

I hope we can learn from Paul as he passes the test. Every time he was witnessed to by the Spirit that things would be bad, he kept his face, like a flint, right towards Jerusalem. It reminds me of Jesus in Luke 9:51 when it says, "He set his face towards Jerusalem." He knew what He had come to do. He knew the cost that was going to be His to pay.

Well, first of all we've got to go back to Acts 20. We are going to see the first time that the Holy Spirit spoke to Paul. It said the Holy Spirit witnessed to his spirit. That's the first point. The Holy Spirit witnessed to his own individual spirit. Look at Acts 20:22, 23. Remember, he is in Ephesus. Acts 20:22 says, "And now, behold, bound in spirit." The word "bound in spirit" means "I am compelled by the Spirit of God." Paul was being led. Paul was compelled. Paul was on a course that was charted by God Himself: "bound in the spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there." He didn't know everything, but he knew something. Look at Acts 20:23, "except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me."

Now, I wondered as I studied this, why would he go to Jerusalem to begin with? I mean, anybody with any common sense,... Paul grew up in Jerusalem. Paul was trained under the Law. Paul's message was totally different, and now he was going back. He knew what was ahead of him. Now the Holy Spirit told him what was ahead of him. Why would he even want to go to Jerusalem?

Go back to Acts 19:21. If you read this very carelessly, you are going to come up with the idea that Paul planned his own agenda. But if you will take a little time and look at it, take other texts and put it together, you will realize that he was on God's agenda. Acts 19:21 reads, "Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit." Now, that word "purposed" caught my attention. It is not the word that I thought it would be which means "being determined and made up his mind." It is sort of synonymous. It is the word *tithemi*, which means "to set something in place, to appoint something." It is setting a direction. It is putting something deep down inside of yourself that God wants to be there.

Now look at the second phrase there, "in the spirit." You see, the Spirit of God is speaking to him. There are two places God wants Paul to go. He has very clearly told Paul this. First of all, it says, "go to Jerusalem." That's number one, but that's not the only place; "after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'" Now it sounds like Paul is sitting there thinking, "You know, this is fun. I like this missionary stuff. I think I'll plan me a good trip. I've never seen Rome. I think I want to see Rome. I've never seen it. I think I'll put Jerusalem on the agenda, too. God, are you okay with that? Fine. Good. I am going to do it." He gets a travel agent and gets on the plane and goes and asks God to bless his efforts.

That is not what he was saying. He is saying he purposed in his spirit; God spoke to his heart. He took what God had said and put it deep down inside of him. That began to frame his direction and determination. He wanted to see the ministry God had begun completed in his life. That was the heart cry that Paul had. God willed for Paul to go to Jerusalem and Rome, so Paul put it deep in his heart and determined, "Yes, I am going to do exactly what God has said."

The term "solemnly testified" means "to witness or to affirm something." The Spirit solemnly testified to me in every city. He affirmed something in my spirit. Now, since it doesn't say how, we don't know if he used other people to do it, because he talks about that later on. I believe by implication he means, "he bore witness in my spirit".

You know, sometimes that happens. We can't explain it to anybody. It is just the Holy Spirit bearing witness in your spirit that

something is about to take place. How the world do you explain that to anybody? Somehow, Paul sensed in his inner spirit that God was speaking to him, not only to go to Jerusalem, but then when he got there, things would be bad.

Again, I bring up the situation. This is when the going gets tough. "What are you going to do, Paul? You know God has told you to go to Jerusalem. You say you are compelled by the Spirit. Now, to cast even more shadows on it, the Holy Spirit says when you get there, it is going to be bonds and afflictions." The word "bonds" in the plural means "imprisonment;" the word "affliction" means "to be squeezed to where it's very, very painful."

Paul talks in Galatians about a struggle of the flesh and the spirit. He says in Romans 7, "The things I want to do, I can't do. The things I want to say, I don't say." When he tries it himself that Law just continues to hover over him. There has been a struggle in Paul. We've got to understand that. It doesn't talk about it in Acts 20, but you know he went through one. You know good and well. He was a man, a person just like you and me. All of us wrestle with that.

What is God saying to you? What has God clearly spoken through His Word to you as regarding His will? What is it that has just literally caused you to be paralyzed with fear and stopped you from going on and doing what God has said? Well, we are in some good company because some pretty good folks have gone through the same battles.

Look back in John 11:7. This is my favorite text to talk about this. I have mentioned it many times. This is when Jesus has been in Judea. What are they doing to Him in Judea? John 10:39 says they were seeking to seize Him. He eludes their grasp because the time is not right. He goes to the other side of the Jordan River, a whole day's journey away, and here He is with His disciples. He has gone a whole day's journey, on the other side of the Jordan River, to a different Bethany, and He is there with His disciples. He gets the message that Lazarus, His friend, is sick. Of course, Martha and Mary are just absolutely about to have a spell. They can't stand it. They can't understand why Jesus is not there. They are upset with Him. Now you say, "You don't know that." Yes, I do. Because when He gets there, what does Martha say? "Where have you been? If you had been here, he would not have died." What does Mary say? "Where have you been? If you had been here he wouldn't have died. You can't do anything now. You can't do anything here." They were very upset with Jesus because He had gone over to the other side of the Jordan.

Jesus knew that this miracle with Lazarus, his resurrection, was going to be the miracle that would pull the trigger on the plot to put Him on the cross. All through John He says, "The time has not yet come." In John 12:1ff, after He is there and has raised Lazarus, He says, "The time has now come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Now, what does He mean? He had to go to the cross to accomplish what He came to do. That is perfectly okay with Jesus, but it wasn't with the disciples.

Look at John 11:7. These guys remind me of me and you. "Then after this, He said to the disciples [Now watch carefully the words], 'Let me go to Judea again.'" Is that what your Bible says? No, "Let us go to Judea again." Now, that's fine for Jesus. He walks in perfect harmony with the Father. What He sees the Father do, He does. What He hears the Father say, He says. He walks in that divine reflex of whatever the Father wants. But that's not too cool for the disciples. They are not excited about this at all. As a matter of fact, look at verse 8: "The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?'" They hadn't even thought about going with Him. They are trying to figure out why He would want to go over there.

It is kind of like Tonto and the Lone Ranger. They came up to the edge of a cliff. There were a million Indians in front of them and a million Indians behind them. The Lone Ranger, the white man, looked at the Indian, Tonto, and said, "Well, Tonto, I guess that's it for us." Tonto said, "What do you mean, pale face?"

That is exactly what is going on. They are thinking, "We're not going! Are You going over there? Are you crazy? They were just seeking to stone you. Are you going there again?" What was their problem? Fear, the same thing you and I have. The Lord Jesus puts His will in front of you and says, "I want you to start giving." Hey, isn't that the one we don't want me to get on? Why don't we get on it for a minute? You say, "Well, Lord, I can't give. I mean, come on, get off my case." Then all of a sudden one day you decide you are going to do it and what happens? Fear sets in. "If I do that, then I'm acting irresponsibly, and I can't pay my bills, and I can't take care of other things. I can't afford to give." Have you ever heard that before?

Now what was it that paralyzed you from doing what God said? Fear of what will happen to you if you did! You want to live by sight. You're saying, "Lord, show me something, and I'll believe you." You're acting just like the Jews all the way through the Old Testament. We as Christians don't live that way. We walk by faith. When God says it, we stand on it, and that's enough. The key is, are we willing to step out on what God has said in any area of your life?

What are you dealing with? What is challenging you? What is causing you to be afraid? Here is the situation. You've got to go to school and make a stand for Jesus Christ. The first thing that hits you is, "What are they going to say about me? I don't want to be laughed at. I don't want to be humiliated." All of a sudden, fear paralyzes you from going on and being what God wants you to be.

Well, Paul shows how he conquered the fear. Go back to Acts 20:24. He has just us that the Holy Spirit has borne witness to him. Look at verse 24: "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order 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.” Let me paraphrase that for you. “I don’t care what happens to me. I only want God to accomplish His will and ministry in my life that it may be a testimony of the gospel of grace in me. I want it to be a testimony to others of what God’s grace can do in a man’s life.” Are you there right now? Are you willing to take a step out on what God has said and say, “God, you just show others that the reason I am able to do this is because of your work of grace in my life.” First John 4:18 says, “Perfect love casts out all fear.” The word “perfect” means “that which accomplishes its goal.” When my love for Jesus is accomplishing its fullest goal, then that fullest goal is obeying Him. When I am fully obeying Him, surrendered to Him, that in itself casts aside all fear. How do you deal with fear? You turn towards Him, and you surrender yourself to Him. You step out on that which He has said. Then fear will fall away. You don’t know that yet because you haven’t made the step yet. What has God said? Where are we afraid?

Well, the Holy Spirit witnessed to his spirit, “Things are going to be bad, Paul.” Paul kept right on going. That shows you his resolve to do what God had said.

Well, here he is at Tyre, the seaport city there north of Jerusalem. It says in Acts 21:4, “And after looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days.” Paul looks up the disciples, and they stay there for seven days. Look at what they do: “and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.” First of all, we see the Holy Spirit bearing witness to Paul’s spirit.

Secondly, we see that the disciples were worried about his safety.

You really need to see this. When it says, “they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem” that could cause you to think the Holy Spirit told them to tell him not to go. They are just communicating that to him. That is not what it is saying. The Holy Spirit wouldn’t contradict Himself. The Holy Spirit has already told him to go to Jerusalem. What are they saying? Here is what I believe they are saying, by implication. The Holy Spirit has told them the same thing He has told Paul. “It is going to be bad when you get to Jerusalem.” They don’t really mean this to be bad, but they come to Paul and start begging him or telling him, “through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.”

Many times when God has used His Spirit to bear witness to us that it is going to be bad, the people closest to us, the people who around us who love us, try without realizing what they are doing to talk us out of doing that which God has put before us. “Don’t go to Jerusalem. The Spirit has told us the same thing.” Without realizing it, they are throwing up a barrier. They should never do that.

I am going to encourage you. That is the barrel which God shot me out of. When you come to me and you say, “I’m going to do this,” I can look at it. You see it, and I see it, and we both realize it is going to be bad. Immediately, somehow I want to talk you out of it. I don’t want anything bad to happen to anybody. That is just the way I am. That is why I am a lousy counselor. If you come to me I am going to help you out. Maybe you don’t need to be helped out. Maybe you need to be nailed to the wall by somebody that will confront you. That is not me. I don’t like to confront anybody. I’d rather go around the block. I want everybody to be happy. I don’t want anybody to ever be upset. So, therefore, I may do the same thing these disciples did. You come to me and say, “Oh, I believe God is calling me over here.” I look at it and sense that God really is calling you there, but in my mind, I know just by common sense, it’s going to be bad. Then the Holy Spirit begins to quicken my spirit, “Yes, it’s going to be bad.” I say, “Are you sure you’ve heard from God? There is a place over here that you can go that will be a lot more comfortable.” I don’t want anything bad to happen to you.

It might be your wife. The Lord told us one time to tithe when we owed a bill of \$188.55. I was committed to going ahead and tithing, even though I knew if I wrote a check for \$12 it would bounce. I was going to go on and do it because God said it. My wife cried for three days. Now, look out ladies. Quit it. You may by good intentions be trying to save somebody from the price they may have to pay, but don’t ever get in the way of them doing what God has told them to do. The disciples did not mean bad, but by implication, they were saying, “Don’t do it.” They were trying to talk him out of doing what God had said.

Years ago when I first came to this church, we outgrew everything. We are still doing it. That’s wonderful. I don’t understand all that except that God keeps us on the edge trusting Him because of it. We got to the point that we had to do something about Sunday School and nursery space. We had none at all. Well, to do what we wanted to do, we had to get rid of adult Sunday School. What? That’s a sacred cow! You can’t build a church without Sunday School! It’s written on every staunch Southern Baptist that was ever born. It is absolutely tattooed on their body when they become Southern Baptists. They believe if you don’t have Sunday School, you can’t build a church. Well, first of all, I am not trying to build a church. Jesus has done a fine job with His own Church for a long time. You just have to cooperate with Him. Sunday School works for some. It may not work the same with others.

Well, we had to get rid of the adult Sunday School. We had some adult Sunday School classes that were more loyal to their class than they were to Jesus. I mean, after all, they were not about to move out of that class! There were some real decisions we had to make.

Somebody called the “Gestapo!” The Associational Missionary came out and took me to lunch. Right there, in the middle of the

meal, he looked over at me and said, "Young man." I said, "Sir." He said, "Don't you understand what you are about to do?" I said, "Yes, sir." I told him how we had prayed about it, but I didn't catch the drift of his question. He said, "You are about to wreck that church." I said, "Well, first of all, it is not my church. We are trying to do what the Lord Jesus wants to do. It is His church. If He wants to wreck it, that's His business. This is what we believe He has told us to do." He saw he couldn't convince me that you don't get rid of your adult Sunday School.

Well, we left the conversation, and I went back to my house. I thought, "You know, I don't want to wreck this church." This is the fear that gets in all of us. Well-meaning people will come alongside you. You've heard from God. God's Spirit has born witness in your spirit. You know where you are headed, but there are well-meaning people who realize that it is not going to make you popular or it is going to cost you something. They come alongside and try to give you advice to cause you to pull away from what God has set before you.

We finally came to the conclusion that this wasn't my idea. Many of us had prayed about it. This is what we believed God had told us to do, so we went ahead and did it. Boy, it really wrecked our Sunday School! We grew 300 stronger that summer than we had ever been before. It was like God smiled. You know, some people come to me now and say, "How many do you all have in services?" I don't know. I've never counted them. "Well, how many do you have in Sunday School?" I think we have reached 1,050. You don't have any more than that in Sunday School. Well, we are using broom closets twice every Sunday. What else are we supposed to do? God knows all of that. You just have to go the way He guides and the way He provides. What makes us unique is just being those who follow Him. We don't have some program pulling us down the road. We've got the Lord, and we are trying to be compelled by His spirit to be on His agenda. When folks come alongside and say, "Oh, it is going to hurt things." Yeah, it does, but that's alright. Be careful of that in your life.

Who is it right now that is trying to talk you out of doing what God has told you to do, because they are scared to death of what it is going to cost you or what it is going to make you look like, or the pain you may have to endure if you make that decision? You've got to make up your mind. Are you going to please the Lord, or are you going to please man?

After they said, "Don't, don't, don't go to Jerusalem," Acts 21:5 says, "And when it came about that our days there were ended, we departed." Well, Paul really let it bother him, didn't he? He just got right on the boat and said, "See you later." He had his face set toward Jerusalem: "and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. And after kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again." It didn't hurt him a bit. He is right on the course God had set him on.

The third time that he is witnessed to that it is going to be bad in Jerusalem comes up in Acts 21:7-14. Acts 21:7 says, "And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais [that is right above Caesarea on the coast] and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea." That is where he is going to lodge for a while, "and entering the house of Philip the evangelist;" remember back in Acts 6:5 when they picked those men who were full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit to be helpers to the apostles? Philip was one of those men. In 8:5 we see him preaching and becoming the evangelist of that day. I don't know if that blessed you or not, but it just kind of tickled me that Paul stopped at Philip's house.

Okay, I will move on. Well, look at Acts 21:9-11. Now watch this: "Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses." What is a prophetess? I don't have the slightest idea. They had these people in the beginning of the church. The Bible was not even put together up until about AD 60. They didn't have anything but letters that were written by Paul and some pieces of the Gospels. They did not have the Scripture. So these prophetesses and prophets were there in the New Testament. Very clearly, they did as the Old Testament prophets would do, up until a point. We don't need them anymore because we have got the Word right here.

Acts 21:10 says, "And as we were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea." Now what's this guy going to say? "And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, 'This is what the Holy Spirit says: "In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'""

You see, the Holy Spirit witnessed to his spirit, "It is going to be bad." The disciples were worried about his safety, and they tried to talk him out of it.

Thirdly, the prophet of God warned him about the seizure that was to take place when he got to Jerusalem.

This was the third time the Spirit bore witness to Paul. This time it is a prophet coming to him by the name of Agabus.

Now watch, "And when we had heard this," who is the we? Luke is writing this. Are you kidding me? You mean Luke joined in on this? Well, that is what it says, "when we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem." Now how much can a man take? He goes to Tyre, and the disciples get around him and say, "Oh, the Spirit has told us

that it is going to be bad in Jerusalem.” Paul says, “Yeah, I know. He told me too.” “Don’t go. Don’t go.” He gets on a boat and says, “See you later.” He gets over here to Caesarea. Here comes a prophet. “Oh, no; let’s all get in a corner because he has got a word from God.” The prophet says, “Paul, they are going to bind you, and they are going to put you in prison.” What is he supposed to do? Here is a man who was constantly warned about how bad it was going to be. He knew what God’s will was, but he also knew that it was not going to be good. What is this man going to say and what is he going to do?

Well, look at Acts 21:13: “Then Paul answered, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’” Now you see his resolve. “Quit trying to talk me out of doing what I know God has put before me. I am going to do it if it costs me my life. I’m going to go where God has told me to go.” That has got to be our resolve. If we are going to accommodate ourselves to God, we have got to get rid of the thought of what is going to happen to me or what it may cost me. Now you say, “I appreciate the message. Ho-hum. It’s time to eat. Let’s go home.” I hope you don’t say that because, folks, God has pushed us as a church into a situation that we are going to have to start accommodating ourselves to what He is saying.

You know, we have a missionary outreach. That’s what we are. Missions is where we are. We have 20 mission boards that we help support. We’ve got to take care of these people who are out there. “Well, if you had asked me, I would have told you. Don’t do it. Do it the way we have always done it. Then you can take a percentage of the budget. You don’t ever have to worry about it. It is all somebody else’s problem. You shouldn’t have started it.”

Then I hear people say, “This church is just too big.” You know what they are really saying? “It is going to cost me if I stay here.” “I like little churches. In little churches, you can help them out more.” That’s right, and you don’t need as much money to run them. I remember back when we were small, it was great. Everybody loved us. Man, it was crowded. “Let’s pray that God will grow us.” Well, we started growing, then certain people got a little edgy. “Uh-oh. We are out of space. That means we will have to build a building. Let’s check out for five years until they build the building. Then we will come back and say God led us away and now He has led us back. It was fun. For five years, we will let them pay for it, then we will come back and be part of it.” That’s just the mentality. That is where it’s at. I’ve had it. A lot of us have gone through that. It’s going to cost us. You’ve got to start accommodating.

Why do we have our missions outreach like it is? Because we have people who have the same doctrines we have. I don’t believe when we get to heaven God is going to honor Southern Baptists; I believe God is going to honor His Word and the people who were responsive to it. If people agree doctrinally with us, we are going to join hands with them, and we are going to reach the world for Christ. What does that mean? That means if you are here to stay with us and not just a spectator, God has got you up against the wall. Are you going to accommodate yourself to what He has led us as a church to do? Well, you see, you can’t do that if you are not doing it individually day by day. If you are not walking that way right now, no wonder it scares you to death when we talk about something bigger than that.

Things are happening right now that has been a dream of mine for over 12 years. Now God is working it out. Are we going to accommodate ourselves to it? Or are we going to say, “These elders don’t know what they are doing. They are just a bunch of men who sit in there and they try to tax us all with our money. We don’t believe God is in that whatsoever”? You see, you have to make a choice somewhere. I’ve got to make one. You’ve got to make one. Is God in it? If He is in it, if we trust His system, if God gives wisdom to the people He has appointed to lead, then let’s do what He says. Let’s accommodate ourselves to it. In the name of the Lord Jesus, for His reputation, for His dignity and His character, we will do what He tells us to do regardless of what it costs us. That’s the bottom line. What has paralyzed most of us, myself is included, is the fear of what will happen to us.

Paul said, “What in the world are you guys doing, weeping and breaking my heart?” He says, “Man, I’ll die if need be, and I am going to Jerusalem. God has told me to go, and I will pay whatever price.”

Look at Acts 21:14 and we will stop: “And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent.” The word “silent” there, doesn’t really mean it just got quiet. It means they gave up. They acquiesced. They said, “Well, alright.” Then look what they said, “remarking, ‘The will of the Lord be done!’” Now why did they say that last and not first? They came and said, “Don’t go. Don’t go. I beg you don’t go.” Then when they saw that he was going, “Well, the will of the Lord be done!” Well, what else could be done and God get any glory for it?

I don’t know where you are in this message. I just know where I am. I tell you what. Some of the direction which God has already put before me, I don’t like, but I have got to accommodate myself. I don’t like some of the decisions I have to make, nor do you like some of the decisions you have to make, but you’ve got to do what God tells you to do. That is the key.

The first key is know for sure He has spoken. Now I understand there is a risk of irresponsibility. Some people will walk up and say, “Well, God told me to do it.” Maybe He did, and maybe He didn’t. First of all, Paul had the credibility of living before others to the point that they realized that’s all that man was the will of God. His character spoke well. All he had in his life was the determination to

do it. So, when he said that God told him to go to Jerusalem, they could understand it because they had watched him in every other area of his life. Just because you say God spoke doesn't mean God spoke. We know that those that are willing to do the will of God can know what it is. John tells us that.

Here are some questions and then I am through. What has God put before you? A person came to me recently and blessed my heart. If for nobody else, it was worth it to me to hear his testimony. He said this is exactly where I am. He's about to do something that God had put before him in the area of missions and already the in-laws have gotten involved because they are worried about what is going to happen to their children when they get over on the mission field. It has caused them great consternation. He said, "Thank you. I needed that this morning. I know what God said, and I am going to do what God has told me to do."

What has God put before you? "Well, I can't do what God has put before me. I can't stop socially drinking with my business partners because if I do, I am going to lose my job. Do you know how much money I give to the church?" Well, if that is the way you are getting it, keep it. Folks, listen, you have got to do what God tells you to do. Quit worrying about what is going to happen to you. Quit worrying about your house and your job. Just do it. Let God take care of the rest of it. The Holy Spirit has confirmed to your spirit that it won't satisfy men. They will speak evil of you, and they'll seek to do you harm. The believers who love you are trying to keep you from going through with it because they are worried about your safety. God's men and God's Word, like the early prophets, have warned you that doing the will of God may not always mean that you are going to be well-liked. Now, what are you going to do? Are you going to obey? Are you going to back up?

One thing I like about Paul. He was a warrior, not a wimp. He was a warrior. He was not a wimp. You find out who the wimps are when the cost comes down to it. They won't go on and do what God is telling them to do. You'll find out who the warriors are because they will obey God at any cost, at any time, when God speaks to them.

Let me share a verse with you. Galatians 1:10 so clearly says it. "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." You can't please both, folks.

Hebrews 11:6 says without what it is impossible to please God? Faith. You know what faith is? It is not believing that He can, it is hearing what He says and stepping out and obeying what He says. You can't say you have faith, if there is no obedience. Without that, there is no way to please God. Are you pleasing self? Are you pleasing men or are you pleasing God? That is the key. If you are not pleasing God, what is it that is causing you to be paralyzed? It's that fear. What casts out that fear? Turn and fully surrender afresh and say, "God, I can't understand it. You said it, and I am going to do it. Thank you." Then go on and do it. You will watch the fear just fall off of you. You don't know that it can be cast away, because you haven't done what He says yet. Go on and do it. Step out. That's when you are going to discover what you have not known before.

Well, glory. I wish I could point a finger, but I can't. There are three more pointing right back at me. My kids are going to college this year. I have never in my life been as overwhelmed financially as I have been lately. Does that ever bother you? "No, Wayne, the water is different at our house." I want to tell you. I had just recently got to the point that I just doubted God. I lost my joy. My countenance fell. My wife asked me one night, "Good grief, Wayne. You preach it. Aren't you going to live it?" Oh, don't say that to me. I have had to regroup. I am so grateful that this is where we are in Acts because it just sort of kicked me right in the seat of the pants where I need to be kicked. If God said it, am I sure they are supposed to go where they are going. We have prayed this through many months ago. Then stand on it and go through with it, though I can't see what it costs. I am just going to believe Him.

Paul: The Messenger – Part 12

Turn with me to Acts 21. Paul has basically concluded his third missionary journey. We are going to begin a new adventure with him. We are going to start looking at Acts 21:15 and go down through Acts 21:26. We have seen Paul, the man. We have seen Paul, the missionary. Now we are going to begin looking at Paul, the messenger. Paul had a message that he not only preached, but he had a message that he lived before others. This is what I want you to see more than anything else. His message was the message of the life-changing grace of God. By the way he lived, you see how he was definitely changed by that very message.

Remember Ephesians 1:1? That is what we are introducing by all this study. It says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God." That word "apostle" means "one sent forth with a message." Oh, he had a message at one time in his life. He was a savage wolf putting everybody under the Law. But God met him on the Damascus Road, changed his message, put a new song in his life and now he is on a different adventure altogether. He is not only preaching it, he is living it before others. God has instructed him to go to Jerusalem and then on to Rome.

In the last study we saw the Holy Spirit witnessing to his spirit. It's going to be bad with bonds and afflictions. Paul just kept right on. We also saw the disciples worried about his safety. When he got to Tyre, they said, "Listen, we are witnessing out of the Spirit. It is

going to be bad.” Paul climbed on the boat and kept right on going. We saw him when he came to Caesarea. The prophet Agabus came down and warned about him being seized and put into chains. Paul says in verse 13 of chapter 21, “What are you doing weeping and breaking my heart?” The men had gathered around him. Luke was included in all of this. “For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent.” We acquiesced. We just said, “Alright, so be it,” “remarking, “The will of the Lord be done!””

Verse 15 now takes us to that city. Paul finally arrives where God has told him to go. Remember, you are never going to see what God wants you to see, you are never going to a part of what God wants you to be a part of, until you learn to start accommodating yourselves to the will of God in your life. God has a purpose for you, for me and for our church just like He had for Paul, but we’ve got to be surrendered. We’ve got to be willing to cooperate fully with all that He does.

In verse 15 he finally arrives where God has instructed him. It says, “And after these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem.” Back in Acts 19:21, God had told him to go here. This is not something he came up with in a committee meeting thinking they needed the message of grace. It says in verse 21, “Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit.” In other words, the Spirit had spoken to him. He took what he said and placed it deep inside of his heart, which set his direction. He said to go to Jerusalem. At the end of the verse he says, “After I have been there, I must also go to Rome.”

In Acts 23:11, the Lord Jesus comforts him after he had made his stand in Jerusalem. He said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.” Paul is doing this because God has instructed him to do it. This was not a matter of a committee meeting. This was a matter of God, the Holy Spirit, working on a surrendered man’s heart. That’s how missions take place. Whether it is across the street or around the world, God wants to use us. However, we must be willing to accommodate ourselves to Him.

Well, this visit was not his first one to Jerusalem. It was going to prove to be the most difficult, however. One of the things that Luke, who writes Acts, does not record is the fact that part of his reasoning for going to Jerusalem was to take a gift, a contribution, that had been taken up by the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to the suffering people there in Judea. That was not his only reason. It was a side venture that he was taking as he went to Jerusalem. Look at Romans 15:25, and you will see this. Remember, Romans was written in February of AD 57. We believe this journey took place in May of AD 57. Romans 15:25-27 says, “but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.” So Paul had taken a collection from the Gentile churches over to Judea. That was part of his reason for going.

However, in Acts Luke does not even bring that up. I believe that is because Luke is just so overwhelmed by the fact that Paul even goes to Jerusalem. Luke is the one who penned the gospel in Luke 9:51, which says that Jesus Himself set His face resolutely towards Jerusalem. If anyone knew the problems that Paul would have in Jerusalem, Luke knew. Luke was there when the Lord Jesus was crucified. Therefore, here in Acts he only mentions the fact that Paul went to Jerusalem. You see, Jerusalem was the place where grace confronted law. Law was deeply seated in Jerusalem. The message of grace that Paul preached was about to find a barrier and a real frustration as he gets to Jerusalem. They had no patience there. Even the Christian Jews had no patience for Paul’s message of grace to the Gentile believers. Paul knows that. I have a deep-seated conviction that is why John Mark left him. I believe John, who came out of Jerusalem, was like the rest of them. He could not handle Paul’s preaching of absolute grace to the Gentile believers. He was brought up a different way. So he checked out and went home.

There is something for all of us to remember. Once Paul became a believer and began preaching the message of grace, home was never the same. You see, Jerusalem was where he grew up. Look over in Acts 22:3. He gives his testimony before the people there that bring him before the Romans. These are Jews he is defending himself in front of, and it says in Acts 22:3, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.” Paul had been raised up in Jerusalem. Why was it he sensed that it would be hostile for him to go back home? Because the Paul who had been raised under the teachings of the Law had been transformed by the message of grace in his life. Now he was going back to people he knew. He knew how they believed, and he knew how he felt.

I want to ask you a question. How many of you when you came to know the Lord Jesus saw a conflict arise in your family? I wonder how many of us found conflict when we came to know Jesus Christ? We understand what Paul was thinking. He was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, knowing this was where he was raised. He also knew they were not going to receive his message.

Well, things are about to get hot. Paul’s message is deeply imbedded in him. We want to see him now as a messenger, not just as one who preached the message of grace, but one who has been changed by the message of grace. I want you to see the attitude of this messenger as he goes into Jerusalem. This is what really spoke to my heart. I told my son I wrestled with this passage for almost six hours. I could not seem to grasp what was the seed truth that God wanted me to bring forth. I can figure out all the details; anybody with a mind can do that. I’ve got a little bit of one. I wanted to know, what was the message God really wanted. The

more I stayed with it, and the more I stayed with it, and the more I stayed with it, the more I began to realize what God was saying. I am so excited. I'm even more fired up about this study than I was in the last study. I want to show you the attitude of a messenger, a real messenger, of the message of grace. I want you to see the transformed attitude he had.

You tell your children, "Son, you are saved by grace. You are changed by grace, and you live by grace." Remember, grace is God's transforming power. Are you living it before the people you are telling it to? The key to having a message transferred to others is not just in telling them. It's in modeling it in front of them.

There are three things I want you to see about Paul's transformed attitude. First of all, his attitude was one that was contagious. Look at Acts 21:15-16. Have you heard about the fellow who had a boy named Johnny? One day little Johnny was told by his mama to clean up his room. Well, he wouldn't do it. For days it went on that way. Finally, one morning he got up and did what his mother told him. She went into his room to check it out. I mean, he cleaned up the room. He found out there was actually carpet on the floor. He found out the color of that carpet. He found toys he had been looking for years for. He thought it was Christmas. Man, he was finding things that he had misplaced. It had all been stacked two feet high. He had been spanked every single day since he had been born because he wouldn't clean up his room. Finally, one day he decided to clean up his room. I want to show you how attitude is contagious. Man, he was so proud. He left one toy out on the floor to play with, one that he hadn't seen in years. About that time, his mother walked in. Well, his mama had a bad day. I mean, a bad, bad day. So, the mama walked in, looked over and saw the fact that his toy is laying out there on the floor. She looked at him and said, "Johnny, why in the world can't you clean up your room?" Immediately the attitude of that little boy began to change. I mean, he had worked so hard on it all day long.

The father came home from work and wondered where his supper. The mother had been cleaning up the house instead of cooking supper. You talk about an attitude as being passed from one to another. Little Johnny sat there and man, his whole attitude had changed. After the mama walked out, he looked over in the corner and there was the old cat. The cat was laying over in the corner, and the little boy walked over. He was afraid to say anything to his daddy or anybody else. He walked over, grabbed that cat, opened up the window and said, "Get out of my life." He threw that cat out in the alley. They said that night they had the worst cat fight in that neighborhood that they had in years. It all started with somebody's attitude that was passed to another and passed to another.

Paul's attitude was contagious. You can see this in verse 15. "And after these days [Watch carefully. What's the next word?] we got ready and started on our way up to [Where?] Jerusalem." Now, you've got to understand what we studied last time. If you don't put all these scriptures together, it makes no sense. What had "we" been doing back in the earlier verses? "We," Luke included, had been trying to talk Paul out of doing what God had put on his heart. As a matter of fact, "we" got to the point that "we" began to weep, and Paul said, "What are you doing trying to break my heart? Listen, I need to go on and do what God has told me to do." "We" had tried to talk him out of it. It's so similar to John 11 when the disciples did the same thing to Jesus.

They are trying to talk him out of it, but then they realized he is not going to be moved. He is not going to change. Then the contagious attitude of Paul, "I am going to obey the Lord Jesus Christ," spread over those men. They got up, got around him and went with him into Jerusalem.

Now, there is something here that you can overlook if you are not careful. Look at Acts 21:16. "And some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us [they were also trying to talk Paul out of going up to Jerusalem], taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge." Now be careful here. It says, "taking us" to this disciple." You immediately think that he lives over in Jerusalem, and they are going over to where he lives in Jerusalem to stay with him. Or maybe he lives outside of Jerusalem, and they are going to spend the night with him. That's not the Greek there. The Greek doesn't say, "take us to him," it says "bringing along with us this man." In other words, they brought him along.

Now he is an old-timer. This will bless your heart if you will hang in there with me. Here's the apostle Paul. He said, "I am going to where God told me to go." Here are the people of Caesarea who tried to talk him out of it. "We are going with you. We are going with you." That attitude seems to be so contagious. Here is an old-timer who says, "Hey, man. Count me in. I've got a house over in Jerusalem. Come on, let me go with you." He goes to Jerusalem with them, and that's where they stay when they get to Jerusalem.

There are four things we know about this old-timer. First of all, his name. I'm not going to try that again. Secondly, he is from Cyprus. Who else is was from Cyprus that we have studied? Thirdly, he is an old-timer. The word "long-standing" is actually the word for ancient. Now you get the idea here. Think with me. He's old. I don't know what old is to them, but he is old. I mean, he is over the hill. Here is an old-timer. He's been a disciple for a long time. They go get him and bring him along with them and take him over to Jerusalem. The fourth thing we know about him is he has a house in Jerusalem.

You know, a chill just bumps on me thinking about this old timer. He has been a disciple for the Lord Jesus all this time, and all of a sudden one day, the apostle Paul comes in, and he finds out what is going on. Evidently, he was in the crowd and knew what was happening, and he has a house over in Jerusalem. He may have been one of them that tried to talk Paul out of doing what God had before him. Paul would not be talked out of it, so all of them jump on the band wagon with Paul. I can just see him now. "Come on

guys, let me go with you.” Instead of retiring, he refires. I mean, he just gets excited about doing the will of God in his life.

There was a lady that came to me in one church that I pastored. First of all, she told me one day, “You are the first preacher that’s ever taught me that the Holy Spirit of God lives inside of me.” She was 84 years old! She had sat in a Southern Baptist Church all of her life and didn’t even know that the Holy Spirit of God dwells in the hearts and lives of people who receive the Lord Jesus Christ. I’ve never seen anybody get any more excited in all of my days.

She was the funniest little lady. I’d ride by her house, and I’d wave at her. She was so old, she wouldn’t turn around and wave back at me. She did not want to start an ugly rumor in the town. Eighty-four years old! I said, “Why didn’t you wave at me?” She said, “I don’t want to start rumors in this town.” One day nobody came to pick her up at the church. I said, “Hey, you just live right around the corner from me. Let me take you home.” “No, sir. Your wife is not with you, and we are not going to start any talk around this place.” Eighty-four years old!

She came to me one day and said, “Would you teach me how to study my Bible?” I began to show her how to get into the Word of God. Man, I would look for her every Sunday because she just beamed. Eighty-four! Man, life to her was better than it had ever been before! She came up to me one day during the invitation and what she said just broke my heart. I was waiting for the young couples to come down. It was just one of those moving times in a service. Instead of the young people coming, instead of all the young couples, this little old 84 year old lady struggled out of her seat, and came down to me. She put her arms around me and said, “Brother Wayne, I don’t know what I can do. I am so old, but I want to tell you, if you think of anything, will you please let me know. I am just abandoned to do whatever God wants me to do in these last days on this earth.”

I want to ask you something, friend. Are you living the kind of life that causes even the old people to get excited about Jesus? Are you living the kind of life that is so contagious that people around you want to get on the bandwagon? They don’t want to miss what God is doing. That is the message of grace. You can tell people until you fall over on the floor that you don’t get to heaven by obeying the Law. You get to heaven by grace. By grace are you saved through faith. But I want to tell you, you will never show them anything different until you start being changed by that same message. When they start seeing somebody who they knew really couldn’t before, start living that way all of a sudden, they know it is not because of them. It is because of Christ living in them. They begin to realize, “You know what? There is something to this.” That attitude begins to get contagious. That old negative, “Don’t go, Paul, don’t go,” just changes, automatically changes. “I’m going.” “Okay, buddy, we are going with you.”

That’s the whole contagious message a man has with grace. It is not what you preach. It’s how you live before others. I guess that does more damage in my spirit than anything else. I know that my reputation is what you think I am; my character is what my wife knows that I am. I can act it before you. But listen, she knows the valleys I walk through. She knows the hurts and weaknesses I have in my life. She knows better than anybody else whether or not the message of grace has changed me. I’ve got to live it that way. My kids know the same thing.

Folks, listen. Who do we think we are kidding? You can tell your kids to live a certain way, and if you are not living it in front of them, you haven’t modeled anything about grace. Grace is God’s transforming power. It not only changes you on the inside, it changes your attitude. It will make it contagious to where people around you are going to say, “Well, it doesn’t matter to me either what’s going to happen. If he is willing to go, I am willing to go.” They get right in there with what God is up to in their own life. An old-timer got turned around because of the contagious attitude of Paul’s message of grace.

Secondly, his attitude was not only one that was contagious, it was one that was humble.

Look at Acts 21:17-20a. “And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.” The word “received” there really doesn’t require “gladly” after it. There are two words for “received.” The word used here is the Greek word dechomai. It is the word that means “to receive with eagerness.”

There is another word for received that means “ah, I’ll take it.” Let me explain the difference to you. I am in a store shopping for someone. I make the mistake of telling the clerk who I’m trying to buy a gift for. I don’t know it, but that person is in the same store on the other side of the counter. He hears everything I’m saying. He says, “Wayne is buying me a gift?” He follows me around. I don’t know this. He is real good at hiding himself. He comes around and sees me pay for it. Now that’s what grabs him. He can’t really see what it is because some people are in the way, but he hears how much it costs, \$200! The lady at the counter asks, “When are you going to take it to him?” “I think I’ll drop by unexpectedly this afternoon about 2:00.” It is about 11:00 at that time. Boy, he just vanishes right out of the place. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he is gone, and he gets home.

What does he do? Nothing the rest of the day. He gets a chair, sits it behind his front door, right there in the foyer, and waits on me to come at 2:00. When 2:00 rolls around, I walk up to the door. As I am about ready to knock, he opens the door, and I about fall all the way into the foyer. I say, “Well, I didn’t know you were here.” “Oh, yeah. Been here most of the day.” “Well, I have a gift for you.” “You do? Let me see it?” He takes the gift. He receives it, but he receives it with eagerness. He is looking forward to seeing what it is. That is the word dechomai.

As a matter of fact, over in Acts 17:11-12, when Paul goes into Berea, it talked about the same thing. They were more “noble-minded.” The word means they had more class than the other churches he was at because they received the word, the same word, with great eagerness. He didn’t have to put that extra phrase in there because that’s what the word implies. The word “gladly” is a beautiful Greek word. It means “gladly.” You don’t need it. They received us with gladness, with eagerness, with joy.

Now, let’s move on. Paul was such a contagious person. Let’s look in verse 18. “And now the following day Paul went in with us to James [Remember James? He is the head elder in the church at Jerusalem] and all the elders were present. And after he had greeted them.” I want you to note here what he says to them, because it is very, very important. You see, they received him also, just as eagerly and with as much gladness as did the brethren when he first got there. We don’t know who those brethren are in verse 17. They are probably some very dear friends, those that had come to know the Lord Jesus through the message of grace. They are certainly not in the same category as the ones we are going to look at. They certainly were close to Paul.

The elders of the church, the leadership, receive him and receive him gladly. “And after he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles [How?] through his ministry.” That’s a very, very important point. Sometimes we read that and skip right over it.

Listen, there were days in which he did something. Go back and read Philippians 3 sometime and look at his pedigree and what he used to say. He didn’t used to say, “God did” anything. He used to say, “I did it. I was a Pharisee. I lived according to the Law.” God’s message of grace had now transformed him, even in his old attitude towards himself. He doesn’t say that anymore. He says, “I want to share the things that God, not me, has done through me and through the ministry that God has given to me.” That’s the key. The secret of humility is when God gets the glory and you don’t. No wonder they rejoiced with him. Look at the result of it in Acts 21:20: “And when they heard it,” What did they hear? What God had done, not what Paul had done. They did what do? “they began glorifying God.”

I’ve about come to the conclusion that people are not impressed with what man can do except in America. I honestly believe that. All that seems to be in the magazines I get from mission organizations and denominations is “What we have done. What we have done. What Southern Baptists have done. What Presbyterians have done.” That’s nothing more than the height of that old flesh. It is not what anybody has done. It is what the Lord Jesus has been allowed to do through that individual who has become a conduit. Then God could use him to carry out His own ministry. The humility was marked in Paul by the fact he took no credit or glory for anything that had taken place. He only shared what God had done in and through him.

I have a prayer for our church that we will never rejoice over that which man has done. We will only rejoice over what God has done through those humble enough to allow Him to do it. Marilyn Lazlo, the missionary to Papua New Guinea, was in our church recently. I want to tell you, folks, that still rings in my mind. I can’t get away from it. I was so impressed. I saw her sitting in the pew, and it just overwhelmed me to realize that little lady just said “yes” to God. She was scared to death of bugs and snakes, and that’s all they’ve got down there. She went all the way down to Papua New Guinea. When I saw those natives up on the platform. Oh, I know I’ve brought it up before; I’ll probably bring it up again because it just done something to my mind that won’t go away. The essence of humility was, she didn’t stand up and say, “Look at what I have done.” She was overwhelmed with the fact of what God had been allowed to do by her proper response to do what He told her to do. That’s the key.

Paul’s attitude was not only contagious. Paul’s attitude was humble. That’s a transformed attitude. That’s what grace does in an individual’s life. That’s a message that we preach, but folks, listen; if it’s not in our life, everybody around you knows it. Who do you work with? Who do you live with? Who do you run with? How are they affected by your lifestyle? How are they affected by your attitude? Is the fact that they don’t see it modeled in your life the reason they don’t want to hear what you have to say? We’ve been transformed. We are just uniquely different. It’s absolutely contagious. We even cause older folks to get refired and want to go on and do what God wants them to do for Jesus. Not only that, we are humble in the fact that we don’t give credit or glory to ourselves. We give it to Him.

There is one more thing about his attitude. This was the hardest point. It took me forever to figure out what was going on. Not only was his attitude one that was contagious and not only was his attitude one that was humble, but his attitude was one that was submissive. That’s very, very important. If you study Paul’s life before he became a believer you won’t see a whole lot of submission in him. Buddy, he had the bull by the horns, and he was going to do what he thought right. Absolutely nobody was going to get in his way. Now, you’ve got a different man transformed by the grace of God. He’s still just as zealous to do the will of God, but now he is transformed in his whole attitude and manner as to how he approaches all of that.

There is a huge problem that is going to face Paul. The elders are going to break it to him here in this passage. It seems, verse 20 tells us, that there have been a number of Jews come to know Christ. They glorified God for the Gentiles that had come to know the Lord. Then it says, “and they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many thousands,’” the word “thousands” there means “tens of thousands.” It’s a Greek idiom which means “a great number.” I guess they were like we are today. “How many did you have in

church yesterday?" "Oh, about ten thousand, ministerially speaking." "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed." In other words they were saying, "There are a great number of your fellow people, Paul." Remember Paul said in Romans he had a burden to see his own people come to know Christ. They glorified the Gentiles coming to know Christ.

Now Paul in his self certainly was glorifying that his own fellow kinsmen were coming to know Christ. But now, watch: "and they are all zealous for the Law." Uh-oh! This is going to be a stumbling-block for some of you if you don't walk through it carefully. The word "zealous" is a Greek word zelotes. The word refers to one who is eagerly desirous of something. It comes from the word for "fire, fiery." I mean they were fired up about the Law. That would be a good way to put it. These were believing Jews who were still fired up about the Law. Now, the question comes. How in the world can they be believers, transformed by grace, and still be zealous for the Law? I've got a real profound answer: I don't know!

How many people do you know who are believers and are so legalistic they could squeak when they walk? How many people do you know like that? Listen, they walk around carrying a note pad trying to find out whose hair is over their ears. They are trying to find out what woman wore slacks to church tonight. They are trying to find out what you did this past week. Did you watch a video movie in your house? Put that down and check it five times. Have you been to a movie theater? Put that down. That's all they live for. Rules, rules, rules. Are they Christians? I believe most of them are. Well, how can they be believers and still be up under the Law? Friend, the message of grace doesn't completely transform you. If it did, in the sense of forever, we would just be taken out of here the moment you get saved. There's a sanctifying experience going on here. It takes a while for that message to continue to work in our lives. There are changes that need to be made 50 years down the road and 80 years down the road.

These are young Christians we're talking about here in Acts. They still are fired up about the Law. Now, evidently we don't understand a whole lot about their culture, or how they felt about the Law, or how they felt about their own race. We talk about blacks and whites. We talk about the people over in Yugoslavia trying to ethnically cleanse their country of the Muslims and we think, "How horrible!" It's the same thing in Jerusalem. They had the same prejudices. They didn't want to get near a Gentile. They were still zealous for the Law. They were still somebody in God's sight. Were they Christians? Hey, listen, you can take a baby Christian any day, and he is still somewhat tied up under that old Law of bondage. There were many Jewish believers who had come to know Christ, but they were still zealous for the Law.

Now, here is the problem? They don't have a whole lot of regard for Paul and his message of grace, especially to the Gentiles. In Acts 21:21, these elders are very concerned. This shows some of the misconceptions these people had about Paul. Verse 21 says, "and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs." Now, let's stop a minute. What does this tell you? Rumor and word of mouth. They don't know what Paul has said. They have just heard from other people what Paul has said.

What are the two misconceptions? The first one is that Paul was teaching all the Jews who were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses. I challenge you. Bring me your Bible and show me where Paul says to forsake Moses. That's not what Paul said. Paul never one time said that. What Paul did say was this, "If you are going to go back and obey the Law, keep on building it up. But not a single one of those works of what you call righteousness has anything to do with your entering the kingdom of God." That's what he said. He said in Ephesians 2:8-9 that we are not saved by works. We are saved by what? Grace, "lest any man should boast."

A religious Pharisee walks up and says, "Wait a minute. I got this box on my head of all the deeds that I've done for Christ. You mean, all this big old box on my head that I've had to hire this guy to help support doesn't count?" That's exactly right. Jesus said one day, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." You can't be good enough to get into the kingdom of heaven. Paul never said, "Forsake the Law of Moses." God didn't destroy it, He fulfilled it. You come to the one it points to. The Law was only there to be a tutor to lead people to grace.

Therefore, they already had misquoted him due to the rumor that was circling around. In Philippians 3:1-11, we see that Paul says real righteousness comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith means obedient surrender to Him. He said, "That's the only way I want to be found. I've got a pedigree, but it doesn't mean anything. I just want to be found obeying Him." That's the first misconception they had. Here were Jewish believers, who are still legalistic with bondage plus, who had a misconception about Paul.

The second misconception was this. They said people had told them that Paul was teaching them not to circumcise their children and to not walk according to the customs. No sir. Paul did not say that. Paul did say that circumcision means nothing when it comes to entering the kingdom of God. It is not a righteous act. Unless God decides to do it some other way, it cannot come by a simple mechanical way of obedience. What Paul said was this. He said the true circumcision is not of the flesh, but it is where? Of the what? It is of the heart. That is what he said. See how a rumor can always distort something.

I wonder right now how many people there are you don't like in the Christian circles because you have heard what people said they

said. You've never heard it for yourself. More things get started that way. I'm one that loves to jump in the middle of it. I've had to be corrected so many times. I am about to learn. I don't know how many times I have said something about somebody in the ministry, and somebody has walked up and said, "Did you hear him say that?" "No, but I know the guy that did. He's a good guy." Whoop-to-do! That is the way it spreads, just like that. That's exactly what happened in Jerusalem. These folks had misconceptions about what Paul was doing. Whoever told them did a good job. They didn't want to have anything to do with Paul.

Now watch Acts 21:22. "What, then, is to be done?" The elders are concerned. Man, they have glorified the Lord for what God has done through Paul. "They will certainly hear that you have come." They are thinking, "We are going to have a confrontation here that is needless and senseless." Look what they do. "Therefore, do this that we tell you." Now they are telling Paul to do something that is going to appear to contradict the very message that he preaches? How is he going to handle that? I've got to see this for myself. Watch. "We have four men who are under a vow." It was a Nazirite vow. You say, "How do you know?" Well, if you'll take your Bible and turn to Numbers 6:13-21, I'll show you. You see, when you are under a Nazirite vow, you can't shave your head. Nu 6:13 says, "Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall bring the offering to the doorway of the tent of meeting." That's the Tabernacle. Verse 14 continues, "And he shall present the offering to the Lord; one male lamb a year old without defect." I'm going to come back to that. Verse 16 says, "Then the priest shall present them before the Lord and shall offer his sin offering and his burnt offering. He shall also offer the lamb." Nu 6:18 reads, "The Nazirite shall then shave his dedicated head [that's a good way to say it] at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and take the dedicated hair of his head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice as a peace offerings."

Now turn back to Acts 21:24. It says, "take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses in order that they may shave their heads." That's how you know it was a Nazirite vow. In other words, it is very clear. Here were four men, and they were under a Nazirite vow. They had not shaved their heads, but they needed to complete the vow. They needed to offer the required sacrifice to be able to go on and shave off the hair that had been grown during the time they were under that vow. Well, evidently they were unable to afford the sacrifice that it took to be able to do that. If you will look at the text again, verse 24, the elders tell Paul to pay their expenses so that they can shave their heads.

What is he saying? In other words, they didn't have enough money to go out and buy these animals for sacrifices. Numbers 6 helps us understand this. They said, "Paul, you go purchase four male lambs because there are four men. Get four ewe lambs a year old and four rams. All of this is a peace offering. Then go get four baskets of unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, an unleavened wafer spread with oil, along with their grain offering and then get libations. That is their drink offering. Paul, they don't have any money. Paul, you go pay their expenses. Go on now to the Temple. We've got a plan here that's going to make it a little bit easier when it comes to having to deal with these people. It is going to make it a little easier for you."

Well, evidently Paul understood all of this. Their Law allowed for somebody to do that. As a matter of fact, the priests of the Old Testament could pay the sacrifice if someone who was poor and did not have an animal to bring. He had been under a Nazirite vow, but he couldn't get those things for himself. Now, here is the question. They say, "purify yourself along with them." Now wait a minute. Hold it. Here is a man whose message is grace. Why does he need to purify himself? You have to remember he is dealing with people who are still hung up in all that bondage.

It reminds me of when I spoke at a particular place one time that is very strongly legalistic. As a matter of fact, I did two things wrong that day. First of all, I forgot to get a haircut. It was back when I wore my hair over my ears pretty long. Secondly, I used the New American Standard Version. These were people who believed that if the King James Version was good enough for Paul and Peter, it must be good enough for us in these days. I got there and I thought, "Now, am I going to just walk in and be arrogant because I disagree?" The Holy Spirit put on my heart to get a brush that I had in the car and comb my hair back up over my ears. It didn't matter how long it is, but don't let it touch your ear. So I combed it back up over my ears. Then I memorized the passage from the King James Version. I went in with the New American Standard, but I quoted it out of the King James. I used Romans 12:1. It was real hard. I preached the message. When I left there, I forgot that I had done that to my hair and when I saw Diana, she looked at me and just broke into laughter. She said, "What did you do to your hair?" Well, I had to explain to her. I said, "This is why I did it to my hair."

This is what he is doing right here. Paul doesn't need to purify himself. He has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. That's the very foundation of the message of grace. Then why is he going to the Temple to do it? He is doing it because of the weaker brethren he doesn't want to cause to stumble. He's doing it because of the advice of those elders. Now he will not have to have a needless, senseless confrontation with people who have already been saved anyway.

So he does exactly what they tell him to do. Why would he have to purify himself? I mean, what Law is he under? He has been in a Gentile country, and Numbers 9 tells you when you've been in a foreign country, you have to be purified before you can partake of the feast. Remember why he is here? He is here for the Feast of Pentecost. Therefore, he goes in to qualify. The Jews who are suspect of him have heard a rumor about him and are going to see him in there. They are going to say, "Well, I'll be. There's Paul

going in there. Look what he is doing?" You see, automatically they are disarmed in their criticism of a man who has the message of grace. I want to tell you another thing that will rock your theology. Acts 18:18 tells us Paul himself was under a Nazirite vow and had to shave his head when he went down to Cenchrea.

Well, what did Paul do? What is his attitude towards all this? I mean, you are talking about a man that's quite on his own. Look at Acts 21:26: "Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple, giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them."

Now I challenge you to do something. You take Paul's life before he got converted. You try to find something that was contagious in a righteous way to get people to want to love God. No, the only thing contagious about him was the fear whenever he came into a city because he persecuted believers everywhere he would go. Now, you even find an old-timer wanting to get into the show. He said, "Man, I've got a house in Jerusalem. Let's go." He goes with the group. That's the transformed attitude of Paul. Do you find anything humble about Paul before he became a believer? He was the most arrogant individual who ever lived on the face of this earth. He thought he had the whole thing figured out. All of a sudden, God hits him with the message of grace and changes him. He never talks about what he does from that point on. He only talks about what God was allowed to do through him. Go back and study his life before and see if you can find one submissive bone in his body. Paul was a man calling his own shots. Now he is willing to listen to his peers and avoid a senseless confrontation. Before he got changed by the message of grace, he would have relished having that confrontation. He avoided the confrontation so his message could reach more and more and more.

Why would he bother with people who had already been saved? Well, they are under the Law. Hey, listen folks. Go on and be legalistic. Let's go on and get the ones who haven't been saved. That's where his heart was. He wanted to get the message out. So in the meantime, he'll just avoid the confrontations. He was a living model of what he preached. Paul, the messenger. You've got to see it in his attitude before you ever hear it from his lips. He was a man changed by the message of grace.

Conclusions: Does your attitude encourage even the old in the faith? When you are around older people, do they just want to go back and get their Bibles out and do something? Do they just want to obey God? Are they tired of takings trips? Secondly, does your attitude give glory to God and cause others to glorify Him? Thirdly, does your attitude allow you to flex and submit to other spiritual peers?

Paul: The Messenger – Part 2

Turn to Acts 21 as we continue to introduce Ephesians 1:1. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God." We've been looking at this man, Paul. As a matter of fact, this is the 14th time we have looked at him. We've seen Paul the man, Paul the missionary and Paul the messenger. I have to be honest with you, when I first started, I thought it would take a couple of studies, and we could get out of this. Now it has caught hold of me, and I don't know when we are going to get out of it. I do know one thing. We are going to go all the way through the book of Acts. I have been so intrigued. At first it was just with the man, but now it is more than that. What has really intrigued me is the message of grace that transformed the man. That has become the thing that has the most blessed to me.

Well, we are looking at Paul, and we see him now in Jerusalem. God had told him to go to Jerusalem and also to Rome. We see the change that has come in his life. Last time we saw that when he got to Jerusalem, he went to the council of elders of the church there. James and the other elders were rejoicing in what was happening with the Gentile world. Then they tell him what was going on with the Jewish people. Paul grew up in Jerusalem. He was educated in Jerusalem. These are his peers, his friends, and he rejoices. You know he rejoiced in his heart. They tell him, "Paul, we've got a problem. Some rumor has gotten to the believers here who are still hung up with the Law that you are preaching messages against them. Paul, we want to disarm this. In order to avoid a needless, senseless confrontation with people who are already believers but are hung up with the Law, Paul, we want you to do something. We think it will help." They recommend to Paul that he go to the Temple and pay the vow for the sacrifice that four men were going to make. They were poor people, four men taking a Nazirite vow. They didn't have the money for their sacrifice. They said, "Go and pay that. Also, Paul, since in our Law it says when you have been with Gentiles and come back to Jerusalem, you are to be cleansed, you go ahead and cleanse yourself there in the Temple. This will disarm these Jewish believers who are still hung up in the Law.

Now what do you think Paul would have done before the message of grace entered his own heart? Paul wouldn't have given it the time of day. Paul was his own man. Paul told God what to do. He wouldn't have listened to a group of elders recommending that he do what he did. This is the beauty in Paul's life. He doesn't compromise the message of grace. He simply accommodates himself to an awkward circumstance to disarm the people around him so that he can more effectively preach it.

You say, "Well, how can these people still be believers and be hung up in the Law?" How many people do you know this morning

who are believers and are still hung up with the Law? The message of grace, yes, transforms us and makes us new creatures, but that is not the end. That's the beginning. As long as we continue to let that message permeate our life, Paul tells us in Titus, the message of grace is our teacher. Those of us who are not daily receiving it and living in it, or those of us who get off track and get back up under the old law and start trying to perform so that God will love us more, miss the whole point of the message of grace.

Well, he does what they tell him to do. I love him for it. He is in the Temple on the fifth day of purification and while he is in there, it seems to be working. It doesn't speak of any conflict with these Jewish believers hung up in the law, but there are some others who have come over from Asia Minor.

Now we have some dates we think this occurred. We cannot be adamant about them though. One of the things you learn when you study scripture is put down what scripture says. We don't know some of these dates from scripture, but history and scholars have put together some dates that may give us a little bit of information. About three months after he had written to the Roman believers we see him there in Jerusalem. That should be around AD 57.

As he is in the Temple, these people from Asia Minor had come over to Jerusalem. They are unbelieving Jews. They have rejected the message of grace. They are intermingled with the believing Jews. Paul and these men are being cleansed and are finishing up their Nazirite vow. Trouble is about to begin. As a matter of fact, don't miss the next several studies. We are in the most exciting scripture I think that we can find. I say that all the time, but it seems like it is just so power-packed from now to the 28th chapter of Acts which is his first real big imprisonment.

So, we find these Asia Minor Jews, these unbelieving Jews, in the Temple with Paul. We are going to see how they stir up the crowd and bring a great persecution, not just against the message of grace, but against the messenger of grace. I want us to focus on two things, two characteristics of people who bitterly fight the message of grace. It may surprise you because here are people who could have been changed by it but have chosen rather to fight it. All right, let's begin.

Let's read Acts 21:27-29: "And when the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the multitude and laid hands on him, crying out, 'Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere [now listen what they accuse him of] against our people [Israel] and the Law, and this place [the Temple], and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.' For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple."

Now in that little passage of scripture, three verses, I want us to see two basic things. If nothing else, it might serve to encourage somebody. You have been changed by the message of grace. You are trying to live it out and you wonder why people reject it. They violently attack you for even sharing it. Here are two of the symptoms of people who do that.

First of all, these people who attack the message of grace and the messenger of grace have a surface commitment.

Isn't it amazing? We look for persecution to this wonderful changing message of God's grace. We look for the persecution out in the world. I am finding that the world is starving to death to hear it. The place that we find the persecution is not so much in the world. Yes, you will find it there, but the place that you really find it is within the confines of the church. You find it inside the church walls. You find it with people who are on the same pew with you on Sunday morning. They are people who will not be transformed by the message of grace, people who don't want a holy walk with God. They had rather have works that they call holy and ask God to bless. They want to do their own thing, get all the credit for it and give lip service to Jesus. They don't know nor do they understand the message of grace. On the surface they have a commitment that disarms you.

Now you say, "How do you know that?" Look at Acts 21:27. "And when the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple." Where were they? They were in the Temple. Now what in the world were these Jews from Asia Minor, who probably were from the area of Ephesus because they recognized Trophimus, all the way over in Jerusalem in the Temple? How in the world did they get there? Why were they there? Well, remember why Paul is in Jerusalem? If you will go back to Acts 20:16, Paul explains why he is in such a hurry to get to Jerusalem. Obviously God has told him to go to Jerusalem, but that's not the only reason. He is taking an offering for the saints that are hurting, but that is not the only reason. He tells us in verse 16, "For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not have to spend time in Asia." There is a reason. There's nothing wrong with the people in Asia, "for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost," or the Feast of Pentecost.

If you were a committed, Jewish person in that day, and you really wanted to show everybody on the outside that you really loved God, there were three feasts that you would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for every year. They were annual feasts. It didn't matter if you lived in Asia Minor. It didn't matter where you lived. It didn't matter how long the journey nor how hard the journey. You would make this journey for these three feasts. There were other feasts they came for, yes, but especially these three. Remember that their feasts were more festival times. They didn't have a lot of meat to eat on a daily basis. They would have it at the feast, however. Boy, you could really look forward to the fellowship, the food, the fun and the festive atmosphere of these feasts. These feasts were

designed by God so Israel could be reminded of what He and He alone did, certainly not with Israel's help, in their past history. All of those feasts, as everything else in Israel's culture, pointed towards the Messiah. They pointed towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel, still blinded, still having rejected Christ, continued to obey the Law mechanically. They were missing the whole point of what they were doing.

Well, the three feasts were first of all, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, actually Passover. The Feast of Unleavened Bread led right up to Passover when they would kill the sacrificial lamb. The blood of that sacrificial lamb would atone for their sins for one more year. That was a very special time. Of course, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread was when they had to get all the leaven out of their houses. Most people say it was because they had to pack so fast to get of Egypt they didn't have time to put leaven in the bread. To me, that misses it quite a bit. You see, when they were protected by the blood in Israel, that was when the blood was put on the door post. The death angel came, and that was what Passover was all about. It was inaugurated yearly so that they would be reminded of their bondage in Egypt and how God delivered them from that. Therefore, this feast was an annual event.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, to me, is so beautiful because right before the blood of that lamb was shed the leaven was taken out. Of course, we know that by the shedding of Jesus' blood the power of leaven (sin) has been taken out of us. It is still resident to where it can give us a fit, but the power of it has diminished. When we stay at the cross, confessing sin, and mortifying the deeds of the flesh, then the blood of Jesus consistently remains there to give us power over sin in our life. What a beautiful picture of putting the two together.

Well, there was also the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was to remind them of their wandering in the wilderness. Most of their wandering was because of their own stubbornness and their own rebellion. It wasn't very far to where they wanted to go into Canaan, but because of their rebellion, they walked around Mt. Sinai for 40 years. During that feast they would reside in little booths or tents to help them remember that once they were nomadic people. Even the Tabernacle was folded up and carried a certain way. They would move from place to place to place. They were wandering in the wilderness. That was the Feast of Tabernacles.

Then came the Feast of Pentecost. It was held 50 days after the offering of the barley leaf. You know, the more I got back into this, the more I wanted to go back and do the Feasts. Boy, there is such a picture of the Lord Jesus in this. This is the Feast we are talking about. This is the day on the Feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came in Acts and inaugurated the New Covenant, freeing people from their old bondage to self and freeing them into new life. That is when the Holy Spirit came to reside within the hearts of believers. The beginning of a brand new covenant was inaugurated on this earth. That was the Feast of Pentecost.

What a wonderful time and opportunity for Paul with the message of God's grace, the message that frees you out of that old bondage of self and a set of rules and puts you into the absolute coming kingdom of God. What a wonderful time for him to go and preach that message. No wonder he was willing to listen to the elders and go into the Temple. He wanted nothing to get in his way of the opportunity to preach to his brethren the message of God's grace.

Well, for whatever reason he went we don't really know, but we do know that these Jews from Asia Minor were there. What does that tell you? It tells you that they were one of the bunch. They were one of the committed. On the surface they had a commitment to God. They were there as good Jewish people ought to be. When you are persecuted preaching the message of grace or living the message of grace, and people who reject it come against you, remember, they may disarm you. They may be the ones you thought were the most committed. They may be the people who, on the outside, exemplify the fact that they really love God. They are in church on Sunday morning, Sunday night and sometimes on Wednesday night. They give at least once a month. I mean, they really show you they really do love God, on the outside. Do they or do they not?

I find with Paul, that they didn't really love God. They rejected his message. To many of them legalism was not only a means by which they made their profit, but it was also a means by which they could pamper their own flesh and build up their own selfish interest in God. What you do on the outside means nothing if you have not been transformed on the inside.

These people were people who had a surface commitment. You know, I've had to be forgiven many times by the Lord. Usually any time I open my mouth, I stick my foot in it. My wife and I can be riding out through the country and as we are riding down the road, over in a little valley with beautiful green lush trees and grass, there will be the most beautiful little white church with a steeple. It looks so serene and so beautiful and so peaceful. She will make the remark, "Isn't that the most beautiful little church you've ever seen?" I don't know. I guess I have just turned skeptical. I have told her many times, "The meanest white people you have ever been around in your entire life run that little church." I said, "I guarantee you one thing, they are all kin to each other. There are families that have put that little church together, and any preacher who goes in there and starts preaching the message of grace, they are going to chew him up and spit him out. They know how to run the church. They know how to organize the church. They know how to pamper the Associational Missionary. They know how to have a particular missionary program. They know all the rules and the rank and file. They know how to mechanically play the game, but don't you preach the message of God's transforming grace, because when you do, they have got to throw their little system out the window. They'll eat your lunch." God has had to forgive me many

times, because I am sure I was wrong about at least one of them; 99.9% of the time I know good and well I am right.

I am telling you, folks, we see that in America today. Are you are playing a game? You know good and well you are doing it. Why else would God put us in this passage and tell us to preach it? You are playing a game. Your wife knows it, and your children know it. Oh, you are trying to be the goody-two-shoes and come to church on Sunday, but they know your lifestyle. They know you Monday through Saturday. They realize that all you are doing is trying to measure up to a set of rules. God's grace has never transformed your heart. They know that. That is something you sense in a believer. That's something that God has to do. You cannot do that for Him. I guarantee you that if you are like that and have a surface commitment, you are an enemy to God's grace and you attack it in many ways. You may not be as verbal as these folks, but you have rejected it in your heart. Why? Because you simply don't want to bow down and let old self die. You don't want to surrender to Him. You want to do it your own way and someday ask God to bless it.

Well, let's move on. That's enough of that, surface commitment. On the surface it looks good. Everybody around you would think you really love God. Well, that is the first thing we see about them. They were in Jerusalem on the day they should have been. They have come all the way from Asia Minor.

Secondly here is another thing. These people who attack the message of grace, the transforming power of God, the fact that He has the agenda and we don't, and the fact that we must daily die to that and let Him do what He wants to do, are masters at stirring up a crowd. Now this is incredible to me. There is just a level of intelligence here that has to be from the pit itself. They know how to manipulate a crowd. They could mess up a one-car funeral. I guarantee you, they could cause division in the smallest of groups. They know how to manipulate a crowd and get the people's mind off of what the point of the message really is. Well, let's watch that. They will react by stirring up the crowd.

Look at Acts 21:27 again. "And when the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up the multitude and laid hands on him." Well, the word "stir up" there is a beautiful passage. It sort of makes you understand. Inside the temple was a huge crowd of people. There were believing Jews who were still hung up under the Law. There were unbelieving Jews inside the temple. Of course, you have the court of the Gentiles, but we are talking about Jewish people inside the temple. Now, how in the world could you make believers and unbelievers come together and be one as an angry mob?

Well, the word "stir up" kind of helps us out. It comes from two Greek words. One is the word that means "together," and the other word is the word which means "to pour." If you put all of these ingredients into a pitcher, they are all diverse. They are all different. You can look in the pitcher and see that they are different. You take it and stir it up a little bit. Then take it and pour it out. It all comes out as one ingredient. Somehow all of those ingredients have been blended to where they are one ingredient, and now they come out as one. Where they were different, they come out as one.

Now, wait a minute. How did they do that? How did they take this diverse crowd and turn them into a single-minded purposed, angry mob? How did they do that? Well, it reminds me of a political candidate. Somebody who is good at manipulating a crowd is what you've got here. They are people who have rejected God's message and know how to get the people's attention off the very point of that message. They are good at doing what they were doing.

It is amazing what happens here. If you touch a sensitive bone and know what you are doing, you can get people focused on the wrong thing, and they don't even realize what is being done. Now, think with me about what I am saying. How in the world could they do this? How could they take believers and unbelievers and make them all as one angry mob?

Well, they touched three sensitive cords. Those three sensitive cords caused those Jews to stop focusing on what Paul was saying and start listening to what these guys were saying. What are those three sensitive cords? They are in Acts 21:28. They cried out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere [1] against our people," Israel.

If you talk about their race, folks, you have struck a sensitive cord. You say, "Well, we don't have that in the 20th century, do we?" Are you kidding me? I can take you to churches today, buddy, that won't let a black person walk in that back door. You can talk about the white folks and you can talk about the black folks. You say, "That is not the same thing." Oh, you don't think so? This is as ethnic as you can get. What do you think is going on in Yugoslavia right now? They are trying to cleanse that place of certain particular elements of people. It is the same thing that has been going on for a hundred years. When you start getting on Israel you are asking for trouble. These are Jews, buddy. Don't you talk about our people. So they picked that one first.

I am so glad when I can look down from the pulpit in our church and see some of our black members. I think, "Thank you, Lord, they are here. We don't have that kind of garbage. We just preach Jesus. He doesn't see color. He just sees hearts." That's the way it ought to be. They didn't see it that way. If you touch Israel, you've touched a sensitive bone.

Secondly, he says, "and the Law." "Oh, don't you get on the Law. We are Jews. What do you think we are doing in the temple? Don't you talk about our Law."

Then thirdly, they mention the Temple itself. "This place" refers to the temple itself. Now what do they say about that? That got their attention. Boom! What do you think they used to cause all these diverse people to start thinking the same way? Well, there it is. They tell three lies about what Paul has said. They twisted what he has said to make it appear he has done something to violate the three most sensitive areas these people have. Number one, is Israel. They said, "This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people." Now, that is an outright lie. He never preached against Israel.

As a matter of fact, if you want to know his heart, look with me at Romans 9:1-5. I think we will see here that he could not have preached against Israel. That is not his heart. We don't know the exact dates when Romans was written, but we think it was before this was happening over in Acts. Yes, God had assigned him to the Gentiles, but that did not mean he did not love his brethren. Romans 9:1-5 says, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart." Why? "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever."

Now does that sound like a man who has preached against Israel? That sounds like a man who can't even sleep every night because of his burden for Israel. So what's wrong with these guys? Listen, they have rejected his message. They are trying to make the crowd think Paul no longer loves Israel and has preached against God's people.

There is a principle here that I believe God really spoke to my heart as I was studying that might mean something to you. When you preach the message of grace to the people you love, if they reject it, they make the false assumption that you are preaching it at them or you are preaching it against them. It is incredible. I don't know how many times that while preaching the message of grace in churches people have tried to make me believe I was the enemy. For some reason, they think I have come in and tried to turn over the whole apple cart. They have fought against me when all I have been trying to do is say, "Listen, folks, let's quit doing it just because we have been doing it. Let's get in touch with God. Walk holy before Him and let God in and through us do what He wants to do." They turn it around and make you think you are preaching not only at them but you are preaching against them.

I like what my friend says. He says, "If you shoot at a pack of dogs, the one that squeals is the one that got hit." That's usually the way it works. The ones who have rejected it the most, the ones that have been hit the hardest, are the ones usually making the most noise. They have heard the message, have twisted it and said, "He is actually preaching against his own people."

Secondly, they say he preached against the Law. This is absolutely incredible. They say here in Acts 21:28 that he preaches against the Law. Paul never preached against the Law. Paul simply explained the purpose of the Law. You see, he was saying you can go to church, or the synagogue to them, or to the temple. You can do all of these things. There is nothing wrong with that, but that is not going to get you to heaven. The Law is not here to produce righteousness. The Law is here to expose unrighteousness. That is all he said. He wasn't against it. He didn't say the Law was bad.

We believe Galatians was written ten years before. We will get to heaven and find out whether it was or not. Let's just say it was. Let's look in the book of Galatians for a second. Let's just see what Paul says about the Law. It tells its own story. Look at Galatians 3:17-25. Let's just see if he preached against the Law. We know he didn't preach against his people. He was so burdened. He said, "I would wish myself to be accursed if my people could come to understand this message." Gal 3:17 says, "What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later [Later than what? The covenant of Abraham] does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. Why the Law then?" I mean, what's the purpose of the Law? Why did it come along in the meantime? "It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made."

So many folks overlook this. God promised three things to Abraham: He promised a nation; He promised a land; and he promised a seed. Galatians will go on in this chapter to tell you that Christ is that seed. Until Christ came with His message of grace and His works of grace, the Law was ordained in the meantime. It was very, very purposeful.

He goes on in Gal 3:20, "Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin [I love that] that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."

Gal 3:23 continues, "But before faith came," before Christ came, before the gospel was preached, "we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor." Don't think I am preaching against the Law. It was the very thing to lead us to grace. It was like a babysitter. It was like a school teacher. It was something that kept us in line until Jesus could come and do His work on the cross. Then we will come to Him by faith. The law was

very important. Man would have never known sin unless the law had come. Then he says in verse 25, "But now that faith has come," the gospel, our belief in Christ, Christ Himself has come, "we are no longer under a tutor."

Does that sound like a man who preaches against the Law? No. It sounds to me like a man who wanted them to understand the purposes of the Law and what the Law was designed to do. He says almost the same thing in Romans 7:7-12-note . I won't take time to read that right now.

What they had done was reject what he had said, turned it around and made it look like he had preached against the nation of Israel. Oh, that got their attention. He is preaching against the Law. Oh, that got their attention. They were picking out the sensitive bones so the people would get off the point of what Paul is really trying to say.

Thirdly, they said Paul preached against the Temple, against "this place." This is occurring about AD 57, we think. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in AD 56, which was a year earlier. Now what do you think he said about the temple there? Paul said, "What, know ye not that your body is the [what?] the temple of God." When you go to church you are going to get inside of a temple. When you are Christian, not only do you get inside, He gets inside of you. He resides in you. His Spirit lives within you. So, Paul was just showing the shadow of the things that the Lord Jesus brought substance to when He came on this earth. He was showing how everything pointed to Him. He wasn't denying them. He wasn't preaching against them. He was just showing how they all pointed to the Lord Jesus and the message of grace.

We had a youth director here several years ago. One day in our church, a very dear lady just happened to say something to him out of her own conviction. She said, "Young man, take your hat off your head. You are in God's House." He didn't miss a beat, bless his heart. The one thing God could never convict him of was not being bold enough to say it. Sometimes what he said wasn't exactly the right thing, but he didn't have any trouble having the boldness to do it. Greg said, "I beg your pardon. This hat is not in God's house. This hat is on God's house." Then he kept right on walking. Was he right? Sure he was right. Was she wrong? No, she wasn't wrong. There was just two things being said.

This is exactly what Paul is saying. "The temple is good for now. You come here. But, you don't need this anymore. It's been showing you something. All of the means of worship, everything you do, is a picture of the substance Christ brings to a person's life. This is a shadow. He brings the substance." What did these people say? "He preached against our temple." Take a political candidate who wants to get a good following. What is he going to hit right now during our time. Can you help me out? Well, let's see. Let's hit the economy. Alright. Everybody thinks that. Let's hit the fact the jobless rate. Let's hit these. You think, "Oh, this guy is so intelligent." Oh, come on. This has been going on for hundreds of years. He knows what is sensitive to the crowd. Getting their attention, he focuses them off of what he is really saying and pulls them over here to what you think he is saying.

That is the same thing these people were doing. If that wasn't enough, they took a false assumption and used that false assumption to end their case. Look at what they say. They say in the last part of verse 28, "and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple."

Oh! Now there was a Court of the Gentiles. You could bring them there, but don't you dare take them past that into the temple. You couldn't do that. As a matter of fact, the penalty of death was upon anybody who defiled that temple by bringing in a Gentile, "and besides, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place. For they have previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple."

Do you know what that word "supposed" means. They assumed. Now, boy, they are on their little soap box right now. They are inside the temple. Do you think they couldn't get an audience? You tell them he is preaching against Israel. You tell them he preached against the Law, and you tell them he is preaching against the national of Israel. Then build into it a false assumption, which is a total outright lie, that he had defiled the temple when he had done exactly the opposite. He had shown favor to them by going there to be cleansed when he knew he didn't have to do that.

So, here is the setting. They have set it up, and they have persecuted Paul. What have we learned? Well, we learned first of all they have a surface commitment. Look out. The people you think love God the most will be the people who will eat your lunch when you start preaching and living the message of grace. They can't stand it. It is not organized. It doesn't make any sense. There's no long range planning committee.

Listen, if you keep on rejecting the message of grace and try to do for God what only God can do, you are going to live in misery. People who are programmed that way cannot stand the message of grace. What the Law could not produce, it pointed to. That's what we ought to learn from it. Only God can do what God can do. Man cannot do it for Him. That's the message of grace.

Why in the world would they be this upset? It was the same way with Jesus. Look in John 3:19-20. It's the same thing today as it was then. It's no different. People who persecute the message of grace and the messengers of grace are people who are wrapped up in their flesh. On the outside they look like good people. People say, "Why if anybody is a Christian, that ole boy is a Christian."

You've heard that before. Not only that, they are masters at stirring up a crowd. Do you think they can't get you focused on the wrong thing so you will miss out on what's being said? They can do it in a minute. Watch this in Jn 3:19-20: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness [He is talking about the Jewish nation, because that is who He came to first] rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

Let me tell you something about the message of grace. If you are not willing to confess sin and recognize the ugliness of flesh, you can never receive the message of grace. God only gives that to the humble. The humble are the ones who recognize what they aren't and what they don't deserve. They come to Christ for it, and they continue to live that way day by day. That's the key to walking in that message of grace.

Well, they said those things that were sensitive, and they stirred up the crowd. Several years ago, we saw this very effectively done in our Convention. It has been done in every convention. I don't know why we think it's funny that it's been done in the Southern Baptist Convention. Those of us who believe that the Bible is God's Word believe it is Truth without error. We believe in the plenary, verbal inspiration of Scripture. Every word is God-inspired and God-breathed. That's where we stand. People like us were once called "conservatives." That is what I was from the time I became a believer. I believe God's Word is Truth.

However, the other side changed the terminology. They started called us "fundamentalists," whatever that is. That began to hit some sensitive nerves of our convention which caused people to get totally wrongly focused on what was not the issue, the Cooperative Program. These people, if they get their way, will kill the Cooperative Program. You mention the Cooperative Program to most people who have SBC tattooed on their bodies, and they will absolutely rise up and curse you. I'm telling you friend, don't you ever say anything about the Cooperative Program. Don't you touch it. It is a sacred cow.

Secondly, they said, "What's the WMU going to do?" I am going to leave that alone. I thought for years it was the Women's Military Union.

Thirdly, then they talked about our schools and our seminaries. When you start mentioning the little sensitive things that all Baptists hold on to, and when you cause people to be focused on something that is not true to begin with, you have just clouded the whole issue.

That was exactly what these Jews did in the temple that day. Those who were hung into the system could not stand the message of God's grace. In fact, the message of God's grace literally transforms those things that are so sensitive. Don't you think our Cooperative Program would be absolutely phenomenal if the people who were involved in it were dying to self daily and believing God out of His economy and not their own? Do you think it would be phenomenal? We would have won the world to Christ and be playing golf waiting on Him to come back. Don't you think the WMU would be a different organization if God would get hold of the people who are in it and just let them die to self every day and admit what they can't do? Do you think those things would be changed? You see, the very thing that could have changed and made it better, they were reacting against. They were fighting it by touching the sensitive bones of those people, trying to get them to unite for their cause. People who fight the message of grace, folks, are good. They are good. They are sharp. On the outside they make you think they really love God, but they don't love God any more than they do a flag pole.

Secondly, they are masters at stirring up a crowd. They can get your mind to thinking that something is wrong when it is not, and it is the very thing they are rejecting. It could have been the thing that would have transformed them. That's the good news and the bad news. Those of you who can't understand the message of grace, I can't explain it to you until God reveals it to your heart. It's not taught. It's caught. It is not what man can do. The Law has proven man cannot do it. It is what God can do through His grace, His transforming grace, in a person's life through Jesus Christ. You learn to live that moment by moment by moment.