

Bible Study # 42
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The Gospels and Acts Series—Acts 18—28

We will be finishing up our series on the survey of the Gospels and the book of Acts. There is an awful lot that we could have gone through on some of this in this sequence of studies. Hopefully, it has given you a little bit of an insight in terms of continuity and the flow of it. This evening we are continuing this series.

One of the main areas that we **will focus on this evening has to do with the imprisonment of the Apostle Paul.** I think this section is an excellent place to illustrate the point as to how God works in our lives in ways that we could not begin to foresee. We have the account of the way God worked in the circumstance of Paul's life—Paul's imprisonment or what resulted in his Roman imprisonment.

He was first imprisoned in Caesarea for a couple of years. He was in transit on a ship and was shipwrecked. He went through a lot of difficult circumstances and finally wound up in Rome. He was there for a couple of years. The whole circumstance was not at all an enjoyable sequence of activities. It was not a pleasant experience. Well, God allowed that! Don't you think the Apostle Paul must have wondered why?

You know, we have the advantage. We look at it and we read it. It only takes us a matter of a few minutes to read the last portion of the book of Acts, and we know the end of the story. He lived his life one day at a time, just like you and I live our lives and the sequence of our lives. Paul had found himself in difficult situations before. He had found himself in jail before. There was a time when he was thrown in jail. He and Silas prayed and sang hymns. About midnight, God sent a big earthquake and an angel, and they were delivered. That's pretty dramatic.

This time Paul was thrown in jail. Midnight came and there was no earthquake. In fact, the next day came and there was no earthquake. It dragged on and on. The days turned into weeks; the weeks turned into months; the months dragged out and a couple of years went by. It was a very difficult and trying experience. It dragged on and on for several years.

Now, undoubtedly, Paul must have wondered during this time why God was allowing this. 'I need to be out of this place. There are things that

I need to do, people I need to visit, places in which I need to preach and areas where the Gospel needs to be spread. There are a lot of things that need to be done.' I am sure all those things went through his mind. They would go through mine, and I'm sure they would go through yours.

We look back on it from a little different perspective because while he was in jail, the only way that Paul could really impact the areas where he had worked was to write letters. Now, we are familiar with those letters. They comprise a goodly portion of our New Testament. Some of the most important things the Apostle Paul did, he did from a jail cell. He wrote letters that had a tremendous impact. They explained many things. He was in a circumstance that writing letters was all he was able to do—and he did it.

The point is that God was working out a purpose. Paul may have looked at it at the time and wondered why he had been "put on hold." He couldn't get out and do anything. And yet, we look back on it and realize that while he was in jail, he did what turned out to be one of the most permanent, enduring and important parts of the work that he had ever accomplished. He gave us a goodly portion of our New Testament.

The point that I would like to make in that regard is that when we are going through difficult circumstances, when we are going through trials and we can't see why, we have to accept the fact God may be working out something in our lives. God may have a plan and a purpose that supersedes anything that we can see or fathom at the time. Generally, we can never see the purpose until after it is all over. We can very rarely understand the purpose of a trial when we are in the midst of it. Generally, we only see it in retrospect; sometimes it is even years in retrospect because it takes time to get it into perspective.

Paul's imprisonment in Rome allowed him to come into contact with the very top leadership of the Roman Empire. A lot of times that's not realized, but there's a lot of evidence of Paul's impact upon the very top echelon of the Roman Empire. Notice what Paul says in one of the letters he wrote in prison.

Philippians 4:22, "All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household." There were people converted in the very household of Caesar. That's getting pretty close to the top. There were converts in Caesar's household.

Philippians 1:12-13 (KJV), “But I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace [margin, “Caesar’s court”], and in all other places [margin, “to all others”]...” This is often read over. We notice here that he talks about “all the palace.”

I would like to give you the RSV translation of it because it brings out an additional detail, “I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard [margin, Greek, “in the whole praetorium”], and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ...” “Praetorian” is the Greek word for “palace.” The RSV translates it, “the whole Praetorian Guard.” What was the Praetorian? Who was the Praetorian Guard? Why is that significant?

The term that is used here refers specifically to the Praetorian or Praetorian Guard. It was an elite group that was first established by Caesar Augustus as a detachment of troops to be his private bodyguard. They were an elite organization and under the later emperors came to have many special privileges. This Praetorian Guard became so powerful that they were able to raise and depose emperors at their will because after all, these were the elite troops. They were the ones who were right there in the capital city. They were the ones who were responsible for the security of the emperor. They had direct access to him in a way that no one else did. You’re at the mercy of no one more than you are at the mercy of your bodyguards. No matter what you think you have, you are no more secure than your bodyguards.

This special Praetorian Guard was ruled by the Praetorian Prefect, an individual who was second only to the emperor because he held the supreme military and judicial authority there in Rome. As the captain or Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, he was kind of a combination Joint Chief of Staff and Supreme Court. He was the commander of the Praetorian Guard, the supreme military commander of the Roman Empire. He commanded the home troops and had seniority on every other commander; he was considered the supreme military commander of the Roman Empire. He also had supreme judicial authority. He exercised the judicial authority in the name of the emperor. He had a certain amount of legislative power in control of finances and

influence with the provinces. In fact, it was almost impossible to exercise an important influence in political affairs, except in concert with the Praetorian Prefect. It was a powerful post. He was in a position of daily contact with the emperor. He had the personal command of the emperor’s bodyguard, the troops that maintained the palace and the troop right there in the capital. He was a very powerful individual.

Let’s notice Paul being brought to Rome.

Acts 28:16, “Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.”

That’s how it’s rendered in the NKJV, but if you will check it, you will find the literal rendering is, “the centurion delivered the prisoners to the Praetorian Prefect, but Paul was allowed to dwell by himself with the soldier that kept him.”

Paul was actually handed over to the Praetorian Prefect when he arrived in Rome. He arrived on an appeal, a judicial appeal to the emperor. There was direct knowledge of his circumstance. At the time Paul was delivered to Rome in 60 A.D., Emperor Nero was the ruler—he was the emperor. If you have read very much about Nero, you know what a perverted character he was and he was a pretty good size, too. He was “nutty as a fruitcake.” If you’ve read very much about him, he did some crazy things.

There were two main rival factions there in Rome. There were two individuals who had great influence with Nero. One was his mistress who, of course, had her own brand of influence. She was a woman by the name of Poppaea. The Praetorian Prefect was a man by the name of Burrus. He had risen to power in the Roman Empire. He had originally come from North Africa. He had risen to great power and influence there in Rome and Italy; he was the commander of the Praetorian Guard. He was a very close friend of the philosopher Seneca who was the great Roman philosopher at the time and had also been a teacher of Nero. Burrus and Seneca were close friends. As long as Burrus lived, they sought to combine their influence to keep Nero in check because they recognized his mental instability—the cruel and crazy tendencies that he had.

Poppaea was attracted to Judaism. She was somewhat familiar with Judaism and was attracted to that. Burrus, on the other hand, was very much anti-Jewish. Now, this sets the stage for something.

Paul had been a political “hot potato” back in Judea. The Jewish religious leadership had brought charges against him. It was primarily because of an unwillingness to create a lot of upset with the Jewish religious leadership in Judea that the Roman governors had held Paul as a prisoner, and then finally sent him to Rome. He was a “hot potato,” and they were trying to get him off their hands.

They realized that Burrus, who was anti-Jewish, would have an automatic incentive to be favorable to Paul and Paul’s appeal. He didn’t have much use for the Jews. Poppaea was the rival for the influence that he had because she had a lot of influence with Nero. She was really the only one who was in a position to influence Nero, apart from Burrus and Seneca. Burrus resented that, so for political reasons, he would have had incentive to take Paul’s side against the Jews. With this level of contact and with the attitude Burrus had, when Paul came, it evidently set the stage for allowing Paul the level of freedom and the level of contact all the way up to the palace.

Paul became well known in the Praetorian Guard and in the palace. He became very well known and had contact. Many of these people had connections with him. In fact, it may certainly have influenced even some of the later writings of Seneca. There is evidence of that. When you read some of the things that he wrote, because of the timing of it, you wonder to what extent he came under the Apostle Paul’s influence.

Paul was released from prison evidently in 61 A.D. Burrus died a few months later in 62 A.D., shortly after Paul’s release from prison. Now, with Poppaea in the ascendance, once Burrus was gone, she was able to influence Nero without Burrus’ counter-influence. It took time for the new Prefect to establish his authority. One of the things that happened was that Nero turned tolerant toward the Jews and began to persecute the Christians.

One of the things that seems to be characteristic of the demagogue type of politicians is that they always look for some group to be made the scapegoat. They like to blame all the problems on some minority—somebody that is significant enough in the minority to be noticed but is powerless enough that they are not going to be able to successfully defend themselves. You have to pick a group that is small enough that you can overwhelm them, but they are large enough that everybody notices them. You blame all the problems on them. You say, ‘They have caused

all the problems. Let’s get them.’ This is an old tactic that has been used on various groups. In some cases, it was used on the Jews.

The Jews have been a target, but they have not been the only target. There were other groups and other targets. It depends on the society and the culture at the time as to what’s used, but it is an attitude of human nature. People don’t want to take responsibility for their own problems. They want to believe that somebody else is the source of all their problems. Boy, you gang up on them, get them, and you’ll solve all of your problems. Politicians are good at that. They try to make a scapegoat out of some segment of society.

Nero, the Roman Emperor had used the Jews that way at various times. It was also a handy way to get a little cash because when you expelled the Jews from Rome, you confiscated all their property and got a little cash in your hands. You “sent them packing.” Then after a few years, they gradually drifted back.

In Acts 18:2, we read of Aquila and Priscilla who were Jews from Rome. We read that they had been expelled from Rome when Claudius kicked out the Jews. They had come to Corinth. Paul had met them and become acquainted with them. Why were they expelled? Claudius was a predecessor of Nero. They had problems so he decided to just blame all the Jews and kicked them all out of Rome. They gave them a few days to leave with what they could carry on their backs. Then they confiscated their property, which of course went to the emperor. This was the situation. Later, the Jews were allowed to come back in. They needed them for business purposes. This was the kind of situation that was going on.

After the death of Burrus, Nero began to turn his persecution from the Jews to the Christians. Because Poppaea influenced him to not be so rough on the Jews, he looked for another group he could blame all the problems on. If you can’t blame it on the Jews, there should be somebody you can blame it on. Blame it on the Christians. This led to the situation that later resulted in the Roman martyrdom of Paul and Peter and several of the other apostles. Prior to that time, the latter 60s A.D., the persecution the Church received was from the Jews. The Romans were observers. There may have been times when they didn’t step in simply because they didn’t want to risk stirring up political trouble. They just let the events take their course. They didn’t really care, one way or the other, unless they got “put on the spot” with it.

After the late 60s A.D., after the death of Burrus, then they began to turn their attention toward using the Christians as the scapegoat. Official Roman persecution began to come on some of the leadership of the Church. When the book of Acts ends, it ends with the conclusion of Paul's imprisonment in 61 A.D.; Paul left Rome. When he was let go from prison, he left Rome, went to Spain (which was where he had said he was going (Romans 15:24)) and then from Spain to Britain. There was a period of several years that went by. About three years afterwards, about 65 A.D., Paul returned into the Mediterranean area. It was shortly after that, about 67 A.D., that he was arrested and put to death. Luke ends his account in Acts with the release of Paul from prison. He didn't go further.

One of the things to note about the book of Acts is that it does not end with "Amen." "Amen" is the concluding statement, the word that gives the connotation of completion and finality that we find in the other New Testament books, with a few notable exceptions. We note it here with the book of Acts, in the book of James and in the book of 3 John. They are the only New Testament books that do not end with "Amen." There are reasons in each case.

When we go through the General Epistles, we will focus in on why that was the case in James and 3 John. We might just note that Acts was written as a book to catalog the acts or the actions of the apostles; it ends abruptly. It doesn't end with the death of Paul. It just summarizes the fact that he was released from prison in Rome two years after being brought to Rome. He dwelt in his own rented house two years.

Now, there's a reason why it ended there. God did not want the rest of the story recorded. You remember Paul's three-fold commission. He had been commissioned to take God's name before the Gentiles, before kings and before the children of Israel (Acts 9:15). That was the commission and that was the order of the commission. The book of Acts records him taking the message before the Gentiles and it brings us up to where he was going before kings. He went before governors and rulers, right on up to the Roman emperor. But it ends when he left Rome.

God did not have recorded the third part of his commission to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. God did not intend that it be clearly and unequivocally preserved in Scripture exactly where the lost sheep of the House of Israel were; otherwise, they wouldn't have been lost sheep.

God allowed that knowledge to be pretty much lost from sight. It's been available and accessible, but God allowed it to be lost from common sight. God didn't preserve that clearly.

I think it is interesting if we look at the commission God gave Paul to take God's message to Gentiles, to kings and to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. You could say that in Mr. Herbert Armstrong's case, it was the same commission, only in reverse order. He took God's message first to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, then to the Gentiles and then before kings. It's kind of an interesting reversal of the way that it went.

There is this ending in Acts. The acts of the other apostles are not noted here. Luke told a portion of the story that God wanted recorded for us. But the absence of the "Amen" gives us realization that there is more. It does not have that "ring" of finality. It was what God wanted preserved as Scripture for this time. Perhaps in the Millennium, Luke himself will write the rest of the story. Perhaps he will write the completion of the history of the Church, which is the action of the apostles.

Let's note briefly, let's summarize this portion of the book of Acts.

Acts 17 ended up with Paul having come to Athens and his address on Mars Hill.

Acts 18:1, "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth." Corinth is a little further down in Greece. This is where he found Aquila who had lately come from Rome.

Verse 2, "And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them." Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome.

One of the ways of dating the book of Acts is that the command to expel the Jews from Rome was issued by Emperor Claudius in 50 A.D. That is simply a matter of secular history and Roman records. It is one of the ways of cross-dating. The book of Acts can be dated internally. We will go into that in a later series. We will go through a "Life and Letters of the Apostle Paul Series." We will go into detail in terms of how we date the events here. Much of Acts can be dated internally, but there are also a few places where we can check with an external date—a date from secular history—where an event of secular importance is noted. It serves as a crosscheck on

the date. This is one of those ways of cross-dating.

We see what Paul did when the Jews no longer allowed him access to the synagogue. We find that Paul simply rented a place nearby.

Acts 18:6-8, “But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.” He rented a location nearby. He went to a place that was nearby and preached to the Gentiles. This was Paul’s approach.

Verse 11, he stayed in Corinth for a period of a year and a half. He was anxious to return to Jerusalem.

Verse 21, “but took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.’ And he sailed from Ephesus.” He was anxious to go to Jerusalem.

This was the Feast of Tabernacles 52 A.D. Paul didn’t say he just wanted to go to Jerusalem because it had been a long time. He didn’t say he wanted to be there at Feast time to preach to some Jews. He said, ‘I must by all means keep this Feast!’ Now, if he was going to keep the Feast, he was going to observe the Feast.

The Protestants try to explain it away and say Paul wasn’t going to keep the Feast; he was going to be there to preach to some Jews because he knew there would be a bunch of Jews there. You can go through and read the account. That’s not what he did. He didn’t evangelize in Jerusalem at all. When he went back for the Feast, he didn’t go there to evangelize. He knew that he wasn’t a very popular person in Jerusalem, and he didn’t go there to evangelize. There’s no mention of him doing that at all. He went there to do what he said. He went to keep the Feast.

It’s incredible—if you were to ask most people, most theologians, they’d tell you, ‘Oh, the New Testament does away with the need to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days.’ And they’re sure that if anybody did away with it, Paul did away with it. Some of them will say, ‘Well, maybe James kept them or Peter did, but Paul, he didn’t fool with all those Jewish things.’

Acts 18:4, you go through the book of Acts and find, “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”

Verse 21, “but took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem;’” You find example after example where Paul kept the Feast and kept the Sabbath. He preached not only to the Jews on the Sabbath, but he also preached to the Gentiles on the Sabbath.

He commanded the Church, the Gentile Church, in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 5:8, “Therefore let us keep the feast,” Paul made it very plain that he kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Church should keep the Feast.

We find that Paul left.

Acts 18:22, “And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up [to Jerusalem] and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.” To go “up” means to go to Jerusalem. That is the term that is used. When a Jew speaks of going to Jerusalem, he always speaks of going “up” to Jerusalem. It doesn’t matter where he is going from; if he goes to Jerusalem, he goes “up” to Jerusalem.

A part of that is derived from the symbolism of Isaiah where it talks about how, in the Millennium, all nations will say:

Isaiah 2:3, “...‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;’”

Verse 2, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.” The Jews always speak of it in that term and from that perspective. From wherever you are, you are always going up to Jerusalem and going down to anywhere else when you go from Jerusalem.

Acts 18:22 says he landed in Caesarea. Caesarea was the seaport. He went up, which means up to Jerusalem. He greeted the Church. He didn’t evangelize the Jews. He went to keep the Feast. He met with the congregation in Jerusalem. Then he left right after the Feast and went down to Antioch.

Antioch was his headquarters for the Gentile portion of the work. It was the center from which he worked.

Verse 23, he spent some time there. Evidently, he wintered there. He spent a period of several months there, probably about six months, between the Feast and the Spring Festivals. Then

he left to go overland. This began his **third evangelistic journey** going up through Asia Minor—through the region of Galatia and Phrygia.

Acts 19:1, “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus....” Paul came to Ephesus, which is located in Asia Minor on the seacoast across from Greece.

Verses 1-7, we note an example of some who had been baptized but had not received God’s Spirit. They had been baptized at an earlier time. This is an example of someone whose baptism was not valid. What makes a baptism not valid? Well, what makes it not valid is if you did not receive God’s Spirit when you were baptized. You weren’t truly converted. You really didn’t understand. Here were people who had been baptized by John the Baptist or some of his disciples, but they did not understand conversion. They didn’t understand about the Holy Spirit. Paul baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus and laid hands on them; they received the Holy Spirit and spoke with tongues and prophesied.

This is the third and final mention in the book of Acts of the miraculous gift of foreign languages at the time of receiving the Holy Spirit. This was not something that happened every time. It was something that happened only on special occasions, and this is the third occasion that is mentioned. God gave that original gift on the Day of Pentecost—that marked the beginning of the establishment of the New Testament Church. We’ve gone through and read that and saw reasons why that particular gift was chosen and given at that time.

Acts 10:44-48, later on, when the first Gentiles were converted, God worked the same miracle. God wanted it clearly shown that the Jews would not consider that the Gentiles had gotten a second-rate baptism, so it was the same miracle. Here in this place, God again put His stamp of approval in a very clear way. Here was a decision that had to be made. Here were people who had been baptized earlier by John the Baptist or his disciples. After Paul counseled with them, he determined that their baptism was not valid and he re-baptized them. God put His clear stamp of approval in a very dramatic and miraculous way to clearly evidence that the decision had been a valid one. God made this clear distinction.

We find that he went into the synagogue.

Acts 19:8-9, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom

of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”

When trouble came up and he no longer had access to the synagogue, he rented a school, a school of Tyrannus. Evidently, a fellow by the name of Tyrannus had a school there. Paul utilized that and separated the disciples.

Verse 10, he stayed there for a period of two years and evangelized the whole area—the Roman province of Asia. What we would think of today as the Western portion of Turkey was the Roman Province of Asia—a portion of Asia Minor.

Paul remained there in Ephesus for an extended period of time. Various events took place. One thing we might note simply by way of example is in Acts 19.

Verses 11-12, “Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.”

As Paul was preaching there in Ephesus, people sent word to him of illnesses and of problems. Paul was certainly not able to go and personally anoint and pray for everyone who sent word of being ill. With transportation being what it was, it would be far more difficult than it is today. It is not always immediately possible and practical to go today, and far less so at that time. What did Paul do when he was unable to go and personally anoint and pray for someone? He anointed a cloth. “Handkerchief” or “aprons” just means “a piece of cloth.” He took a piece of cloth, anointed it, laid hands on it and sent it to the individual. God honored that.

Many, many years ago, back in the early 1930s, as Mr. Herbert Armstrong was preaching on the radio, there began to come in requests for him to pray and to anoint someone for illnesses. He was unable to go and personally do that everywhere. That would have been impossible. He looked here and saw the example of what Paul did when he was in that circumstance and he followed that example.

That, of course, is what we do today. If it is possible for us to do so, we go and personally anoint those who are sick. In some cases when that isn’t possible, we will anoint a cloth and send it. It is not the physical act that does the healing. God is our Healer. God has chosen to designate that. God utilizes the laying on of

hands. Laying on of hands is listed in Hebrews 6:2 as one of the basic doctrines of the Church. The laying on of hands has to do with Church government and the fact that God works through human instruments. We find the laying on of hands utilized in cases of ordination, receiving of God's Spirit at baptism and in cases of someone seeking God's intervention in healing. It designates the fact that God is working through human instruments. God could do it some other way, but He has chosen to do it that way to make plain His working and the continuity of His working through human instruments. It shows the fact that we need to go through God's government in certain areas.

One of the things we run into in the book of Acts is the problem that came up with the silversmiths in Ephesus. I think it is interesting to note why the silversmiths were mad at Paul.

Verses 24-27, "For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: 'Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout most all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.'"

'By this craft we have our wealth. Now this Paul has persuaded people to get rid of all these idols and our craft is in danger. He's going to put us out of business.'

This is a good place to go to prove that Paul was not a Catholic because if he had been a Catholic, the Ephesian silversmiths would not have been mad at him. He would have been good for business. They would have added a new line of crucifixes, Madonnas, all kinds of trinkets, saints and medallions. They would have had a whole new line of products. Paul wouldn't have been bad for business. They wouldn't have had any complaints about him. But they did. Why? - Because Paul told the people to get rid of that junk! 'That is idolatry; get rid of those things. Throw them away. You don't want those things around.'

It makes a contrast. I think it is good for us to note the clear evidence of the departure of what calls itself "Christianity" and what calls itself

"the Church that Jesus built." It is important for us to note how far departed it is from the teachings and the practices of Jesus and the early apostles. Paul did not preach a message that was compatible with idolatry and the use of all kinds of shrines. You can't drive down the street without seeing all these little shrines out in front of the houses and all the various things. That's what they had in Ephesus. But the people that believed Paul got rid of those things, just as you did when you came into the Church. All of us, when we came into the knowledge of God's truth, had things we had to get rid of because we realized that was not God's way. There got to be so much of a problem in Ephesus that Paul finally had to leave.

Acts 20:1, "After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to him, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia." He left and went to Macedonia.

Verse 3, we find Paul had gone from Macedonia and had crossed back into Asia Minor.

Verse 7, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." Some had tried to take this out of context and say that Paul was having a Sunday morning service and they were having communion. On the first day of the week, Paul was over there to say mass and have communion early Sunday morning. Well, that's not what it is talking about at all.

Verse 6, notice when it was, "But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days." Oh, they were keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread! Luke and the group with him had been in Philippi for the Days of Unleavened Bread. Paul was in Troas. Why was Paul breaking bread? "Breaking bread" just simply means "eating a meal." Why was he breaking bread and eating a meal with the disciples on the first day of the week?

Verse 7, "Paul, ready to depart the next day." Paul was getting ready to depart the next morning. He ate this meal and the speech lasted until midnight. Now, what is the evening or night portion of the first day of the week? It's not Sunday night. It's Saturday night! If Paul was gathered with them breaking bread on the first day of the week and their meeting lasted until midnight, when was this? This was Saturday night. This was after the close of the Sabbath. They had a going-away dinner for Paul. He was getting ready to leave; after the Sabbath they had

a going-away party, so to speak, and Paul spoke. When he got “cranked up,” he just kept going and it lasted until midnight.

Verse 9, there was a fellow sitting there by the name of Eutychus. He got sleepy, which occasionally occurs. The only problem was that they didn’t have air conditioning and the windows were open. He was sitting up there in the loft and was evidently trying to get a little fresh air. He dozed off and the next thing you know, he fell out of the window, which is even worse than falling out of your chair. It’s bad to go to sleep and fall out of your chair. But what was really bad, he was sitting up there by the open window and he fell out.

Now can you imagine how Eutychus is going to feel when he comes up in the resurrection and finds out the only time that he got his name in the New Testament was one time when he fell asleep in Church. Luke had to write it down and put his name in there so that everybody who has ever read the Bible, all the way down through the centuries, the only thing they know about Eutychus is that he went to sleep in Church and fell out of the window. If I were Eutychus, I think I would have a few words with Luke. I would want to ask Luke, ‘Did you have to mention my name? Couldn’t you just say “somebody”?’ Anyway, he went to sleep and he fell out.

Verses 10-12, Paul went down and prayed for him. He raised him up and he was healed. They went in and ate some more. They broke bread and ate again because it was late. They talked a long while, even until the break of day. So, this thing lasted all night. The moral of that story is that if you’re going to go to sleep, don’t sit next to the window. Everybody else was either wide-awake after that time or they stayed away from the windows because we don’t have a record of anybody else falling out.

Verse 13, Paul left early the next morning. What happened (if you look at a map) is that the others had left and sailed around the peninsula. Paul was able to walk straight across it. He stayed there on the Sabbath and Saturday night. Early Sunday morning when it was daybreak, he took off on a 20-mile hike. That’s what he was doing Sunday morning. He stayed there until daybreak. Sun-up Sunday morning, he took off on a long hike across this peninsula and met the ship on the other side. He had quite a day’s walk—I say 20 miles, maybe 17 or 18, but that is a pretty good walk. I think that’s usually about as much walking as most of us would care to do in a

day—and then a little bit. There’s certainly no Sunday morning church service going on here.

Paul sailed by Ephesus. He didn’t want to spend time there.

Verse 16, “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.” Here he is observing the Day of Pentecost. He was on his way to Jerusalem to observe the Day of Pentecost.

Verses 17-36, he had sent word and the elders of Ephesus met him at the Port when he came; he was able to speak to them.

Notice the emphasis that he gave and the message that he preached.

Verse 25, “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God,” Jesus came teaching the Kingdom of God. Paul taught the Kingdom of God. It was a message about the establishment of God’s government. The God of heaven is going to set up a Kingdom. You find that emphasized throughout.

Acts 1:6, the last question the disciples asked Jesus was, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Why did they ask that? He kept talking about a Kingdom and the establishment of a Kingdom. They understood what a Kingdom was, and they just wanted to know *when*, which is the question most of us have. ‘*When*, Lord, are You going to restore it? Right now? Five years from now? *When*?’ Well, that’s the question they had.

He told them to wait until they received the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 8) and then to go and do the Work. That’s what we are to do until the Kingdom comes. We are to be busy doing the Work. That was Paul’s message here to the Ephesians elders.

Acts 20:29-30, he warned them about the falling away and the things that were going to happen. There were already things coming in that were setting the stage for the apostasy—the falling away and the false church that would occur.

Acts 21:8, “On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea,”

Verse 15, “And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem.”

Verses 17-18, “And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.” James was an apostle and the brother of Jesus. He was the apostle who presided over the Jerusalem Church.

This was the headquarters Church in the New Testament period. This was the area from which everything centered. When Paul arrived at Jerusalem, he went to James.

Verse 19, all the other ministers were gathered there and he greeted them. He gave them a report of the things that God had been doing. They were very thankful and they updated him on the work that was going on there.

Verse 20, “And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.’”

Now notice. Had Christians in the headquarters Church in Jerusalem been taught that Christ did away with God’s law? James was the brother of Jesus. Surely, if Jesus had done away with the law and nailed it to the cross, He would have let His brother know. James is saying, ‘We have a lot of people here, and they are all zealous for the law!’ James didn’t say, ‘We are trying to tell them that the law is done away.’ Paul didn’t say, ‘Why haven’t you told them it was nailed to the cross?’ People just read right over that and want to say, ‘Well, the law was done away.’ James didn’t think it was done away. He said they were all zealous for the law.

Verse 21, “but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”

‘They have been misinformed about you.’ Things were wrongly stated. Word had gone out that Paul was teaching the Jews who lived in the Diaspora, the Jews who lived in the Gentile areas, that they shouldn’t circumcise their children. That was not what the Church taught at all. The Church did not teach against circumcising the children on the eighth day. That was not what the Church taught at all.

The decision of Acts 15 did not say that there should not be circumcision any more. They said that circumcision is not a matter of spiritual salvation, and when Gentiles who are uncircumcised are converted, they don’t have to go through the ritual of circumcision to be a part of the Church. It is not something that is necessary. It is not part of conversion. If you were uncircumcised when you came into the Church, there is no reason for you not to remain that way.

But in the case of Jews, circumcision was the physical sign of the covenant God made with

Abraham. There was nothing the Church said in any way to discourage the continuation of that practice, most specifically, by those who were themselves the descendants of Abraham. There was nothing there to discourage that. And the Church had never discouraged it in that sense, as a physical matter, but it is not a part of salvation. If someone is uncircumcised when they are converted, there is no need for them to make a change in that. It has no bearing on their salvation.

Paul’s statements had been misinterpreted. Paul had never said that, but some of the Jews had believed this rumor that Paul was telling Jews in the Diaspora to just ignore the instructions on circumcision of their children. They came up with an idea.

Verses 23-24, “Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.” They said, ‘We want the Jews here to recognize that you are not anti or against or disparaging of the custom that we observe, even as a part of the temple ritual.’

There were some individuals who had a vow. You have to understand that there were things that could be carried out when the temple stood that simply can’t be carried out today. You could not take upon yourself a Nazarite vow today because a part of that vow involves a temple ritual at the end of it. When the vow expires, you have to go to the temple and do certain things. Today there isn’t a temple to go to. If you can’t do exactly as God says, you leave it alone.

That is why the Jews don’t offer sacrifices today. It’s not because they consider that the need for them is done away, but because they recognize the instructions in Deuteronomy 12 that say you can’t do it just anywhere you think of doing it. You have to go to the place where God has set His name. You have to do it at the altar that is sanctified and the Levites and the priests have to perform it. They recognize that if there isn’t a sanctified altar and a Levitical priesthood to carry out the ritual, it is something that they can’t do. It will occur, but they won’t do it until that is re-instituted.

There was nothing here that restricted those who had access to the temple from taking part in certain rituals, which were not wrong and which had their place. Since Paul was not against that,

he was going to be involved in this. The intent was to have his presence there in the temple, bear the cost of these individuals ending their vow, and let it be seen that Paul was not the kind of individual that he had been represented to be. But that was not the way the story went.

Verses 27-28, “And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, ‘Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.’”

We see a mob. A riot starts—this kind of lynch-mob mentality. People get in a mob and they don’t think. Rumors go out and people believe the craziest things. Here they were. The rumor went out that Paul had brought Gentiles into the inner part of the temple; he had brought in some who were uncircumcised and who would not have had access beyond the outer courts in the court of the Gentiles. The rumor went out that he brought them in and had defiled the temple.

They said, ‘This man has so little regard for the temple that he has brought a couple of uncircumcised Greeks in here, and they have defiled the temple. He has nothing but contempt for the temple.’ This was the rumor that began to run rampant. There was a riot that started.

Verse 33, the police force came and arrested Paul. They didn’t know what was going on.

Verses 37-38, “And as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, ‘May I speak to you?’ He replied, ‘Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago raised an insurrection and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?’”

The commander (captain of the guard) makes it plain. He said, ‘Aren’t you that Egyptian fellow that had started a riot and led a bunch of robbers off into the desert?’ He was surprised when Paul spoke Greek to him. From all the commotion going on, he thought he was arresting the “Al Capone” of his day. He thought he must have the public enemy “number one.” It turns out that he said, ‘You are not that guy. I can see you and listen to you talk. You are not that fellow that did that.’ Paul said, ‘No, I’m not.’

Verse 39, “But Paul said, ‘I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.’”

Verse 40, Paul began to speak there. He spoke in Hebrew to the crowd.

Acts 22:2, “And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.” They quieted down when he began speaking in Hebrew—both out of respect for the Hebrew language as well as the fact that they generally had to “listen up” in order to hear it better because Hebrew was not the everyday spoken language in Judea at that time. Aramaic, which is similar to Hebrew, was the common language. Of course, a lot of the Jews who were there from other areas for the holy day understood only a small amount of Hebrew or they were “rusty” with their Hebrew. When Paul began speaking in the “real thing,” they had to really “listen up” to try to understand what he was saying. They were doing so, and he went through and spoke to them.

Verses 21-22, everything was fine until he began to talk about preaching to the Gentiles. When he mentioned going and speaking to the Gentiles, this really stirred them up. To them this was the unforgivable sin. They were ready to start a riot again. Such was their attitude.

Verse 24, the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks (KJV, “castle”). The commander decided that there had to be something to this. He didn’t know what was going on, but he took him in there and gave him a good working over—gave him the “third degree.” Then they would see what story he would tell.

Verses 25-26, they tied up Paul. Paul asked the centurion, ‘Is it lawful for you to do this to me, a Roman citizen, and un-condemned? I haven’t had a trial. I haven’t been convicted of a crime. You’re going to take me in there and give me a beating. I’m a Roman citizen.’ Well, then the centurion got scared and went and got the captain. ‘You had better watch it; this guy is a Roman citizen.’

Now, Roman citizens had rights. Most people in the Roman Empire were not citizens. Originally, the only ones who were Roman citizens were the inhabitants of Rome. Later, Roman citizenship was extended to all the people of Italy. Everyone else that they conquered were subject peoples—they weren’t citizens. They were subjects of the Roman Empire, but they weren’t citizens, which meant that they didn’t really have any rights. The only ones that had any rights were the citizens.

There were a number of rights. Rome practiced the rule of law, but the law only applied to the citizens—and there weren’t a whole lot of citizens. The automatic citizenship, there in Rome and Italy, was extended out to a few

other localized areas. Individuals could obtain Roman citizenship granted on a one-by-one basis. Generally, the way you got it was you bought it. Kind of like the way you get things today. If you have enough money, you can probably buy just about anything. You could probably get a Russian citizenship or whatever citizenship you wanted if you had enough money. It's amazing when you pay off the right people. The emperors were always willing to sell a few things, a few citizenships, and raise a little cash.

Citizenship was hereditary in the family. If your dad was a citizen, then you inherited that citizenship. Once a family received Roman citizenship, then from that time on, that family had that citizenship. Paul had inherited his citizenship. He was born a Roman citizen. Paul invoked the legal rights that he had and utilized them.

Let's quickly summarize here as we get to the situation where he went to trial before the Sanhedrin. Paul used wisdom. There is a time to use wisdom.

Acts 23, Paul was on trial.

Verses 6-7, when they brought him before the Jewish court, it didn't take him very long to realize that half of them were Pharisees and half of them were Sadducees. Now, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection. They accepted the doctrine of the resurrection, but the Sadducees didn't.

When Paul got in there, the first thing he said was, 'You know I was born a Pharisee; I am the son of a Pharisee. I am in here because I've been called into question of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.' Immediately, this began to set things "abuzz."

Verses 8-9, the Sadducees were upset because they didn't think there was any resurrection. They began arguing with the Pharisees who said, 'Yes, there is.' Then the Pharisees said, 'This fellow doesn't seem like such a bad fellow; we think you should turn him loose.' The Sadducees were mad. The Pharisees and Sadducees began squabbling and fighting among themselves. Paul just used a little bit of psychology. He picked the point that they did not agree on and got them arguing among themselves.

Verse 10, that got so much commotion going that they were about to get into a fight over him. The soldiers came in and took him back to jail. They said, 'This is getting out of hand.'

In Acts 24, they brought him before Felix the governor. Now the Jews had hired a real

"hotshot" lawyer—a fellow by the name of Tertullus. He was one of those real "hotshot" types, a kind of the "Race-horse Haines" of the day or whatever the famous lawyer. He came in there. Notice the "syrupy" way he started off. When he was called, Tertullus began to accuse Paul to Felix.

Acts 24:2-7, "And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying, 'Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought in this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands.'"

Does that at all bear any resemblance to the truth? He comes in here "laying it on really thick." He was saying, 'This fellow, he's a troublemaker, a ringleader of this sect—this cult, this sect of the Nazarenes. (Boy that sounds bad.) He's just stirring up trouble everywhere. He was going to profane the temple, and all we were trying to do was bring him to court. We are peaceful, law-abiding people. We were arresting him for breaking the law and we were going to take him to court. These soldiers, these policemen, just came in there swinging their Billy-clubs everywhere. They just knocked us all around and just took this guy. Boy, police brutality! They were just trampling all over us, just terrible, terrible! You need to speak to that chief of police that you have. I just can't believe it! Those police just came in there and they were just so ugly!'

Listen to this guy just "laying it all on." People haven't changed; it's the same thing. You can just see this lawyer up here in court, going on about his poor client. 'The police came in and it was terrible.' Well, anyway, the governor listened to all this.

Verse 9, the Jews were standing there and were agreeing—'listen to this guy.' Paul, afterward, just went down and gave the facts.

Verses 10-13, "Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: 'Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully

answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.”

‘They didn’t find me in the temple arguing with anybody or inciting people—neither in the synagogues nor in the city. I haven’t said anything to anybody. They can’t prove any of these things that they are saying. They have no evidence. They can’t document one thing that they say I did. I was not preaching in the temple. I was not doing anything.’ Paul had been accused of profaning the temple.

We see the situation went on. Felix listened to Paul. He called Paul and liked to listen to what Paul had to say.

Verse 25, “Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’” When Felix heard about righteousness and self-control, this made him a little nervous. When he began to find out there was a judgment to come, this really scared him because he knew that he was falling pretty far short when it got to righteousness and self-control, and if there was a judgment to come, he really was in trouble. So, he didn’t want to hear anymore. This is the way some people are. They hear the truth and want to turn off the television. It makes them uncomfortable.

Verse 26, “Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.”

Felix kept him in jail because what he really wanted was a little “payola.” He wanted a little “under-the-table” money. He kept figuring that eventually Paul could “shake down” the Church and get some money for him. He would listen to him from time to time and kept waiting to get some money.

Verse 27, “But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.” Two years went by and Paul didn’t pay him off. So, when he was getting ready to leave office, he decided he would just leave him there. He wouldn’t stir up trouble with the Jews. Festus came in. Festus was the new governor. Well, they had to go through all the “rigmarole” again.

Acts 25:2-3, “Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.” Festus thought, ‘Let’s just send him back to Jerusalem and have a trial.’

Verse 10, “Then Paul said, ‘I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.’” Paul said, ‘No way. I am not going back there.’ He knew that they would try to kill him. There wasn’t going to be any trial. Paul at this point appealed to Caesar.

Verse 11, “‘For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.’” He appealed to the Supreme Court of the day. He appealed to Caesar. He was exercising his right as a Roman citizen to do so, and this solved the problem for Festus. He said, ‘I will just send you to Rome then.’

Verse 12, “Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, ‘You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!’”

Verses 13-27, King Agrippa was in town and he wanted to hear this fellow Paul. Festus decided this would be an opportunity to get in good with Agrippa.

Acts 26:1-29, Paul addressed Festus and Agrippa. Notice the situation. Paul has now had an opportunity to speak to the top echelons of government in his area. He spoke to the two Roman governors and the king over that area under the Roman Empire.

Verses 31-32, neither of them found anything wrong with him.

In Acts 27, they put him on a boat and were going to ship him off to Rome.

Verses 13-44; 28:1, on the trip from Caesarea to Rome, a storm resulted in a shipwreck on Malta where the group had to winter. Of course, Paul took advantage of the opportunity to preach.

In Acts 27:9-10, it was a time when the sailing was dangerous. In fact, Paul warned them that it was really too late in the season. But they figured, ‘What does he know?’ And they went anyway. It mentions in verse 9 that the Fast was already past—in other words, the Day of Atonement.

In Acts 28:1, they wrecked there at Malta.

Verses 11-16, when the winter was over—in the spring—they left. They landed at Syracuse, in

Sicily, and then came into the main part of Italy, south of Rome. When Paul came to Rome, he was delivered to the Praetorian Guard. He was allowed to dwell by himself. He rented a home.

Acts 28:30, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him.” He had a personal guard. He was evidently chained to the guard, but he was at least allowed to dwell in a house. He was allowed free access for people to come and see him.

Notice the reputation of the Church. Notice what they knew about the Church.

Verse 21-22, “And they said to him, ‘We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect [speaking of the Church], we know that it is spoken against everywhere.’”

‘We don’t really know anything about it; we just know that people don’t like it.’ That sounds kind of like us, doesn’t it? They don’t know much about it, but they don’t like it. ‘This sect! This cult! This crazy bunch you got mixed up with.’

There’s nothing new under the sun. That’s what they said about Paul. That’s what they said about the Church in the New Testament. Why should we expect that they think more highly of us? Christ warned us to be careful.

Luke 6:26, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you,” Be careful if everybody likes you. I don’t mean your personality. People liked Christ’s personality, but they didn’t like His message. If the world agrees with you, you have trouble. If the world agrees with you, then you have to look and see what you are preaching and practicing. The world did not agree with Christ, and they are not going to agree with us. They may like certain things about us, but when it comes down to religion, they think that’s kind of crazy.

We notice what Paul was preaching right to the end.

Acts 28:31, “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”

Acts 1:6, we open the book of Acts with the disciples asking Jesus, “... ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’” –Because that’s what He preached about. When the book of Acts ends, Paul was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Throughout, we have the clear message and teaching of the Gospel of the

Kingdom of God. The world has lost sight of that Gospel and that message, but God’s Church has preached and taught that message through the centuries.

With that, we will conclude our survey of the book of Acts. We, of course, have only hit the high spots in the book of Acts, but you have had opportunity to read the story in detail. I have tried to concentrate on matters of background that can perhaps make it a little more meaningful. We will be starting fresh on a brand new series.