

The Bible Notebook

THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Volume 5

(Chapters 16-18)

A Verse by Verse Study

By

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DEDICATION

To

Mike Minnix

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For the Georgia Baptist Convention*

Because of Your

Commitment to Our Lord,

to His Word, and to those who preach His Word,

And because you are my friend

A Word About the Bible Notebook

My good friend, Dr. Gene Jeffries once told me that he had looked forward to going to college because there, in contrast to high school, he could study what he wanted to study. When he got to college he found that they had a core curriculum and he had limited electives. When he left college and went on to seminary he thought he would finally be able to study what he wanted to, only to discover that his choices would be limited there as well. I understood.

Dr. Jeffries founded Cambridge Graduate School and Emmanuel College for Christian Studies, wrote the curriculum, and then succeeded in getting both institutions accredited. Now, he does everything he can to be sure that students have a little more choice in their studies than they may in other institutions. As a member of his faculty, I am impressed.

The later Dr. Jan Mercer, a creation scientist, introduced me to recommended Dr. Jeffries and recommended me for his consideration for the faculty. He told me that Dr. Mercer had said, “Johnny Sanders is more conservative than you.” When he repeated that to me, he said, “They call me Atila the Hun! What are you?” Knowing that I was in over my head I decided to try to go in under his radar by replying, “I am Hagar the Horrible.” I had no idea whether or not he was familiar with that comic strip character or not, but I did know that my work was rather modest compared to his, and to that of other members of the faculty. That, however, does not mean that I have no idea what the Lord has wanted me to do.

The Lord gave me a passion for Bible study, and when I graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary I realized that, now that I could finally study what I wanted to, I had to focus on two things: (1) the want to, and (2) the how to!

I began by preparing a full sentence outline of Romans. After that, I outlined other books and added study notes. When I got my first computer I began to expand those studies. In time, I expanded them and developed the format I use today. Then I adopted the general umbrella term, THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK. Three things guided me as I worked on these verse by verse Bible studies: (1) the Lord gave me a passion for Bible study, (2) a desire to preach the Gospel and to teach the Word of God to others, and (3) a commitment to focus on what I see as a gap between the critical commentary and a devotional commentary. For a number of years I taught seminary extension classes, so it was only natural that The Bible Notebook would be written with the serious lay person and the bivocational pastor in mind.

The Bible Notebook would be verbose if prepared for publication in book form, but I had grown tired of looking up a passage in a commentary only to find the note, “For comments on this verse, see the author’s comments on 3:15 in Vol. 2.” Even in an electronic library that can become a bit tedious. By the time you run the references you may have to suffer the distraction of getting all your windows open to the right place again. There is no apology for repetition in The Bible Notebook. Running references is still an option, but for a busy pastor or a Sunday School teacher it is not always necessary.

Another reason I call my studies **The Bible Notebook** is that - well, that is exactly what it is. Dr. Mike Minnix, Editor of the PastorLife.Com web site, calls them commentaries, and a few qualify, but for the most part, I want to go back and do another re-write. Only one commentary, *UNDEFEATED, Finding Peace in a Word Full of Trouble*, has been published at this time. Dr. Minnix has also posted sermons from **The Sermon Notebook** on PastorLife.Com. May God bless you as you continue your study of the Book of Acts. A better understanding of Acts will give you a better understanding of what your church should be doing for the Lord today.

CHAPTER 16

I had been communicating with Dr. William R. (Bill) Cooper, Middlesex, England, is the author of *After the Flood* (1995); *Paley's Watchmaker* (1996); *William Tyndale's 1526 New Testament* (British Library 2000); & *The Wycliffe New Testament of 1388* (British Library 2002). Did you read that? Dr. Cooper translated the 1388 Wycliffe NT and the 1526 Tyndale NT into modern English!

With that in mind it is not surprising that Dr. Cooper would produce another amazing work, under the title, *Old Light on the Roman Church, a consideration in four parts of certain neglected areas of Church History*, an unpublished research paper (Copyright protected under his name). Nor, is it a surprise that he would begin with the statement: "Much of the material contained in this book can be read nowhere else - unless the reader goes to the original sources" [COOPER: preface, p. 2]. Not only does Dr. Cooper present the results of his research, he also provides a chronology that covers the period Luke covers in the Book of Acts, as well as many things before and after Acts. The following is his chronology [COOPER: 45-46]:

Chronology

- AD 29.....Aulus Plautius Consul of Rome, afterwards Governor of Pannonia.
- AD 30.....(?) The year of Pudens' birth. His father, Pudentinus dies in this decade.
- AD 33.....Our Lord's death and resurrection.
- AD 36.....Birth of Claudia, daughter of Caradoc. Matthew's(?) Gospel is finished.
- AD 37.....(?) Gospel arrives in Britain according to Gildas. Death of Tiberius Caesar.
- AD 40.....(?) Aulus Plautius marries Pomponia. Pomponia converted by Gospel.
- AD 41.....Death of Tiberius Caesar. Claudius becomes Emperor.

- AD 43.....Claudian Invasion of Britain. Arrival here of Aulus Plautius and Pomponia.
Judicial murder in Rome of Julia by Messalina, the wife of Claudius.
- AD 49.....Capture of Caradoc's family by Ostorius Scapula. They are placed in the
care of Pomponia who converts them to Christ.
- AD 51.....Caradoc is betrayed by Queen Cartimantua (Aregwedd Foeddawg).
- AD 52.....Caradoc appears with his family before the Senate. Pudens returns to
Rome, leaving his land in Chichester to the pagan temple there.
- AD 54.....Death of Claudius Caesar. Nero becomes Emperor.
- AD 57.....Trial of Pomponia. Retirement of Aulus Plautius from public life.
- AD 58.....Return to Britain of Bran, accompanied by Aristobulus.
- AD 59.....March 15th, Aristobulus martyred. Paul writes letter to Romans.
- AD 60.....(?) Murder by Nero of Aulus Plautius the Younger.
- AD 67.....Paul is martyred at Rome.
- AD 68.....Nero commits suicide.
- AD 81.....September 23rd, martyrdom of Linus under Domitian.
- AD 83.....Death of Pomponia (said to be forty years after Julia's death in AD 43).
- AD 107.....May 19th, Pudentiana is martyred.
- AD 124.....Beginning of Lucius' reign.
- AD 140.....(?) Timotheus is martyred with one Marcus.
- AD 142.....Pius becomes bishop of the Roman Christians.
- AD 151.....June 20th, Novatus is martyred.
- AD 201.....December 3rd, death of Lucius.

About the time Caradoc was appearing before the emperor in Rome, Paul and Silas were appearing

before the chief magistrates in Philippi. While Caradoc's family was living with Lady Pamponia, who introduced them to Jesus Christ, Paul and his companions were worshipping living in the home of Lydia, and worshipping down by the riverside. Dr. Cooper notes that Caradoc's daughter Claudia wrote many of the hymns the first century church sang, and his son Linus (not Peter) was the first bishop of the church at Rome.

About the time of the return to Britain of Bran, accompanied by Aristobulus, or the martyrdom of Aristobulus (March 15, AD 59), Paul was writing his Epistle to Romans. Francis Shaeffer used to say of the Bible, this is history: real people doing real things at a real place at a real time in history. That certainly applies to the Book of Acts.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Paul Returns to Strengthen Gentile Churches, 1-5

NOTE: Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus had gone on an extended missionary journey, leaving Antioch of Syria, passing through Cyprus, the home of Barnabas, and then sailing across to Pamphylia, where John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, left them and returned to his home in Jerusalem. By the time they arrived in Antioch of Pisidia, Saul was using his Roman name Paul and he had become the obvious leader, with full support from Barnabas. They began by going to the synagogue on the Sabbath and continued until they were forced to withdraw when leaders of the synagogue opposed them. When persecution broke out in the city, they departed and moved on to Iconium, and then to Lystra and Derbe. After their work in Derbe was over they reversed their steps and revisited churches that had been planted earlier.

When they returned Antioch of Syria and reported on their missionary journey, a group of Judaizers who had come from Jerusalem, opposed them, insisting that Gentiles had to be circumcised before they could be saved. That issue was revolved at the Jerusalem Conference and James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote a letter expressing the opinion of the leaders in Jerusalem on the subject. (They had no ecclesiastical authority over the churches of Syria or Galatia to issue a ruling.) Gentiles are saved exactly the same way as Jews, by grace through faith, not by ritual or ceremony, or even by any combination of grace plus works. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with Silas and Jude, who would verify the results of the Jerusalem Conference.

In time, Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to go back to those churches planted on the earlier missionary journey to share this news and to strengthen the churches. Barnabas insisted on giving John Mark another opportunity, but Paul opposed taking him because he had deserted them earlier. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed for Cyprus and Paul took Silas and began Paul's Second Missionary Journey.

16:1 - TO DERBE. *“Then he went on to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish woman, but his father was a Greek.”* Paul and Silas left Antioch of Syria and passed through the “Cilician Gates”, a famous pass in Mt. Tarsus, and traveling by land, entered Asia Minor, which in New Testament times was considered the province of Galatia where the cities of Derbe and Lystra were located.

TIMOTHY. Lystra was the home of Timothy, his mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois, both of whom were committed to the Lord, and an influence in his life (2 Tim. 1:5). It is not unreasonable to assume that Timothy had been converted on Paul’s First Missionary Journey. Timothy was the son of “a believing Jewish woman” and a Greek father. By “a believing Jewish woman”, we may infer that she was converted on the earlier visit by Paul and Barnabas. Evidently, the Greek father was not a believer. Some even suggest that the mother may have been a widow. What we do know is that Timothy’s mother and his grandmother taught him and encouraged him in the faith.

16:2 -THE BROTHERS. *“The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him.”* There was no hierarchy in those early churches, no “father”, no priest, no diocese. Obviously, there was some organization, but what we see is both the autonomy of the local church and cooperation between churches. The primary title was simply “brother” (or sister). The brothers at both Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of Timothy, which demands both communication between the churches and some demonstration of ministry or service on the part of Timothy.

SPOKE HIGHLY. This is stressed here and other places in the New Testament because of its importance to the Lord’s work. Paul was very careful to avoid any hint of compromise. It was important to the Kingdom of God then and it is no less critical today. Timothy had the approval of his home church, which is a wise precaution today when a young man is about to be ordained to the Gospel ministry.

16:3 - PAUL WANTED. *“Paul wanted Timothy to go with him, so he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, since they all knew that his father was a Greek.”* We may assume that the Holy Spirit placed the thought in Paul’s mind and in his heart that he should invite Timothy to accompany them when they left Lystra. I served on the executive board with a well known pastor in the early nineties, and at one point I was invited to preach a revival in the area where this man served. The pastor where I was the visiting evangelist told me he had observed his neighbor for some time and he had concluded that the man was no more gifted than many other pastors, but he had a gift for surrounding himself with outstanding staff members who served faithfully and effectively.

Paul seemed to have been strongly drawn to this young Christian and saw in him the dedication, stability, and courage that would make him a good assistant. He may well have compared him to another young man, John Mark, who had turned back when the going got rough. Timothy had the advantage of knowing this region, and since his father was Greek and his mother Jewish, he would understand the issues that divided them and challenged fellowship within the local church.

CIRCUMCISED HIM. Paul circumcised Timothy, even though he had refused to have Titus circumcised in Jerusalem.

“Paul had Titus there on the scene to test his victory. They did not compel Titus to be circumcised. There is an obvious connection between this case and that of Timothy whom Paul circumcised (Acts 16:3). In Timothy’s case circumcision seemed expedient because he was a half Jew and would be working with Jews who would not accept him otherwise. Circumcision had nothing to do with his salvation, it simply removed a stumbling block with the Jews. Paul, however, had no intention of having Titus circumcised. He is very clear about that. To yield in this instance would be an admission that circumcision, hence all the Jewish ceremonial law, was essential to salvation” [Sanders, Johnny L., unpublished commentary on Galatians, PastorLife.Com web site, Georgia Baptist Convention, Dr. Mike Minnix, Editor].

The reason Paul circumcised Timothy was one of expedience. Titus would be a testimony to both Jews and Gentiles that the Jerusalem Conference had agreed that circumcision was not necessary for one’s salvation. Timothy, on the other hand, being half Jew and half Gentile, would be working with both races. It was a practical decision because of the Jewish population in the areas in which they would be working. Timothy’s ordination may have occurred about this time (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6-7).

Timothy would be Paul’s faithful companion and trusted assistant, a young man who would serve him when he was ill or in prison, yet one he could send on the most challenging mission. Titus proved his faithfulness and resourcefulness many times, but when Timothy is not with Paul, they are in close communication. Parenthetically, it may be noted here that when both Paul and Timothy had failed in Corinth, Titus had been successful in resolving some issues and in restoring their confidence in Paul. The Holy Spirit would inspire Paul to write two inspired epistles to Timothy and one to Titus, but it is reasonable to assume that they communicated through personal letters in addition to those epistles. After all, Paul had written a personal letter to the church at Corinth before being inspired to write the First Epistle to that church, and then another personal letter before writing the Second Epistle to Corinth.

16:4 - AS THEY TRAVELED. *“As they traveled through the towns, they delivered to them the decisions reached by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.”* Paul, with Silas and Timothy traveled through the Phrygian region of Galatia, visiting churches in Iconium and Pisidian Antioch where they “delivered to the them the decisions reached by the apostles and elders” at the Jerusalem Conference. The verb “delivered” is imperfect active, showing that they kept on delivering the news of the decisions from city to city. There may have been other churches by now that had been started from those in Antioch, Iconium, an Lystra.

They would have read the letter James had written, and it is reasonable to assume some scribe would copy the letter, if Paul or Silas had not made them a copy. This letter should have prepared them for the later visit by those Judaizers who had lost the debate in Jerusalem and Antioch of Syria, but were

not about to give up the fight. They would follow him, hounding his steps, undermining his work, as we see in Paul's rather blunt Epistle to the Galatians.

THE DECISIONS. The Apostles and elders had agreed that Gentiles are saved in exactly the same way as Jews, which means by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8). This was a decision of the first magnitude and it would have been received joyfully by those churches.

REACHED. Robertson renders it, "Which had been ordained (ta kekrimena)", which, he explains, is the "perfect passive articular participle of *krinô*, to judge, emphasizing the permanence of the conclusions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. For to keep (*phulassein*). This present active infinitive likewise accents that it is a charter of liberty for continual living, not a temporary compromise" [Word Pictures in the New Testament, A. T. Robertson, The Bible Navigator, an electronic Bible library, produced by LifeWay Christian Resources, developed by Tim Vineyard, Vice President of the Technology Division and his team - after this, ATR].

Later, Paul would be inspired to write to the churches of this region, and chastise them for setting aside sound doctrine and embracing the false teachings of the Judaizers. In that epistle he would state emphatically:

"Yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified" (Gal 2:16, HCSB).

In 2007, I asked my friend Phill Burgess, Vice President of Broadman and Holman Outreach International (a division of B & H Publishing Group, LifeWay Christian Resources) to send a copy of the relatively new Holman Christian Standard Bible to a brilliant Bible scholar, Dr. William R. Cooper in Middlesex, England. Phill Burgess sent him a new leather, Illustrated copy. After spending a week with the HCSB, Dr. Cooper e-mailed me that he loved the translation, in part because it avoids some of the shortcomings of other modern translations.

Dr. Cooper translated the 1388 Wycliffe New Testament and the 1526 Tyndale New Testament into modern English. He works, not only in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, but also in Old English, Middle English, Welch, Celt, Gallic, and a number of other European languages and dialects (including Russian). Dr. Cooper spent twenty-five years researching ancient records before writing the book, *AFTER THE FLOOD*, published in 1995 (the book may be ordered from the Institute for Creation Research or from Answers in Genesis). In that book, he reproduces many ancient records, including lists of six European royal families who traced their royal line back to Noah through Japheth, and that before they had ever heard of Christ or seen a Bible! Dr. Cooper affirms that **the region of Galatia was settled by ancient Celts, who gave the people of the region their temperament.** They were very quick to embrace new concepts, but it seems they were just as quick to give them up for the next new philosophy to come along. Paul must have known something of the character of these people, but he was still shocked that they would give up the truth he had preached to them and

embrace a lie so quickly. In his epistle to the churches of this region he was brutally frank with them:

“You foolish Galatians! Who has hypnotized you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified? I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? **Are you so foolish?** After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh?” (Gal 3:1-3, bold added by this writer).

16:5 - CHURCHES WERE STRENGTHENED. *“So the churches were strengthened in the faith and were increased in number daily.”* Paul and Barnabas had preached the Gospel and souls had been saved, and churches established in the major cities. People going to markets in the cities who were saved would have taken the Gospel back to their towns and villages and other churches were planted throughout the region.

Churches must grow or they will wither away. Evangelism is essential to church growth, but if there is no follow-up and if the members are not taught sound doctrines the church may fragment, with some divisions pulling out and others spreading false teachings. This would be the situation that would demand the Epistle to the Galatians a few years later. For the present, Paul, Silas, and Timothy would deliver the message and the churches would be strengthened.

“The disputations at Antioch, relative to circumcision, had no doubt spread far and wide among other Churches, and unhinged many. The decrees of the apostles came in good time, and prevented farther mischief: the people, saved from uncertainty, became established in the faith; and the Church had a daily accession of converted souls” [Adam Clarke’s Commentary, in The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources - after this, CLARKE].

When I was in my late twenties, I accepted the pastorate of a church that was excited about its recent growth. I saw the numbers and anticipated working with a strong church. After a few weeks, I realized that there was a serious problem. I would visit homes and the surprised people would look me and say, “We don’t belong to your church. We belong to Riverside. We just visited during their revival.” I had to go back and delete from our Sunday School records almost 50% of our enrollment! We had to settle down to some serious work. There was a negative image that had to be overcome. I would introduce myself to people as the pastor of this particular church and expect someone to say, “I sure hope you are not like one they had there!” They would then tell me their story.

About six years later, after praying, visiting, preaching, teaching, and pleading, we experienced what I jokingly called “over night success”. In one year we had one addition for every 6.7 members, and I baptized one person for every 11 members. The next year the records were almost as good. And this was in a town that was covered with churches. Usually, when a church in that town was growing, another one was in trouble. A member of a very strong church in that town said, “You are reaching people everyone else in town has given up on.” It was all the Lord’s work. I had worked for five or

six years, applying every methods, means, and program I had learned from seminary, my denomination, and my personal experience, but with only limited visible results.

Our members kept saying to me, “We believe everything is going to be fine, if you just don’t get discouraged and leave us.” They had lost one pastor after eleven months and another after five months. I had contacts from other churches that were looking for a pastor during those years but I was convinced that our church needed a pastor who would stay with them long enough to be a pastor. The church did not grow numerically, even though I was working as hard as I could, but with limited visible results. I often prayed, “Lord you have more at stake here than I. If You have not given up on them, why should I?” When the people began coming, making professions of faith, and being baptized, we were amazed. God was growing the church. At the same time, I am convinced that it took five or six years for the church to be strengthened, and that only He could strengthen a weakened church.

The Gospel Goes to Europe, 16:6-10

16:6 - WERE PREVENTED. *“They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia and were prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the message in the province of Asia.”* Paul and Silas, taking Timothy with them, moved from the area covered during the Paul’s first missionary journey (with Barnabas) and moved in a northwesterly direction. Robertson points out that provincial identity of the places mentioned here are hotly debated by those who hold to a northern Galatia position and those who hold to a southern Galatia theory [ATR], but we will not try to settle that here.

Some of the churches in the Province of Galatia may have been planted during this time (Gal. 1:2; 1 Cor. 16:1), but others may have been started as the Gospel was spread throughout the region as a result of the first missionary trip. We do know that the Galatian churches were already in existence at the time of the third missionary journey (18:23). Luke offers no details about the trip through this region.

“There are several explanations for the lack of a detailed description of Paul’s work at this time. Some think it was because Luke (the writer) had not yet joined the group. Others maintain that Luke was anxious to bring his written record to the time of Paul’s activities in Europe. Possibly the general theme of the development of the Christian church from Jerusalem to Rome made Paul’s short time in Phrygia and Galatia of relatively little importance in that context” [New Commentary on the Whole Bible, NT, QuickVerse Electronic Library - after this, NCWB].

16:7 -THEY TRIED. *“When they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.”* Paul, like the modern missionary, pastor, or evangelist, was filled with good intentions. He had a plan to serve the Lord, but he learns here that his plan was not the Lord’s

plan. He knew well the words of the Lord, recorded by Isaiah: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways.’ [This is] the Lord’s declaration. ‘**For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways**, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Is. 55:8-9, bold added for emphasis). Their desire to preach the Gospel in Roman province of Asia is commendable, but the Holy Spirit had other plans.

Though it may be more information than the average Bible student wants to read at this point, Robertson’s note is of interest, if only for the concluding statement:

“Now Bithynia is northeast of Mysia and north of Galatia (province). Clearly Luke means to say that Paul had, when hindered by the Holy Spirit from going west into Asia, gone north so as to come in front of Bithynia. This journey would take him directly through Phrygia and the North Galatian country (the real Gauls or Celts). This is, to my mind, the strongest argument for the North Galatian view in these verses Acts 16:6, 7. The grammar and the topography bring Paul right up to Bithynia (north of the old Galatia). It is verses Acts 16:6, 7 that make me pause before accepting the plausible arguments of Ramsay for the South Galatian theory. In itself the problem is nothing like so important or so determinative as he makes it. But **shall we smash Luke's grammar to pieces to bolster up a theory of criticism?**” [ATR, bold added by this writer].

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS. This special designation for the Spirit of God is both interesting and exciting. Robertson wrote, “The same Spirit who in verse Acts 16:6 had forbidden going into Asia now closed the door into Bithynia. This expression occurs nowhere else, but we have the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9) and the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Php 1:19)” [ATR]. We are reminded here that the Holy Spirit is in control of this missionary journey. We are also reminded of why the Book of Acts, often called The Acts of the Apostles, may be more appropriately called The Acts of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of Jesus would not permit them to go into Bithynia. “How these hindrances were accomplished is not stated. It may have been circumstances, a word of prophecy, a vision, or some other phenomenon. At any rate, God planned for people in” [The Bible Knowledge Commentary, QuickVerse Electronic Bible Library - after this, BKC].

There is a lesson here which the modern church, pastor, and missionary would do well to learn. Anyone who has been in the ministry very long is aware of the many “Outreach Programs” introduced by his denomination during his ministry. Many, such as the FAITH evangelism program developed by Bobby Welch, and taught throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, is an example of a very good program. There have been many others. Rick Warren introduced the Purpose Driven Church, which was immediately adopted by various churches and denominations and many continue to praise it, while others split over their application of the program. There are many advocates, but some opponents of this program. Warren Smith, *DECEIVED ON PURPOSE: The New Age implications of the Purpose-Driven Church*, is one of the stronger critics.

My purpose in neither to condone or condemn here, but to illustrate how men and women of God, with the best of intentions, may make a fundamental mistake in seeking to serve the Lord and win the lost. Let us take two hypothetical churches. Church A, led by pastor who is committed to winning his community for the Lord, attends an evangelism conference and learns from the vice-president over evangelism for his convention that his denomination has a newer and better evangelism program than any the world has ever seen before this one. They have tested the program and churches that used this method saw phenomenal results. The baptism numbers proved the program was a gift from God, and every pastor who really cares about lost people will promote this program - all at the same time. The pastor of Church A goes home and presents the program and asks his people to vote to implement the program, and then asks the Holy Spirit to bless the effort.

Now, consider church B, whose pastor is just as committed, but they begin with a conviction that they are not reaching the lost of their community as they should. They begin praying that the Holy Spirit will lead them and motivate them to reach out to the community. They may adopt an existing outreach program, modify an existing program, or develop one that is applicable to their community.

What is the difference? One church may adopt a plan and ask the Lord to bless their plan. The other church begins by seeking God's outreach plan with assurance that if they obey Him, He will bless it. Christians, including church leaders, have often demonstrated a disturbing tendency: they see a pastor or writer whose "ministry" (i.e. program, method) is producing phenomenal results (usually manifested in nickels and noses in reports and the denominational journals), and they become so focused on that man, or his program, that they are in danger of taking their eyes off the Lord.

16:8 - TO TROAS. *"So, bypassing Mysia, they came down to Troas."* The city of Troas was located on the northeast shore of the Aegean Sea. It was the scene of the Trojan War. "This city, named Alexandria Troas after Alexander the Great, was the seaport of Mysia, though a Roman colony and not counted as part of either Asia or Bithynia. New Ilium, on the site of the old Troy, was four miles farther north. It was the place to take ship for Philippi. Twice again Paul will be here (2Co 2:12; Acts 20:6)" [ATR].

SPECIAL NOTE: When students take a class in history, they may be challenged by names, dates, and events to the point that they do not make connections between dates, individuals, and events. Dr. William R. Cooper of Middlesex, England spent twenty-five years researching the table of nations in Genesis 10-11, with an eye toward determining for himself whether or not the Book of Genesis is true or just a myth. He reasoned that if we have all these names and nations recorded in Genesis, there should be some corroborating evidence in the records of nations in the Middle East and possibly in other places. He not only found that the descendants of Shem had maintained valuable records, but that six royal line of pagan Europe could trace their lines back to Noah through Japheth, and that was before the birth of Christ, and before Christian missionaries arrived on those shores to edit, create, or influence the genealogies.

Dr. Cooper writes:

“Anchises, known to us from other histories, fled with his son Aeneas, from the burning ruins of Troy, and they made their way to the land that nowadays is called Italy, settling with their people on the banks of the river Tiber around what was later to become Rome. The indigenous population was ruled over by Latinus who received Aeneas and his people with kindness and hospitality, in return for which Aeneas defeated Latinus’s foe, Turnus, king of Rutuli. He then married the daughter of Latinus, Lavinia, from which union came Aeneas Silvius who later rose to rule over all the tribes of Italy. But it was through the line of his brother Ascanius that the royal lineage was presently to be perpetuated, and of this line was born Ascanius’s son Silvius. Silvius seduced an unnamed niece of his grandfather’s wife Lavinia, and it was from their union that his son Brutus was born. The mother of Brutus died whilst giving birth to him, and when he was a lad of fifteen years, Brutus accidentally shot his father dead with an arrow whilst out hunting. For having caused the deaths of both his parents, thus fulfilling a prophecy concerning him, Brutus was exiled out of Italy, the royal line of Aeneas passing into the hands of another. And it is at this point that the history of Briton as a distinct nation begins” [Cooper, Bill, *After the Flood*, New Wine Press, England, 1995, p. 70].

Cooper explains that Brutus and his followers came across “another group of Trojans led by Corneleus, who were likewise escaping abroad from their captors” [COOPER: 71].

“They combined forces and landed in Gaul with Brutus being acclaimed as their overall king. There they fought and defeated the Picts under king Goffar (Koffarffichti - Goffar the Pict - in the Welch). The Trojans again set sail, and came ashore at Totnes in Devon at some time in the 12th century B. C. The land and its people were subsequently to derive their names from Brutus. Then Brutus founded the city of Trinovantum, or New Troy, which was later to become the city of London.

Brutus, the first king of the Britons, reigned over his people in this land for twenty three years, i.e. from ca 1104-1081 B. C.” [COOPER: 71].

All this was happening as the Period of Judges was winding down in the Land of Promise, almost two centuries before David was inspired to write of the coming Savior. Tribes relocated, and nations were founded, carrying with them a blood line, religion, culture, and many characteristics that would be identified with them. As mentioned already, the Celtic influence on the region identified as Galatia, made them a ready target for evangelism, but less inclined to discipleship, or training in sound doctrine than, say the people of Ephesus.

16:9 - A VISION. “*During the night a vision appeared to Paul: a Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, ‘Cross over to Macedonia and help us!’*” We find mention of visions eleven times in Acts (and once in Matthew 17:9). In my notes on Acts, written around 1974, I find the statement that the Macedonians were related to the Greeks, but they were more hardy and less civilized. I still find it interesting to consider that distinction. Under, Philip (360-336 . B.) and his son Alexander the Great (336-323), the Greeks became a major power, conquering the once mighty

Persian Empire. They conquered nations as far away as India. Macedonia came under Roman control in 147 B. C. and made a Roman province, with Thessalonica as its capitol. In September, 2007, General Dutch Shoffner (Retired) sent me a map of a section of Afghanistan. The region where American and coalition forces have looked for Osama bin Laden for seven years is shown on the ariel photograph, along with a note that the peaks are 15,000 feet above sea level, with the foothills at about 7,000 feet. General Shoffner added a note in one message that surprised me. He said that there are remote people groups in those mountains that still show the influence of Alexander the Great and that there is a Greek influence on their culture.

MACEDONIAN MAN. In this vision, Paul saw a man from Macedonia “pleading with him, ‘Cross over to Macedonia and help us.’” Bible students have speculated as to the identity of the Macedonian who pleaded with Paul to come over and help the people of Macedonia. Some have suggested that it might even have been Philip of Macedon, but such a suggestion is strained at best. The man in the vision identifies himself with Macedonia and that is all we need to know.

16:10 - WE. *“After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to evangelize them.”* Paul and his companions were obedient to the call “he had seen in the vision.” They “immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia.” This reminds us of the use of the word “immediately” in the Gospels. When God commands, we should always obey immediately. The late Dr. Jan Mercer and her husband Andy, were visiting in our home a number of years ago when they subject turned to seminaries and young men and women called to serve the Lord. Dr. Mercer made the statement that we would be surprised at the number of people who had graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth who never left town. They found jobs in the Dallas, Fort Worth area and they are “waited for the right opportunity to come along.” For some, there may be a good reason. Let us pray that some are not still there because they have observed the big churches in that area and they are now waiting for something that matches the image they have of themselves. One friend told me that a former roommate of his was called to a small rural church, but before long he had moved on to a position with a large denominational entity. It seems that his wife had told him she would continue to live with him if he had some job like that, but if he remained in the pastorate she was leaving him.

Bill Pace was saved in his mid-thirties, committed himself to winning souls for the Lord, enrolled at Chriswell Bible College for training, and then served on church staffs as an outreach minister. Then, after a visit to China, he sensed that the Lord was calling him to move there. At age 65, Bill “retired” and moved to China, where he has taught Conversational English for six years. I recently arranged for friends at Broadman and Holman Outreach International to send me several cases of the Gospel of John in the new Mandarin translation (Mandarin and HCSB parallel) for Bill to take back to China, or have sent to him there. At age 65 Bill felt the call to go to China and responded immediately!

Luke writes, “we”, not “they”. “The first of the **“we sections”** in Acts begins here, indicating that Luke joined the party of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The “how, why, and precise location

of Luke's joining the group are left unstated" [BKC], however, it is the opinion of this writer that he joined them at Troas. Paul may have come into contact with Luke in a medical capacity, seeking relief from any after effects of the illness he mentions in the Epistle to the Galatians. We may follow the ministry of Luke, the godly the Physician, who often traveled with Paul, by following noting the pronoun "we" from this point forward in Acts. The plural is dropped in 17:1 and resumed in 20:5.

MACEDONIA. Luke writes, "We immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to evangelize them." The four missionaries responded to the vision "immediately", as one should when led by the Holy Spirit. The late Dr. Leo Eddleman once told me that when any young man talked with him about trying to determine how one knows the Lord is calling him into the ministry he reminded him that the word "call" implies communication, and "it is inconceivable that the Lord would call someone and then keep it a secret." Any young person reading this might well wish the Lord would give him a vision to confirm his call, but one who has been called by the Holy Spirit will receive affirmation daily if he or she is faithful to that call. That is a ministry of the Holy Spirit.

This marks a new "a significant turning point in the early history of the gospel. By going over to Macedonia, Paul would begin the gospel work in Europe" [NCWB]. It is a highwater mark in the history of Christianity, and a giant step in implementation of The Great Commission (taking the Gospel unto "the uttermost parts of the world"). Every person in Europe, America, Canada, Central America, South America, and Australia can look back on this move with a sense of gratitude. Jesus had commanded His followers to go unto all the world with the Gospel, winning the lost and making disciples of them. This was a new beginning in the implementation of the Great Commission. And these four missionaries are as obedient to our Lord's command as any person who heard it in person.

Before long, the center of the spread of the Gospel would be shifting to Europe. The first center had been Jerusalem, and then the center was Antioch of Syria. In time, it would be Rome, and then the center would shift to the west.

Sadly, over a period of many generations the "church" became an institution, complete with organization, hierarchy, influence, and political power. And during the reign of Constantine, Christianity was named the official religion of the Roman Empire. We can be sure this was not surprise to those at the top of the hierarchy. The cross, which had been both the symbol and the instrument of martyrdom, now became a symbol of religion.

When I first heard my high school teacher, L.C. Caffey, mention Constantine's edict, I thought this must have been one of the brightest days in human history. Little did I realize that it was one of the darkest. When the church was persecuted it grew, even as it grows phenomenally today in China, where it is reported that ten thousand people are saved every day, and that in a land where every effort has been made by the Communists to wipe our religion. When the world ceases to persecute the church and begins to accommodate it, the church is in trouble, primarily because it has already ceased to confront the world with sin and the judgment to come and begun to try to get along with the world.

Lydia's Conversion

16:11 - SETTING SAIL. *“Then, setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis...”* Secular historians may insist that the Gospel writers were just that - Gospel writers, not historians. I would only point to Luke, a medical doctor with the scientific background, who was not only inspired to write the Gospel that bears his name, but also The Book of Acts, the book of history in the New Testament. Over the past century, many Bible students have discovered that Luke was indeed an historian. For example, it has also been observed that he knew the language of the sea and used it freely, but as a landlubber rather than a sailor. Here he writes, as one familiar with sailing in that day, “setting sail, we ran a straight course to Samothrace.”

“This island was on the Thracian Coast, north of Troas and slightly to the west. The wind must have been blowing from the south or southeast to bring them there so soon, since the current is usually strong in the opposite direction (cf. 20:6). **“(A)nd the next day to Neapolis’**—This was the seaport for the city of Philippi. Neapolis was 65 miles from Samothrace and 10 miles from Philippi” [NCWB].

Ancient sea captains knew the waters of the seas they sailed and the harbors to which they had to sail. They knew when to sail and when not to sail, as to seasons, but were often caught in storms no one could predict far in advance at the time. I would recommend highlighting references Luke makes to sailing in Acts.

16:12 - TO PHILIPPI. *“(A)nd from there to Philippi, a Roman colony, which is a leading city of that district of Macedonia. We stayed in that city for a number of days.”* Philippi was a “a leading city”, but it was neither the biggest nor the most important. Thessalonica was the capitol and Amphipolis was larger. However, in Philippi, the missionaries faced a miniature of Rome. The people spoke Latin. Philip of Macedon had founded the city on the ruins of an earlier town (Crenides) in the Fourth Century B. C. His son Alexander would conquer much of the known world in an incredible conquest that fulfilled the Lord's purpose and the promise handed down to prophets like Daniel, who prophesied in exile in Babylon. God had raised up Assyria, which He replaced with Babylon, which He would replace, in order, with Persia, Greece, and Rome before the coming of the Messiah, who would establish an eternal kingdom.

Paul had now come to the town that once had boasted of Alexander. Now, a greater than Alexander had come to Philippi, and a greater conquest was under way. There was a time when I would lie awake at night and recall what, in my mind, were the great moments in human history, and the great historical characters (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Martin Luther, George Washington - you get the idea). Jesus was always the pivotal character in my history exercise. I would suggest that we put a book mark right here in our Bible. This is one of the defining moments in human history. The Gospel goes to Europe! God made the call, overruling

Paul's initial plans to move into a different province.

In the commentary by this writer, *UNDEFEATED! Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble* (Brentwood, 1998), I included the following notes on the city of Philippi:

Background material for studies in Philippians is found in the diary ("we") sections of the Book of Acts, beginning in Acts 16. There we see four missionaries entering the pagan city of Philippi. Little could anyone who saw them enter the city that day have realized the impact they would have on that city and the world.

Philippi was named for (and by) Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. Philip had developed a great military machine and united the various peoples of that part of the world. He secured his son's commitment to Greek culture by enlisting Aristotle to teach him. By spreading that Greek culture Alexander had determined to a great extent the environment of the early church.

In 356 B. C. Philip changed the name of a new settlement to Philippi. In 41 B. C. a famous battle was fought outside the city (on the plains of Philippi). That battle had determined to some extent the direction of the Roman Empire and the context in which the events of the New Testament transpired. The battle was between Antony and Octavian on one side, and Brutus and Cassius (conspirators against Caesar) on the other.

Philippi was a Roman colony, but it was not a great city like Rome, Athens, or Ephesus. It was, however, a cosmopolitan city. Lying across the great Ignatian Way which linked the eastern and the western parts of the empire, Philippi was very important to Rome. Soldiers, merchants, and other travelers passed through the city regularly.

Philippi was a pagan city, with the people worshiping many and various gods. Emperor worship was also very strong. But there was no synagogue there, probably because the Jewish population was very small. This meant that there was no Old Testament background which the missionaries might use to introduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This was the world into which the four missionaries, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke, entered. The important thing for this study, however, is not to know about the city of Philippi, but to know about Paul and his message. It is significant that Paul visited Philippi on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36ff). The purpose of the second missionary trip was to strengthen the churches started on the first journey, and to establish new churches. Paul's purpose in evangelism was not to win and abandon, but to win and develop, to see new converts grow into Christian maturity. He would never forget these new believers, nor they him.

Paul and Silas had begun this missionary journey from Antioch of Syria, Silas having replaced Barnabas who accompanied Paul on the first great missionary trip. When Paul and Barnabas could not agree on John Mark, who had left them on the first missionary venture, they decided to go their separate ways. Paul and Silas visited churches established on the first journey to encourage and assist them. They were joined by Timothy at Lystra and by Luke at Troas. The missionaries were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go into Asia (modern Turkey). Paul received a vision from the Lord while at Troas of a man from Macedonia asking him to come over and help.

Philippi represents a new step in the spread of the Gospel. Moving into Europe, emotional barriers were often more challenging than geographical barriers. Christianity clashed with the paganism of the Gentiles; the Judeo-Christian culture clashed with Roman culture. There was no synagogue in Philippi, possibly because officials were determined to keep the city as purely Roman in dress, culture, and politics as possible. Another possibility is that there may not have been enough Jewish men (heads of families) in Philippi to support a synagogue.

It did not take long for the first controversy to occur after Paul and the others began to witness to the people of the city. Luke records the encounter in Acts 16:16-19. We soon find Paul and Silas in jail and the jailer asking, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). They did not say, "You don't know enough to be saved," or, "You don't have a proper background." They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). If Paul could say that to the jailer in Philippi, we can say that to anyone in the world today. We might add that this is the only way any person is ever saved. Beginning with the conversion of the jailer and those of his household, and the conversion of Lydia and those of her household, a great church was established in Philippi (see Acts 16:14ff).

Paul visited Philippi at least two more times. First, at the conclusion of his work in Ephesus, he went to Philippi after Titus failed to arrive from Corinth when he was expected. The purpose for this trip was to Philippi and Corinth was to collect an offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. While he was in Philippi Titus arrived, having traveled overland from Achaia, to give him a good report on his ministry in Corinth. Following this report, Paul wrote his second inspired epistle to the church at Corinth. In the Corinthian epistles he mentions two (extra-biblical) letters he wrote to the church.

Many texts on stewardship come from remarks Paul made about the Christians in Macedonia (2 Cor. 8 and 9). These saints were extremely poor but they begged Paul for the privilege of taking part in the offering. If our churches had that attitude today, we too would be turning the world upside down for Christ (their

enemies in Thessalonica complained, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too" (Acts 17:6b).

The next visit to Philippi is recorded in Acts 20:4-6. After going to Corinth to collect the offering from the concerned believers in Achaia (Greece) for the suffering saints in Jerusalem, he visited the church at Philippi again on the way to Jerusalem, where he was arrested in Jerusalem and taken, after two years in prison in Caesarea, to Rome [SANDERS: 10-14].

A ROMAN COLONY. The city of Philippi was distinctly, and proudly Roman. "Anthony and Octavian sent some of their veterans there following the battle of Philippi in 42 b.c. As a Roman colony, it had all the privileges of Roman citizenship, such as exemption from scourging and arrest, as well as the privilege of appeal from the local magistrate to the emperor" [NCWB]. In Philippi, the dress and lifestyle were distinctly Roman. We must remember that this was the headquarters for the Roman garrison that has been stationed there to protect the empire from the "barbarians" to the east who might attack that part of the Roman Empire.

16:13 - ON THE SABBATH. *"On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate by the river, where we thought there was a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women gathered there."* As noted in earlier volumes in this series from THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK (the umbrella term for all of my verse by verse studies from the Bible), the Holy Spirit had given Paul a missionary strategy, to which he adhered whenever possible. He followed the major Roman roads to the major population centers where he went to the local synagogue on the Sabbath day. When invited, he proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, stressing that He was the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies. He had come to earth in human form, suffered, died on the cross for our sins, and was raised from the dead, the ultimate victor over sins, death, and hell. When forced out of the synagogue, which usually happened when the Jewish leaders rejected the message of the Resurrection, Paul would turn to the Gentiles, taking with him both Jews and Gentiles who believed in Jesus Christ. He would then lead them in organizing a church which would continue to spread the Gospel after he had moved on to another area.

At Philippi, there was no synagogue. This was a Roman military garrison town and there were too few Jewish heads of families there to meet the qualifications for a synagogue. Ten Jewish males were required for a synagogue [BKC]. When the Sabbath day came, Paul and his companions went outside the gate where they found "a place of prayer" by the riverside. "Since there was no synagogue in Philippi (due to the small Jewish population), the women in that city met by a river for prayer. This was an ancient Jewish custom (see Ezra 8:14, 21-23; Ps. 137; Ezek. 1:1; Dan. 8:2)" [NCWB].

SPOKE TO THE WOMEN. Luke says, "We sat down and spoke to the women gathered there." This is some contrast between the scene at the well in Samaria when the woman at the well was shocked that Jesus would speak to her in public. His disciples had also been shocked. This was a very simple beginning of the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

throughout Europe, but we will soon learn that this meeting was far from incidental, or insignificant.

Many Commentaries seem to skip over an interesting point here. What were these women doing there by the riverside? Were they Jewish women who had gathered to pray, or were they business women who were involved in the manufacture and marketing of the cloth mentioned in the following verse? An answer might be suggested in the words, “where we thought there was a place of prayer.” This may mean that they were simply looking for a private place where they might pray, or it may imply that they had learned that these women met there to pray every Sabbath (since the imperfect is used - we kept on thinking), or it may mean that they hoped to find someone who worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This meeting might have shocked those Judaizers who would follow Paul into Galatia to undermine his message to the churches there. If they would go to such lengths to demand that Gentiles be circumcised (become proselytes to Judaism) before they could be saved, what would they say about these missionaries witnessing to these women? Those who declare the Bible to be a sexist book should pay close attention to this encounter, within the context of the First Century.

A very distinguished young lady, an attorney who had only recently been named to an important position in the federal legal system, smiled when she was introduced to me by my son Mark. He had given her a copy of my commentary on Philippians (*UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*). She stepped closer and said, “I really enjoyed your book. I normally don’t like Paul, but I liked your book.” With a knowing look, she added, “Paul was strictly a product of his own time, wasn’t he?” I assured her that even though Paul may have been a product of his own time, the Scripture he wrote was a product of the mind of the Holy Spirit.

If the modern feminist movement can convince young women that the Pauline Epistles are sexist books that discriminate against women, Satan will have cheated those women out of many blessings that God has made available to them. God includes women, and He uses women. He makes distinctions in the roles of men and women, but never with regards to worth. Women may have occupied a more important position in Macedonia than in Asia and the Middle East.

I can think of few things that would be more tragic than for a feminist mother to focus her daughter’s eyes on her perceived discrimination against women in Paul’s writings rather than the salvation Jesus provides to all, Jew and Gentile, male and female, without any distinction. Millions today crusade against slavery, an abominable evil, which existed two hundred years ago in America, but **cannot care less about slavery in Africa or Southeast Asia today. Right now!** Politicians in Washington join church leaders in condemning any and every thing concerning that evil, oppressive system, but when have you ever heard some politician stand in the Senate or the House and deliver a passionate condemnation against the Muslims in Africa who kill adults who become Christians and

then sell their children into slavery? Many feminist reject the Bible because, in their mind, it is a sexist book, and in doing so reject the only One who can set them free for eternity.

16:14 - LYDIA. *“A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was spoken by Paul.”* One person who responded and believed in Jesus was a woman named Lydia and she was from Thyatira, a city in the province of Lydia. Some have suggested that Lydia may have had a store in Philippi, but she may have marketed her valuable purple cloth from there.

PURPLE CLOTH. Thyatira was famous for this material. “This purple color came from a shellfish, the murex, or from the root of a plant” [BKC]. Thyatira was known for its commerce in Asia Minor). “There was a great demand for this fabric as it was used on the official toga at Rome and in Roman colonies. We still use the term ‘royal purple.’ See on Luke 16:19. Evidently Lydia was a woman of some means to carry on such an important enterprise from her native city. She may have been a freed-woman, since racial names were often borne by slaves” [ATR].

THYATIRA. Thyatira was a wealthy city in the northern part of Lydia, a country located in the province of Asia, south of Mysia. Lyida may have been named for the country of her birth.

WORSHIPED GOD. Lydia “**was a worshiper of God**, a term used for Gentiles (e.g., Cornelius [Acts 10:2] and those in Thessalonica [17:4] and Athens [17:17]) who were not proselytes to Judaism but who did worship Yahweh. Even so, they were not in the New Testament church, the body of Christ” [BKC]. This being the case, there may have been Jewish women there who had introduced her to the God of Israel.

THE LORD OPENED HER HEART. The modern day Christian may marvel that the Lord opened the heart of this very successful business women (which I infer from the fact that one of the great churches of the First Century was probably begun in her home). If I can convey one basic truth in these volumes on the Book of Acts it is that there is absolutely no blessing, no power, and no presence of the Lord that was known to those early saints that has been denied to the modern day believer - only different manifestations. One may ask, “What about all the signs and wonders?” They were few and far between, relatively speaking, apart from the ministry of those early apostles and missionaries. We have every advantage today. They had the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but the testimony of those who were led of the Spirit was subjective, whereas the Scripture, which was inspired by the Holy Spirit, is absolute and inerrant. It is the living Word of the Living God.

Certain modern evangelists and pastors are quick to announce that “God told me to tell you thus and so.” My response is that when different people tell us that God is giving them contradictory information, we must go to the sure and certain Word of God. The Holy Spirit miraculously inspired every word of Scripture, He has miraculously preserved it, and He will miraculously illuminate our hearts to help us to understand it and make an application in our daily lives.

Let us understand one thing here: the only way any heart is opened is for God to open it. We do not “find God”, God finds us. We do not discover God, God reveals Himself to us through His creation, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and through His Word. We have a problem in post-Christian America today. The Gospel has been watered down. Sunday School, once the Bible teaching and outreach arm of the church, has become Fun-day School for many. There was a time when people were convinced that if you could get a lost person to attend a Sunday School class for ten Sundays he would be saved. Why? Because he would hear the Word of God taught in an environment in which the Holy Spirit could and would work in his heart. Today, young adults bring their children and young people to Sunday School and to the morning worship service, but instead of preparing for worship and Bible study, their focus is on what they will do as soon as they get out of church, where they will eat, with whom they will visit, and whatever recreation they have planned to fill the afternoon. They never give a thought to the Sunday evening service. Professing Christians are so focused on themselves that they have very little time for God. According to recent Baptist Press releases, a shocking number of Southern Baptist churches are showing no growth at all. It might be added that some of those are rural churches that are going through the process of urbanization. It is also a concern that some “mega-churches” are “marketing” their church at the expense of many smaller churches in the area. I once spoke with the pastor of one of those churches that had “marketed” their church all over the area, showing no concern for any other pastor’s church field, and according to some, little respect for other pastors. I did not live in his immediate area but knew many who did. He asked me about a man I knew who had been a member of his church for a number of years. It was interesting that he did not know that this highly respect attorney, a man who had taught a Bible class in his church for several years, had moved to another church three months earlier.

My effort here is neither to promote or condemn any “mega-church” that faithfully proclaims the Word of God. My point is that if you cannot see signs and wonders today in America, look to China, where, according to some reports, ten thousand people are being saved every day. Some churches in America major in miracles of healing, but sadly, some of those churches do not major on sound doctrine. Where should we look for signs and wonders today in America? I would suggest, rather than looking to some television program in which someone gets a “word of knowledge” that someone out there somewhere in America is having back trouble, look at the changed lives of true believers. Justification is miraculous, and so is Sanctification. Study the Word of God and give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to speak to your heart and you will know the presence and power of God in your own life. You will not have to be a spectator looking in on signs and wonders by means of the television.

PAY ATTENTION. From the words, “The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was spoken by Paul”, we must conclude that Lydia heard, believed, and was born again there by the riverside that day.

16:15 - SHE AND HER HOUSEHOLD. *“After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.”* In Acts 2:38, Peter commanded all who heard the Gospel to repent (third person,

plural, active, imperative), and all who did repent were commanded to be baptized (second person, singular, passive, imperative). We must repent to be saved (implying faith), but only those who believe are commanded to be baptized. The mode of baptism would have been immersion, as stressed by the Greek word meaning to take beneath the surface and bring forth again, thus a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord (see Romans 6:3-5).

STAY IN MY HOME. The head of a household had influence over the household in religious matters and this influence was exercised by Lydia. The note that she “urged” them implies that there was some hesitation on the part of the missionaries. Knowing Paul, he would have been very careful in accepting such an invitation. Lydia must have had a large house with enough servants to take care of the needs of her guests. As a successful business woman, she may have had guests on a regular basis. It is the conviction of many students of the Word that the church at Philippi was founded in her home, and they may have continued to meet there for some time.

Paul and Silas in Prison

16:16 - ON OUR WAY TO PRAY. *“Once, as we were on our way to prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit of prediction and made a large profit for her owners by fortune-telling.”* Barnes notes that we are not told if this was the same day as the conversion of Lydia [BARNES, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources], however, the word, “once” may suggest that some time had lapsed between the invitation to stay in the home of Lydia and this incident. Does “on our way to prayer” imply a regular time and place of prayer? Only if some time had lapsed since the conversion of Lydia. Was this again down by the riverside, in the home of Lydia, or was there now a set place of prayer?

SLAVE GIRL. According to some reports, there were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, but this slave girl was apparently more valuable to her owners (plural) than the average slave. One usually thinks of one owner when thinking of slaves, but this slave girl brought “a large profit for her owners by fortune-telling.” She had a “spirit of divination” (NASB), from Pythian Apollo.

“The English words, **a spirit by which she predicted the future**, translate two Greek words, “a spirit, a python.” This concept goes back to the Greek city of Delphi where the god Apollo was believed to be embodied in a python snake. The original priestess at Delphi was purported to be possessed by Apollo and thereby able to predict the future; therefore anyone possessed by the python spirit could foretell coming events. No doubt an actual demon gave such a person predictive powers. Demons took advantage of people’s worship of false gods (cf. 17:23; 1 Cor. 10:20)” [BKC].

This girl brought in “a large profit” to her owners. They had no concern for the girl at all. She was simply a piece of property who brought them money. She was worth a lot of money to them, and they did not care that she was also a slave to Satan.

In any case like this, one needs to try to determine whether there really is a demonic spirit involved, or the work of a magician or simply a fake. In my study on The Gospel According to Luke (PastorLife.com), I ask the question, where have all the demons gone? Jesus saw them everywhere He went, but He did not get rid of all of them! Where are they? Interestingly, some people see demons everywhere and other Christians see no evidence of demonic activity at all. There are evangelists who announce that they see demon possessed people in services all the time. I have had people tell me that someone who sat in the congregation was “demonic” or “satanic”. They may have had a reason for saying so, and while I did not plant that thought with them, I did not argue the point.

A new volume would be required to deal with the subject of demonic possession, but it should be sufficient to state that demons are real, and possession does occur. Occult activity was real in the First Century and it is real today. Moody Adams included the following testimony in his MOODYNEWS newsletter of Sept. 5, 2007:

CONVERTED WITCH DOCTOR BECOMES AN EFFECTIVE EVANGELIST

Mullai Ruman, our Bible Skills Institute Director in Yei, Sudan, writes about the Witch Doctor a BSI student won after visiting him for 10 days, “I took my new disciple along with me, the former witch doctor. I want to tell all of you that God really know His timing and I think He has really chosen this man for such a time as this.

“This man is bringing people to Christ by telling his testimonies alone. He was a well known traditional healer for that is how they use to call him. In his testimony, he said ‘I believed that Jesus called me because as soon as I started to experience him calling me all associates (the demonic forces failed to come to work with me as usual).

“It was so strange and unusual he exclaimed ‘I didn’t understand it from the very beginning till the day I declared totally that I want Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior then I understood that Christ Jesus has full authority even on the demonic beings.

“His testimony brought 48 people to the Lord in repentance on that Sunday we fellowshipped at Yugupe central Baptist church.

— Moody News: 11715 Bricksome Ave. Baton Rouge, LA 70816

ILLUSTRATION: My mother told, on rare occasions, the story which I share here. When she was a young girl she shared a bedroom with her oldest sister. She had another sister and a brother, but her older sister took care of her. She even took her to school with her when she was a preschooler, though this may have been an occasional thing. There came a day when she and her sister were required to give up their bedroom for a period of time when their mother’s baby sister Maureen

contracted tuberculosis and needed a place to stay until her death. Today, I would have asked a lot more questions. I discovered later that she lived in St. Louis with her husband, and she had a job there. No one ever mentioned her husband to me. Everyone who knew her spoke of her beauty and personality. Her father was a Baptist preacher, but I do not recall anyone talking about her relationship with Jesus Christ. I assumed that she was a committed Christian.

Maureen died after some period of time, and the family had the room disinfected and then let it air out for some time before my mother and her sister moved back into the room. On their first night back in the room, my mother said she suddenly awoke and looked toward the foot of the bed and “Maureen was standing there.” She wanted to be sure she was not dreaming, so she said, “I pinched myself really hard. I was not dreaming.” The “apparition” did not move and had not spoken when her sister suddenly said, “Light the lamp.” Mother said, “No, you light it.” She was looking at “Maureen” and afraid to move. Her sister insisted, but Mother continued insist that her older sister light the lamp. After several exchanges, her sister said, ‘My side is hurting, light the lamp!’ She reached over and found a match and struck it. “Maureen” disappeared as soon as the match was lighted. Immediately, her sister sprang up in bed and pointed at the foot of the bed and cried, “Maureen was standing right there!”

It was an amusing story, but what had happened? My mother might have been confused, she may have been deceived by a dream and pinched herself in her sleep, or she may have seen some kind of apparition. The one thing that is totally out of the question is that she lied about what she saw. The two girls saw the same thing at the same time. How do you explain that? Some family assumed that it was Maureen’s spirit. Mother had no explanation. Her mother’s father was a pastor, but she had married a man who was not a Christian. My maternal grandfather was a mix of English, German, Irish, and Choctaw Indian. Each ethnic group had been exposed to superstition and possible occult practices. In fact, there were a number of other stories of haunts or apparitions told within the family.

I reflected on my mother’s story years later and wondered if there might have been an attempt by some demonic spirit to possess a young girl that night, but her sister’s cry “broke the spell” and Mother never had an experience like that again. I wish I had asked questions about her experience, but I waited too late. She had relatives who assumed it was Maureen’s spirit. I totally reject that. My father was amused at the suggestion and that affirmed what I believed when I was very young. I still have but one explanation, and that is the possibility that some demonic presence sought to influence or possess a young girl, her older sister, or both girls. The fact that the two were together and her sister cried out ended what ever it was. Years ago, Kurt Koch, a German writer, examined thousands of cases involving the occult. He evaluated reports from the position of a theologian, a medical doctor, and a psychologist. He mentioned aspects of demonic activity I had not considered, including generational possession. He mentioned one man whose family had migrated to Brazil from Germany, and there were times when some spell came over the man and he spoke in an ancient German dialect, and though he man was a peasant, during these times he spoke as a very articulate German physician. Another man whose family had migrated to South America (as I recall) would, under some spell, speak in Old Russian. I have discovered that modern Russians cannot speak Old

Russian. My friend Dutch Shoffner (retired three star general) bought an Old Russian New Testament in Moscow during the Cold War, and the man who was with him at the time had a PhD in Russian History but he could not read the Old Russian.

APPLICATION. I believe in both psychological illnesses that enslave individuals, and in demon possession. I do not believe a demon can possess one who is already a slave of Jesus Christ, but even a believer can be oppressed by demonic influences and he may become obsessed by demonic activities and influences. I sometimes wonder if I may be looking at evidence of demonic influences when I see obscene the behavior of some young actors, actresses, or hard rock musicians. It seems probable that I am witnessing demonic possession when I watch television and see people fill the streets in the Middle East, shouting, throwing stones, firing weapons, and demanding the death of all Jews and Christians. Without a doubt, I am witnessing satanic influences.

I do not worry about individuals who may be possessed as much as I am concerned about the evidence that the prince of this world is taking over the entertainment industry, influencing the news media, and asserting influence on politicians in Washington. Laura Ingraham made the statement on her radio program on September 10, 2007, that we are witnessing the pornification of America today. Satan has enslaved tens of millions of souls in America alone if I interpret the evidence correctly. America has become more profane, vulgar, immoral, and violent in recent years. The biggest threat we are facing in America is not the possession of an occasional individual by Satan as much as the satanic control he exercises over the masses.

FOR THOUGHT: When Jesus, following His baptism, withdrew to the wilderness where He was tempted (tested) by Satan for forty days, the devil offered to give Him the world if He would worship or serve him. Jesus rebuked the devil. Six hundred years later, Satan made the same deal with a man named Mohammed, and that man created a new religion and began his satanic conquests. Islamists today are committed to a world wide Islamic regime. They want to kill all Jews and either convert or kill all Christians. The prince of this world is still offering the world to those who follow him.

One report posted October 5, 2007 by WordNetDaily makes the point (here is an excerpt):

“Rampaging Muslims have killed 10 Christians, injured 61 others, destroyed nine churches and displaced more than 500 people in northern Nigeria, according to eyewitnesses – all because Muslim high school students claimed a Christian student had drawn a cartoon of Islam’s prophet, Muhammad, on the wall of the school’s mosque.

The rampage occurred Sept. 28 in the town of Tudun Wada Dankadai, in Nigeria’s northern state of Kano.

According to [Compass Direct News](#), which specializes in reporting on Christian persecution worldwide, there are 1,500 students at the high school, called

Government College-Tudun Wada Dankadai, of which only 14 are Christians, and only seven of those actually live on campus. The Christian students at the school insist no one ever saw the alleged cartoon, and furthermore that no one in the tiny minority group of Christians would have dared such a feat, especially during Ramadan.

"How can we take such a risk when we know that we are a minority and cannot stand [against] them?' Christian student Shehu Bawa told Compass. 'This is a lie created to have a reason to attack us" [WorldNetDaily.com, 10-05-07].

16:17 - FOLLOWED PAUL. *“As she followed Paul and us she cried out, ‘These men are the slaves of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.’”* They encountered the girl while on the way to a place of prayer, but she continued to follow Paul, crying out to the citizens of Philippi about the missionaries. Luke writes that this young girl continued to follow (present participle) Paul “and us”, shouting out to everyone within her hearing, “These men are slaves of the Most High God.” They were indeed slaves of the Most High God, but the frenzied cries of this demon possessed girl would only hinder their ministry.

This was a Roman garrison town, a Roman colony that worshiped a whole pantheon of gods, not a Jewish community in which the Creator was worshiped as “the Most High God”, but a pagan city in which many gods were worshiped. “The Most High God” was a title used by Gentiles for their gods, but it would be interesting to know if this girl was using the title in that pagan sense, or if she was only mocking with her cynical tirades.

SLAVES. The girl hounded their steps, shouting, “These men are slaves of the Most High God.” The slave of Satan recognized the slaves of Jesus Christ. Just as demons in Israel had recognized Jesus, demons in Philippi recognized Jesus in Paul and his companions. They understood that, just as this girl was a slave to her owners, and a slave to the demons, these Christian missionaries were the slaves of Jesus Christ. The use of the slave as a metaphor for a child of God in the first century is understandable (with a reported sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire), and the HCSB uses correctly translates the word slave. The Christian is one who has been bought with a price, and as such he or she belongs to Jesus Christ, the One who paid the price for his or her salvation.

THE WAY OF SALVATION. Everywhere they went, she followed them, shouting, that these men were “proclaiming to you the way of salvation.” That is exactly what they were doing, but this was an alien concept to the pagan population of Philippi and the demonic girl was entertaining the crowds with her shouts, which she may well have been reinforcing with her body language, dancing, and pointing at them. Men are almost always at a disadvantage when a woman mocks them. They have to be very careful how they respond. First, they do not want to be seen as being discourteous or abusive toward a woman. In the second place, there is nothing Satan would love more than to plant the thought in the minds of spectators that men who serve the Most High God might have, shall we say a less than wholesome interest in a young girl like this.

16:18 - MANY DAYS. *“And she did this for many days. But Paul was greatly aggravated, and turning to the spirit, said, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!’ And it came out right away.”* Wherever they went, this demon possessed girl followed them, mocking them. Paul had not over reacted the first time this happened, but when she persisted to the point that it was calling the wrong kind of attention to them, he became “greatly aggravated”. He had not reacted to the satanic attack on the first day, but when the girl persisted in her aggressive verbal attack, Paul was understandably filled with righteous indignation.

TO THE SPIRIT. Just as Jesus recognized demons and addressed them personally, so Paul speaks directly to the evil spirit that possessed this girl. Sean Hannity, on the *Hannity’s America* Television program shown on the Fox News Network on Sunday evenings in August, 2007, featured a part on exorcisms, in which he showed a disturbing exorcism by very intense, hands-on people on one side, and a sophisticated, ritualistic Roman Catholic exorcism on the other side. I have been in the ministry for decades now, and I have never been involved in an exorcism, nor have I personally witnessed one. I have prayed for people who seemed to have been either obsessed with the occult, or oppressed by the devil. I do believe there are people who are possessed by demons, and some of them go to church, which may well account for some of the problems some churches have.

Michael, a godly young man shared some strong feeling with his Sunday School class when the subject of demons was raised by someone in the class. He told them that he believed in demon possession, because, as a probation officer, he said, “I have seen it when I look into the eyes of some of the young people I deal with, especially the girls. When I look into their eyes I see something really disturbing. And when you ask the girls why they cut themselves they will say, ‘to let it out.’” He did not explain what they meant when they said, “to let it out”, but apparently this is not an unusual thing for him to hear. He was by no means saying that all of these young people are demon possessed, but he considers the possibility that some may be.

I contacted my son John and asked him for his opinion. He knows exactly what Michael has in mind when he talks about these issues. John is the juvenile prosecutor who deals with these young people after they are arrested and Michael deals with them after John takes them to court and judge makes his or her decision. John and Michael may work together more than I know, but because of the confidentiality involved in their work they do not reveal very much, and that only in a general way. He did say that whereas Michael is hearing them say they cut themselves “to let it out”, he hears a lot of them, especially girls say that they just want to “see if it is real”. He did stress that he believes most of these young people are not demon possessed, but demon oppressed, demon influenced, or even demon obsessed. He adds,

“We’ve seen these kids who are diagnosed as bi-polar or oppositional defiant disorder (which means being bad, I think) and you wonder when you look in their eyes if there isn’t something more going on there. Of course, we are often looking at kids who have been mentally, physically, sexually or emotionally abused by close family members in a culture that assumes this sort of behavior is

normal.”

Whether it is demon possession, oppression, or obsession, Satan is still Alive and Well on Planet Earth, as Hal Lindsey expressed it in an old volume that was popular with many but rejected by those of a more liberal/moderate persuasion some 40 years ago.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS. Paul said, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” He would never have attempted this on his own authority. Those who must deal with a demon possessed person, must understand that this is serious business. Demons are not afraid of people, they are not intimidated by the “hands-on” approach in which the exorcist strikes or shakes the possessed person. Nor can I imagine demons being anything more than amused at the thought that they can be driven out by ritualistic formulas. The only One they fear is the only One who has absolute power, the One they know and have known through the ages. When Paul commanded the demon in the name of Jesus to come out of the young woman, “it came out right away.” Demons do not fear human beings, but they fear Jesus.

16:19 - WHEN THE OWNERS. *“When her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.”* It obviously did not take long for the owners to realize “that their hope of profit was gone.” The girl had been set free of the demons, and without the demon she was without power and they were without profit. These owners dragged them violently through the market place to charge them before the authorities. I once had a conversation with a girl who explained how a woman who was reputed to be a witch (they called her Mammy) used the occult, drugs, and sex to benefit herself and keep a number of boys and girls coming back for more. I asked a dumb question: “How did you afford those drugs?” She looked at me like she thought I had just fallen off the turnip wagon and said, “I didn’t have to buy them. I’m a girl!” This girl was not demon possessed, and at the time she talked with me, she had committed her life to the Lord. The woman who they called a witch was obviously making money off the boys and the girls as she provided the drugs and somehow worked out a sex for drugs scheme by which she made a profit. A mother who had a young person who fell under the influence of this woman assured me that those young people were very much afraid of crossing her.

SEIZED PAUL AND SILAS. No mention is made of Timothy or Luke here, but there is no reason to assume that they would have made every step Paul and Silas made. Either Paul and Silas were arrested because they were the leaders, or because they were the only ones the slave girl’s owners found when they went in search of the men who had robbed them of their cash cow. The owners, and there may have been several of them, “seized” them (they did not have them arrested as officers of the law might) and took them to the marketplace where they charged them before city officials.

AUTHORITIES. “Each Roman colony was governed by two leaders called *douvir* in Latin. The term **magistrates** translates *strate-gois*, the Greek equivalent for the Latin word” [BKC]. Apparently, the market place was “the place for forums” [NCWB].

16:20 - THESE MEN. *“And bringing them before the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are seriously disturbing our city. They are Jews...”* The Gentile Luke is writing to the Gentile Theophilus and he uses a colloquialism familiar to both of them. He used

“The technical name for the magistrates in a Roman colony was duumviri or duumvirs, answering to consuls in Rome. Stratêgoi here is the Greek rendering of the Latin praetores (praetors), a term which they preferred out of pride to the term duumviri. Since they represented consuls, the praetors or duumvirs were accompanied by lictors bearing rods (verse Acts 16:35)” [ATR].

THEY ARE JEWS. The angry owners violently dragged Paul and Silas through the market place, no doubt inciting the crowds as they forced their way through on the way to the chief magistrates. Once they arrived before the judgment seat the first thing they did was to “play the race card”. The Romans often showed antipathy to the Jews and in contempt for them, they declared, “they are Jews.”

“The charge of **the slave girl’s owners** against **Paul and Silas** was obviously prejudicial. Shortly before this incident the Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome (18:2). Philippi, a Roman colony, would have caught this flavor of anti-Semitism. This also helps explain why Timothy and Luke were not taken before the authorities. Timothy was a half-Gentile (16:1) and Luke was probably a Gentile” [BKC].

Robertson rightly saw this as an “appeal to race prejudice would be especially pertinent then because of **the recent decree of Claudius expelling Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2)**. It was about A.D. 49 or 50 that Paul is in Philippi. The hatred of the Jews by the Romans is known otherwise (Cicero, Pro Flacco, XXVIII; Juvenal, XIV. 96-106)” [ATR, bold added]. They accused Paul and Silas of “seriously disturbing our city.” In this charge they used a word that meant to throw into absolute or extreme disorder.

16:21 - PROMOTING CUSTOMS. *“...(A)nd are promoting customs that are not legal for us as Romans to adopt or practice.”* The charge was one of proselytizing and propagating an unlawful religion which would have the effect of subverting the Roman culture and religions. They do not explain just how these Jewish customs would subvert the Roman society, but mobs seldom worry about logic.

FOR US AS ROMANS. They are still “playing the race card”. People in the market place had no doubt followed the owners of the girl to the seat of the chief magistrates, and the owners knew how to provoke them into mob action.

16:22 - THE MOB. *“Then the mob joined in the attack against them, and the chief magistrates stripped off their clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods.”* The speech appealed to their

Roman patriotism and the crowd was immediately inflamed with pride. The crowd quickly became a mob and they joined in the attack against Paul and Silas.

STRIPPED OFF THEIR CLOTHES. The magistrates probably ordered their clothes stripped from them, but may not have actually stripped them off the missionaries themselves. In 1Thes. 2:2, Paul refers to the shameful treatment received in Philippi. The treatment, for anyone, would have been insulting, but for a Roman citizen this was also unlawful. These magistrates obviously looked on Paul and Silas simply as a couple of seditious Jews.

ORDERED THEM BEATEN. They were not given a trial. The magistrates simply commanded their aids (“lictors”) to beat them with rods. Paul was often the victim of cruel, violent torture at the hands of officials. Robertson suggests that “The usual formula of command was: ‘Go, lictors; strip off their garments; let them be scourged’ [ATR]. In his Second Letter to Corinth, he writes, “Five times I received from the Jews 40 lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the depths of the sea” (2 Cor 11:24-25).

16:23 - MANY BLOWS. *“After they had inflicted many blows on them, they threw them in jail, ordering the jailer to keep them securely guarded.”* The Jewish law called for forty stripes, less one (2 Cor 11:24), but with the Romans it was up to the officials, and they were apparently merciless in dealing with Jews. The Jews used both the whip and the rod to punish criminal, and the Romans may have used both methods.

They beat Paul and Silas mercilessly, and then threw them into jail without washing the blood from them, or offering medical help. One thing we are not told is why Paul did not make known his Roman citizenship. The simple fact is that it may not have occurred to him at the moment. He may have been anticipating a trial, not a command to beat them with rods. It is also possible that the mob was so loud and the magistrates were moving so quickly that he could not be heard. What we do know is that he would declare his Roman citizenship in the future under similar circumstances. He declared his Roman citizenship in 16:37, and again in Jerusalem (Acts 22:26). He also used his Roman citizenship when he appealed his case to Rome when Festus would have sent him to Jerusalem where Paul knew there were plans to kill him.

THE JAILER. The jailer was a responsible person, and he was given orders to “keep them securely guarded.” From what follows we know that he took his responsibilities very seriously.

16:24 - THE INNER PRISON. *“Receiving such an order, he put them into the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks.”* The jailer put them in maximum security and then put their feet in stocks. This was a prison within a prison, and then the stocks beyond that.

For two and one-half years, while I was a student at Mississippi College, I directed the Baptist Student Union (BSU, now Baptist Student Ministries) mission trip to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson, MS, and for over a year I preached at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman every

Sunday morning at 8:00 o'clock, before going to the church I served as student pastor. Maximum security in the Hinds County Jail was a group of three or four cells with a heavy steel door with a heavy wire mesh where one would expect to see a window. Beyond the door there was a small visiting area where two or three people could stand. Between the visitors and the prisoners were two sets of bars, spaced so that no one could touch the prisoner and no one could pass anything to them. At Parchman, there was a very secure, separate maximum security unit, which some referred to as Little Alcatraz. They did not intend to lose a prisoner. A guard at Parchman might be penalized for losing a prisoner, and in case of gross malfeasance he might lose his job. The jailer at Philippi could lose his life, so he was taking no chances.

A Midnight Prayer Meeting

16:25 - PRAYING AND SINGING. “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” That they were praying is not surprising, nor is it surprising they were awake at midnight. What may surprise us is that they were singing hymns to God. They were rejoicing, not in their present circumstances, but in the presence of Jesus Christ, who had promised never to leave us or to forsake us.

The singing of hymns was an important part of worship in the early church, as it should be today. At the same time, we must not forget that the focus of the Gospel is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Prayer is indispensable, and it was an essential ingredient in the lives of individuals and of congregations. The singing of hymns gave those who had heard the Gospel an opportunity to respond by praising the Lord. During the most oppressive period in the USSR, Christians who were not permitted to evangelize, or even preach unauthorized sermons, could sing. So, the church often sang hymns of very long hymns, reportedly up to 80 verses. They were permitted to teach the songs so they would stop after each verse and discuss the verse.

Dr. William R. Cooper of England, author of *AFTER THE FLOOD*, has done extensive research into ancient Roman records, as well as the ancient records of his native island. Some of his fascinating discoveries are revealed in this work, *OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH*, in which he shows that there was a lot of contact between early Christians in Rome and their counterparts in Briton. With his permission, I would like share information about an amazing early saint. However, before doing that, it is important to understand the background.

“The story begins in Britain, in AD 43, the year of the Claudian Invasion of this island and the Britons’ resistance to it over nine long years under the leadership of Caradoc. We could say much at this point of how **Caradoc, time after time, defeated the Roman legions, humiliating their finest generals (including the future emperor Vespasian), in more than thirty pitched battles**, so that his fame and notoriety soon reached even Rome itself.³ But the truly important aspect of Caradoc’s life as far as *this* paper is concerned, is what happened to him and his family when finally **he was betrayed into the Romans’ hands by the Brigantean Queen, Cartimantua**. Tacitus, the Roman historian, takes up the story.

“The scene is the Roman Senate, before whom are presented the members of Caradoc’s household, and, of course, Caradoc himself. **In fear and supplication, every member of the household kneels before Caesar, with the sole exception of Caradoc.** With summary execution awaiting him, he remains standing in chains, and addresses the so-called masters of the world with such dignified defiance that he wins their applause, their pardon, and a home with his family in the imperial palace...

“At an earlier military engagement, and prior to Caradoc’s betrayal, the Romans under Ostorius Scapula had captured Caradoc’s family, namely his wife, **his daughter** and his brothers [*captaque uxor et filia Carataci fratresque in deditionem accepti*].⁹ Captured in ca AD 49, they were kept alive and later exhibited before the Roman people and the Senate in AD 52 with Caradoc himself [*mox fratres et coniunx et filia postremo ipse ostentatus*].¹⁰ Others, whom we know from other sources, were also there, namely Bran, Caradoc’s father; Llyr, his grandfather; and **at least two of his sons**, Llyn and Cyllin” [COOPER: P. 7-8, bold added by this writer].

The story gets even more exciting. Remember is daughter! Dr. Cooper quotes Paul: “Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens...and **Claudia**...” 2 Timothy 4:21. Claudia was the daughter of Caradoc, but let my friend tell the story:

“Two of the most intriguing characters who are mentioned in the New Testament, are **Pudens and Claudia**. Modernists are divided over whether Pudens existed at all, or was in fact two different people, neither of whom were the Pudens mentioned by Paul. Claudia is also said to be such a common name that she could have been anybody if she did exist, and that there must have been several Pudens and Claudias living together in Rome all at the same time - assuming they existed in the first place, I suppose. However, a careful examination of the historical record discloses a part of the Church’s early history that modernism has tried to suppress, but whose importance compels a very close scrutiny indeed” [COOPER: 13, bold added by this writer].

Dr. Cooper then tells us about the marble stone that was found in Chichester, England in April of 1723, on which was the record of a gift of land by Pudens for a temple for Neptune. Pudens was obviously still a pagan at this time. In time, **Pudens married Claudia, the daughter of Caradoc.**

The family of Caradoc was placed in the home of a Lady Pomponia, who had been accused of coming under the influence of a foreign superstition, but because her husband, Aulus Plautius (p. 28), was a senator, she was cleared, but withdrew from public life. **She apparently introduced Caradoc’s family to faith in Christ**, and may have been an influence in seeing the Gospel taken to Briton.

Martial wrote in glowing terms of the relationship between Pudens and Claudia. Now, let Dr.

Cooper tell us about the lady who may have written many of hymns the early Christians used in worship:

“These are not at all the kinds of expression that we are used to hearing from Martial, and it is very evident indeed that here we are dealing with a couple who were regarded by all around them as very special. We shall meet their children a little later in this paper. They had four in the end (Timotheus, Novatus, Pudentiana and Praxedes), the last being born after this second epigram was composed, but it is intriguing to hear Martial referring to Pudens as a “saintly” husband (*sancto marito*), and to Claudia as a lady who puts his (Martial’s) own countrywomen in the shade. Evidently, **Pudens and Claudia found great joy in each other and in their children**, and this is such a marked contrast from the norm in Roman society that it is no wonder that Martial is surprised into sobriety when writing of them. They were, it seems, everything that a Christian family are exhorted to be by the Paul who mentions Pudens and Claudia in his own correspondence and who, early tradition asserts, was entertained by them in their house on the Via Urbana in Rome.

“Paul clearly knew Pudens and Claudia on a personal level, just as he knew Linus, Claudia’s brother, so tradition would seem to be entirely accurate when it says that Paul was entertained at their house. That is not really surprising, but what is surprising is that neither Pudens nor Claudia appear to owe their conversion to Paul in any direct sense, for they were already Christians when Paul first contacted them. They seem rather to owe it to a person known to history as the Lady Pomponia, and we shall consider the circumstances of that conversion (and why she is only referred to but not named in the New Testament) in its due place. Its great importance as far as this paper is concerned, however, lies in the fact that the modernist assertion that the Gospel was a late composition (late 1st - early 2nd century) is shown by the Lady Pomponia’s own faith to be patently absurd. **The Lady Pomponia’s conversion had clearly taken place some years before Paul ever reached Rome, and indeed could have occurred at any time between AD 35 and AD 43**, thus demonstrating that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ had power to save from the very beginning in the years and months immediately following the Resurrection. We shall deal with this question in greater depth later, but could this be the reason why this period of Church history is ignored? Undoubtedly.

“However, **Claudia is the only one of Caradoc’s immediate family who is said to have died a “natural” death**, meaning that she wasn’t martyred, and according to Morgan she is **also credited with the composition and writing of many of the early Christian hymns**” [COOPER: 18-19, bold added by this writer].

It is almost certain that Paul and Silas were not singing any hymns written by Claudia because was only thirteen years of age when she was captured and taken to Rome in A. D. 49. Caradoc and his family may have been appearing before the emperor about the time these events were transpiring in

Philippi. She was a teenager living in the home of Lady Pomponia at during the time of The Second Missionary Journey. Claudia had one brother, Linus, who was also living in the home of Lady Pomponia at this time who would become well known in the area. Linus became the first bishop of the church at Rome, according to Dr. Cooper.

One would expect prayers of desperation at a time like this, not prayers of thanksgiving and hymns of praise. We miss some of the Lord's richest blessings when we focus only on our own needs, our own problems, and our own circumstances. Paul and Silas rejoiced in the presence of the Lord and the assurance that they were in his will. I visited my son's office recently and the receptionist had a brief quote taped to a bulletin board that reflected her faith in Jesus Christ. When I commented on it she took me into another office to show me something another lady had on her wall. It read, "If He leads you to it He will lead you through it." I told her that it reminded me of something I had used on a number of occasions: "The providence of God will not lead you where the grace of God cannot sustain you." Paul and Silas did not have to understand God's will to know they were in God's will.

16:26 - A VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE. *"Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the jail were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains came loose."* There were no seismographs in those days to reveal the magnitude of the earthquake, so all Luke could write was that it was a violent earthquake, and that it hit suddenly. There were no warning signs, no earlier tremors. It hit "suddenly", and "immediately" all the doors in the prison were opened and "everyone's chains came loose." A similar thing happened to Peter (Acts 5:18-20; 12:3-11).

There is no question that they would have prayed for deliverance, and that prayer was answered spectacularly. However, in this extended time of prayer they probably prayed as much about their mission as their imprisonment. One commentary simply observes that their prayers were answered. It is amazing how many times the Lord responded "suddenly" or "immediately" to the prayers of the saints. At the same time, we should not assume that He will always answer immediately. To do so may be discouraging for some, especially immature believers. Paul prayed that God would remove his thorn in the flesh, but God refused to do it. The test of our faith may be seen when His answer is delayed or denied. Do we love God as much when He says No as when He says Yes?

16:27 - THE JAILER. *"When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison open, he drew his sword and was going to kill himself, since he thought the prisoners had escaped."* The jailer was awakened suddenly by the violent earthquake and seeing that the doors of the prison were open he drew his sword and it was obvious to all that he was about to commit suicide, thus saving himself unspeakable humiliation and possibly a more horrible death. To his credit, this jailer was a responsible man and when he was awakened by the earthquake the first thing he did was check the doors, not flee from the quake.

16:28 - BUT PAUL. *"But Paul called out in a loud voice, 'Don't harm yourself, because all of us are here!'"* It is not surprising that Paul would cry out to the jailer to stop the attempt to commit

suicide. First, Paul and Silas were awake when the earthquake hit. Second, Paul was compassionate, and whereas another prisoner may have seen the death of the jailer as an opportunity for them to escape, Paul's first concern was for the jailer. He reassured him that all the prisoners were still there.

16:29 - THE JAILER. *“Then the jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.”* Calling for a torch, the jailer rushed in and fell down before Paul and Silas, apparently without thought for the other prisoners. He fell down before “The persons whom a few hours before he, according to his office, treated with so much asperity, if not cruelty, as some have supposed; though, by the way, it does not appear that he exceeded his orders in his treatment of the apostles[CLARKE].

“Fell down”, as Robertson reminds us is “Second aorist active indicative of *proskunêō*... An act of worship as Cornelius before Peter (Acts 10:25), when *proskunêō* is used” [ATR]. “Trembling” is the response one would expect. The jailer was now in the presence of a power far greater than that of the chief magistrates who had committed Paul and Silas to him for their incarceration, and a power far greater than any power he had seen demonstrated by his Roman gods. Throughout the Old Testament those who are paid a visit by the Angel of the Lord, or hear a word from the Lord are stricken with fear. They must be told to “Fear not”. It is an awesome thing to come into the presence of the one true, living, holy God.

16:30 - WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED? *“Then he escorted them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”* Why would he ask that? How did he know he needed to be saved? One answer might be that he had heard them preaching in the city, or that he had been receiving reports about their preaching. Another possible answer is that he had heard them praying and singing, though we are told that at the time of the earthquake the jailer was asleep (vs. 27). Regardless of what he had heard, the Holy Spirit was the One who moved him to ask this question.

This is the most urgent question anyone can ask. It is also the last question one expects to hear. We normally have to knock on doors, meet with individuals or groups, and present the message of salvation to lost people before they ask this question. I spent five or six years in one pastorate, preaching, teaching, writing, meeting, visiting, training, and witnessing before we saw many visible results. In fact, after following a pastor who had served only five and one-half months, I had to face the facts that the rolls had been padded. It was embarrassing to visit a family and have them tell me, “We don't belong to your church, we belong to Riverside.” I had to delete one-third of our Sunday School roll. There were times when it was especially challenging. Then, one day a young man called and said, “Jill (not her real name) and I are having some problems. Will you talk with us about God?” Wow!!! He was asking, “What must I do to be saved?” I never expected that. And I did not expect all the others who would come over the next two years. We added one member for every 6.7 members during the next years, and almost as many the next year.

Babs Sheppard was one of my favorite people at Mississippi College. She was a godly friend and I was honored to be able to talk with her about her commitment to the Lord. I have never known

many people in whom Jesus Christ was more visible. One day she told me that a twelve year old girl had called her and said, “Babs, I have been watching you and you have something I don’t have. Will you tell me how to find it?” She was asking, “What must I do to be saved?”

16:31 - BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS. “*So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’*” **I have a confession: I have been waiting to get to this verse ever since I wrote about acts 2:38!** This is one of those high water marks in the Book of Acts. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter was asked similar question and his response should be highlighted: “Repent,” Peter said to them, “and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Again, we are told that Jesus is the only name known among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

One of the first verses of Scripture I memorized as a young boy in Sunday School was this verse, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (KJV). Paul would amplify this in his letter to the Galatians: “(Y)et we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified” (Gal 2:16). In an earlier volume in the study of Acts in The Bible Notebook Series, I dealt with the three theories of Justification. In that section I quoted extensively from my study in Galatians, so I will not repeat that here. It is sufficient to say that there are three theories of Justification:

- 1) Justification by works, which is totally rejected in Gal. 2:16 and Eph. 2:9/
- 2) Justification by works plus grace, which is rejected by Rom. 11L6 and Gal. 3:3.
- 3) Justification by grace, which is taught in Eph. 2:8; Gal. 2:16; and elsewhere.

FRANCIS SCHAEFFER COMMENTS ON THIS:

Carl F. H. Henry and C. S. Lewis were celebrated as two of the greatest Christians philosophers of the Twentieth Century. I always add Francis Schaeffer to that list. In fact, I have spent ten times more time with Francis Schaeffer than with Henry and Lewis over the past 25 years. He could challenge you with his simplicity as well as his depth. I must confess that I have less trouble with his simplicity than he complexity! But it is worth the time and effort to read all of his works and I have read some twenty two volumes that he wrote at least three times, some more than that. Perhaps his comments on Paul’s witness to the Philippian jailer will explain my interest in his work. But first, I would like to start us with a typical Schaeffer gem that takes us deeper and deeper as we reflect on it:

“We must never forget that **the first part of the Gospel is not ‘accept Jesus Christ as Savior,’ but ‘God is there.’** Only then are we ready to hear God’s solution for man’s *moral* dilemma in the substitutionary work of Christ in history”

[SCHAEFFER, The Complete Works of..., Vol. 1; p. 144, bold added by this writer].

Schaeffer points out that when one comes to see his genuine need for Jesus Christ, “the good news is the same as it has always been” and at this point we can use not only the same ideas, “but even the same words used to all men” [IBID: Vol. 1; p. 145]. He illustrates that point with a story:

“I recall a time some years ago when two people professed belief in Christ on the same day. One was a very intelligent doctor, and the other a very simple Swiss peasant. In my previous conversations with them, the peasant would have understood very little of my talks with the doctor. Yet on this day, when both of them had come to understand their need, as I spoke first to one and then to the other, I was able not only to use the same ideas, but exactly the same words in telling each one the answer to his need. There is no point in being complicated once the intelligent or the simple man understands his needs; the same ideas and even the same words are all that is needed” [IBID: 145].

Schaeffer expands this thought under a new heading, “Faith and Biblical Sense”:

“In the first place, Christian faith turns on the reality of God’s existence, His being there. Then it also turns on an acceptance of the fact that man’s dilemma is moral and not metaphysical. Each person must face these two things on his own level as a matter of truth.

“The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ The passage that follows is, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in the house.’

“What Paul and Silas said in reply was not spoken in a vacuum. Because of the earthquake and the remarkable way Paul and Silas behaved in prison, the jailer had reason to be aware of the existence of a personal God - one who acts in history, answers prayers, and gives men reality in their lives. But this is not all. The whole city had been in an uproar because of all that Paul and Silas had been saying and doing *before* they were put into prison. Finally, it seems from the jailer’s question and from what we know elsewhere of Paul’s preaching that the jailer had heard the Christian message from Paul himself” IBID: 145].

“True Christian faith rests on content. It is not a vague thing which takes the place of real understanding, not is it the strength of belief which is of value. The true basis for faith is not faith itself, but the work which Christ finished on the cross. My believing is not the basis for being saved - the basis is the work of Christ” [IBID: 145].

YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD. They are not telling the Philippian jailer that his believing

in Christ would save the members of his household. Members of his household must also be saved by believing in Jesus Christ. There is, however, another consideration here. In the Roman world, as with most ancient cultures, the head of the household would determine what god, or gods, they would worship, but that is still not the point. The application for us today is that when the father is the head of the home, if he commits himself to Jesus Christ, there is every reason to expect his family to be so influenced that they will also become believers.

Sadly, men are often the hardest to reach for Christ. A lot of men seem to think that “religion” is for women and children. Even men who profess faith in Him often live as though worship, Bible study, and ministry are for women and children, but the man who fully commits himself to Christ will have a powerful influence on his family.

For as long as I can remember, I have seen churches adopt the attitude that church programs should target children because “if we reach the children we will reach the parents.” The point out that if the children are involved in a church basketball league, choir, or drama, the parents are going to be there to watch them and support them. They will come out to cheer them when they are playing basketball and to encourage them in developing their musical talents, but that does not mean that you are going to reach a man because his son plays basketball. In the New Testament the primary focus of the Gospel is adults. If the parents are reached the children will be strongly influenced by their parents. That does not mean that we should cut back on outreach, ministry, and Bible study for children, only that we should not forget the Biblical approach, nor the influence godly parents have on their children.

For those who doubt this, it should be stressed that those parents who profess faith in Christ must teach their children in the home, and live their faith before their children in such a way that they will be effective witnesses for the Lord. Occasionally, one hears a godly mother or father lament the fact that they have to be very careful in permitting their children to visit friends from their church because of what those children are permitted to watch on TV in their homes. Often times, other parents watch television programs or movies on DVD that they would never permit their children to watch. Parents who want their children saved must teach their children how to be saved, and then demonstrate with their lives that Jesus is real to them.

16:32 - SPOKE THE MESSAGE. *“Then they spoke the message of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house.”* “Spoke the message” may not be the traditional church jargon for witnessing for Jesus Christ, but we can be sure that they “presented the plan of salvation” to them. They proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the jailer and to “everyone in his house,” which tells us that the jailer took them directly from the jail to his home, as Luke tells us in the next verse.

16:33 - WASHED THEIR WOUNDS. *“He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away he and all his family were baptized.”* The jailer had not bothered with their wounds when the officers turned them over to them. He had been more concerned with locking them up where there would be no question of their escape. Now, the Holy Spirit is dealing with him and he takes them to his own home and washes their wounds.

BAPTIZED. It is significant that they were baptized, and that they were baptized “right away”. The Gospel Paul and Silas preached was the same Gospel Peter preached at Pentecost: believe in Jesus Christ and you will receive eternal life, and then be baptized as a symbol of your identification of the believer’s identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul would write to the Roman church in A. D. 58 or 59:

“Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life” (Rom. 6:3-4).

The lost person must repent and believe in Jesus Christ to be saved, and the saved person must be baptized in order to proclaim his or her faith in Him. The New Testament mode of baptism was immersion. Only immersion totally portrays the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and the individual’s death to sin, and resurrection to walk “in newness of life” (KJV).

In my youth, I often heard preachers quote Charles Haddon Spurgeon quoted from pulpits, often with the comment that Spurgeon was the greatest preacher since Paul. I cannot identify Humboldt, whom Spurgeon quotes, but the message is one which needs to be repeated in our day:

“In his travels, Humboldt observed, ‘It seems remarkable that in the hottest as well as the coldest climates, people display the same predilection for heat. On the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, the inhabitants would be baptized only in the hot springs of Hecla. And in the torrid zone, in the plains as well as on the Cordilleras, the natives flock from all parts to the thermal waters.’ The fact is not less noteworthy that men love spiritual warmth. Cold truth, even cold gospel truth, is never attractive. Ministers must be fervent, their spirits earnest, and their style energetic, or many will not come to them. Religion is a dish to be served hot; once it becomes lukewarm it is sickening. Our baptism must be with the Holy Ghost and with fire if we would win the masses to hear the gospel” [-- Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Quotable Spurgeon*, (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, Inc, 1990), Bible Illustrator for Windows’.

16:34 - HE BROUGHT THEM. “*He brought them up into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had believed God with his entire household.*” The Philippian jailer is now a new man. It is doubtful that he had ever done anything like this before. The first evidence that one has received new life in Christ (though not necessarily in this order) is his profession of faith; the second is baptism, and the third is a changed life, which is often manifested in a new way of treating others. The new believer, along with his family went to some place where they were baptized, possibly the same river where Paul and Silas had met Lydia, and then they returned with Paul and Silas and set a meal before them, which may have neglected to do after they were arrested.

REJOICED. New life in Christ introduces an individual to something the world cannot fully understand, something false religions cannot produce. That something is joy. The jailer and his whole household rejoiced in their new life in Jesus Christ. This jailer and his household may well have been sitting in the service when Paul's Epistle to the Philippians was read before the congregation just a few years later, and if so, he would have appreciated Paul's words of encouragement: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

An Official and Anxious Apology

16:35 - RELEASE THOSE MEN. *"When daylight came, the chief magistrates sent the police to say, 'Release those men!'"* Paul and Silas had been taken by force by the owners of the salve girl from whom the demon had been exorcized and then dragged through the market place, where they were presented, along with trumped up charges, to the chief magistrates. Those magistrates had been much more concerned with pleasing the businessmen than with justice. There had been no trial, simply the orders to beat them. After that, they were sent to the prison where the jailer, upon receiving instructions, had them locked in stocks in the innermost part of the prison.

There were still no official charges against them, but what did that matter? They were only dealing with Jews! And, those Jews were only passing through, they were not citizens. The order to release them suggests that they were through with them. Case dismissed!

16:36 - THE JAILER REPORTED. *"The jailer reported these words to Paul: 'The magistrates have sent orders for you to be released. So come out now and go in peace.'"* The jailer had returned Paul and Silas to the prison cell, but he must have rejoiced when he received word to release them. He had learned a lot over night, but he didn't know all there was to know about Paul.

16:37 - BUT PAUL SAID. *"But Paul said to them, 'They beat us in public without a trial, although we are Roman citizens, and threw us in jail. And now are they going to smuggle us out secretly? Certainly not! On the contrary, let them come themselves and escort us out!'"* One would think they would have been relieved when they were told to leave the prison cell, but Paul refused to go. In the first place, he said, "They beat us in public without a trial, although we are Roman citizens, and threw us in jail." It was illegal to beat a Roman citizen. The magistrates could have been punished severely for this miscarriage of justice. Paul learned a lesson here, and in the future he would not hesitate to use his Roman citizenship to demand justice or to save his life.

SMUGGLE US OUT SECRETLY? They had been brutally beaten in publically. They had been humiliated publically. Now, the magistrates just want them to go away. Most prisoners would have been relieved to have had the opportunity to leave the prison and to leave the city. Paul said, "Certainly not!" He said, "let them come themselves and escort us out!" This took both courage and faith in the protection his Roman citizenship afforded him.

16:38 - THE MAGISTRATES. *“Then the police reported these words to the magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens.”* These magistrates had every reason to be afraid. Clarke explains numerous laws these men had broken and the serious trouble they faced.

“St. Paul well knew the Roman laws; and on their violation by the magistrates he pleads. The Valerian law forbade any Roman citizen to be bound. The Porcian law forbade any to be beaten with rods... And by the same law the liberty of a Roman citizen was never put in the power of the lictor. "Porcia lex libertatem civium lictori eripuit." See CICERO, Orat. pro Rabirio. Hence, as the same author observes, In Verrem, Orat. 5: "Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum, scelus verberari." **It is a transgression of the law to bind a Roman citizen: it is wickedness to scourge him.** And the illegality of the proceedings of these magistrates was farther evident in their condemning and punishing them unheard. This was a gross violation of a common maxim in the Roman law. Causa cognita, possunt multi absolvi; incognita, nemo condemnari potest. Cicero. **“Many who are accused of evil may be absolved, when the cause is heard; but unheard, no man can be condemned.”** Every principle of the law of nature and the law of nations was violated in the treatment these holy men met with from the unprincipled magistrates of this city” CLARKE, bold added by this writer].

16:39 - APOLAIZED TO THEM. *“So they came and apologized to them, and escorting them out, they urged them to leave town.”* These magistrates never expected anything like this. The owners of the slave girl had denounced them as Jews who were trying to subvert Roman culture and religion, so they felt perfectly safe in ordering them beaten. Now, they humble themselves before the prisoners and apologize to them.

URGED THEM. Robertson reminds us that the verb is the “Imperfect active of ἐρώτα. **They kept on begging them to leave for fear of further trouble.** The colonists in Philippi would turn against the praetors if they learned the facts, proud as they were of being citizens. This verb in the Koin, is often used as here to make a request and not just to ask a question” [ATR]. The magistrates escorted them out of the prison and kept on urging them to leave town. It would be interesting to know the words these men used, both in the apology and in urging them to leave, but Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, provides only an overview.

16: 40 - TO LYDIA’S HOUSE. *“After leaving the jail, they came to Lydia’s house where they saw and encouraged the brothers, and departed.”* As soon as Paul and Silas were released, they went straight to the house of Lydia. They were living in her house, so it was natural for them to go to her house, both to pick up their meager personal possessions. They also wanted to visit these new believers, both for fellowship and to confirm them in the Lord.

One wonders if Paul and Silas may have remained there for a number of days, taking advantage of

his Roman citizenship so that he might show the believers, and even those magistrates, that they were committed to the Gospel they were preaching. They were not cowards who would slip out in the night. Like John the Baptist, Paul was no “reed shaken in the wind.”

It is noteworthy that Luke is using “they” here, and not “we”. “They” here denotes Paul and Silas, as Robertson states:

“They departed (exêlthan). Paul and Silas, but not Luke and Timothy. Note “they” here, not “we.” Note also the -an ending instead of -on as above. The movements of Timothy are not perfectly clear till he reappears at Beroea (Acts 17:15). It seems unlikely that he came to Thessalonica with Paul and Silas since only Paul and Silas obtained security there (Acts 17:9) and were sent on to Beroea (Acts 17:10). Probably Timothy was sent to Thessalonica from Philippi with gifts of which Paul spoke later (Php 4:15). Then he followed Paul and Silas to Beroea” [ATR].

There may have been times when Luke took a leave and visited his home in Troas, but he makes no mention of where he was in the “we” sections of Acts.

The Gospel Goes to Thessalonica

17:1 - TRAVELED THROUGH. *“Then they traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.”* Paul and his companions are in a sense breaking new ground by moving into a new territory, but they are following the same mission strategy that had proven successful in the past. As from the beginning of the First Missionary Journey, they follow a great Roman highway to a major population center where they will go first to the Jewish synagogue, if there is one in that city. There had been none, as far as we know, in Philippi, a Roman colony and military garrison town.

AMPHILOPIS. After they were urged to leave Philippi, Paul and his companions traveled on through the province by means of the Egnatian Way, one of the great Roman roads “from Byzantium to Dyrrachium (over 500 miles long) on the Adriatic Sea, opposite Brundisium and so an extension of the Appian Way” [ATR]. The first city through which they passed was Amphipolis, “So called because the Strymon flowed almost around (amphi) it, the metropolis of Macedonia Prima, a free city, about 32 miles from Philippi, about three miles from the sea” [ATR]. Paul and his companions may have stopped for the night there, or they may have stayed a few days, but basically, they were just passing through on their way to Thessalonica.

APOLLONIA. The second city mentioned was also located on the Egnatian Way, about 30 miles southwest of Amphipolis. While healthy men might have made such a journey in one day, it is possible that it was a journey like this Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians,

“On frequent journeys, [I faced] dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers

from my own people, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the open country, dangers on the sea, and dangers among false brothers; labor and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing” (2 Cor. 11:26-27, HCSB).

TO THESSALONICA. Thessalonica was about 38 miles almost due west of Appolinia, on the Egnatian Way. Three rivers flowed into the Aegean Sea at Thessalonica, making it important commercially. There was an old city there called Therma, located at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, but

“Cassander renamed it Thessalonica after his wife, the sister of Alexander the Great. It was the capital of the second of the four divisions of Macedonia and finally the capital of the whole province. It shared with Corinth and Ephesus the commerce of the Aegean. One synagogue shows that even in this commercial city the Jews were not very numerous. **As a political centre it ranked with Antioch in Syria and Caesarea in Palestine.** It was a strategic centre for the spread of the gospel as Paul later said for it sounded (echoed) forth from Thessalonica throughout Macedonia and Achaia (1Th 1:8) [ATR, bold added by this writer].

A JEWISH SYNAGOGUE. Some have suggested that there was a large Jewish population at Thessalonica, but the Scripture states that there was “a” synagogue there, which does not support claims of a large number of Jews. However, we cannot state on the basis of Luke’s statement that there was “a” synagogue there that this absolutely precludes the existence of another synagogue in the area, but I believe it is a fair assumption. Ten heads of families were required for a synagogue. Philippi had no synagogue, probably because they did not have Jewish families there. When Paul went to a new place he sought a Jewish synagogue, so he may well have passed on through Amphipolis and Apollonia and pressed on to Thessalonica because of this synagogue.

17:2 - AS USUAL. *“As usual, Paul went to them, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures...”* It is typical of Luke to mention this. It was a part of his mission strategy when he entered a new city, after having followed the major Roman highway to a major population center, he would find the Jewish synagogue, if there was one, and he may have known of this synagogue before he left Philippi.

REASONED WITH THEM. He is following the same pattern he followed on his First Missionary Journey. He went to the synagogue and when he was recognized, he began reasoning with them from the Scripture, with specific emphasis on Messianic prophecies. He was in Thessalonica more than three weeks, but he could only preach in the synagogue three Sabbath Days before he was forced to turn to the Gentiles, as he had done in Antioch of Pisidia. It should be stressed that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is reasonable because and it is the absolute truth, as Jesus is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6).

When I was a young man in the ministry, all I had to do was take a Bible and walk up to almost any

door and ring the door bell. The Bible almost always got me through the door. When I asked, “Do you believe in God”, almost everyone answered that they did. When I showed them the Bible and asked, “Do you believe this is the Word of God”, I could anticipate the answer: “I know it is. My mother believed it and my daddy read it all the time.” When I asked, “May I read something from the Bible”, I could be sure I would have the opportunity. We would talk for a while and even if the person declined to pray to receive Christ, he would consent to my praying with him. There were always excuses back then, but today some may not even bother with an excuse. They may tell you they are not interested, they are opposed to organized religion, or they don’t see that Christianity has any advantage over any other religion. A witness today we must be prepared to reason with people.

17:3 - EXPLAINING. “...*(E)xplaining and showing that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying: “This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you.”* Luke makes it clear that Paul proclaimed the Gospel here as he had at Antioch of Pisidia. There, after an overview of the history of God’s dealings with the Jewish nation, he emphasized that God had fulfilled His promise and the Messiah had come, and died on the cross for the sins of the world. Paul explained very carefully, but uncompromisingly, that “the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.”

THE MESSIAH MUST SUFFER. This was the doctrine which became a stumbling block to the Jews: “For to those who are perishing the message of the cross is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is God’s power” (1 Cor 1:18). In that same passage, Paul wrote, “For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:22-23).

RISE FROM THE DEAD. Once again, Paul stresses that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the great proof that Jesus is the Messiah. In writing to the church established here at Thessalonica, Paul would later make the same point: “Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus” (1 Thess 4:14).

THIS IS THE MESSIAH, JESUS. After stating the case and supporting it with Scripture, he proclaimed, “This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you.” Paul never veered off from the main point of the Gospel. Jesus died for our sins and then He arose from the dead. He proclaimed the truth, but these Jews did not want a Messiah who died, even if Paul claimed that He had risen from the dead. They wanted a Messiah who would reestablish the kingdom of David, making Israel a mighty nation.

LIFE APPLICATION: I found the following illustration in Vol. I in this writer’s study on from Genesis:

Recently, as I glanced at the icon on the screen of my monitor, it occurred to me that I had not checked my Recycle Bin in some time. I assumed that there would be a number of files that I had deleted which had been sent to the Recycle Bin where I would have one more opportunity to restore them if I changed my mind. I clicked on the icon and saw the word **GOD**. Instantly, I remembered replacing a file by that

name with one that I had edited. As instructed, I clicked on the appropriate place to empty the Recycle Bin. At that point I received something of a start, for the next words were, **“Do you want to delete GOD?”** I paused before I clicked to delete - reminding myself that I was only deleting a file, but at the same time thinking how fitting this question is for many people. That is exactly what Satan would like to do; that is what the demons want to do; it is what the atheistic evolutionist is trying to do. While it is true that the post-modern evolutionist has injected humanism with New Age spirituality, he still seeks to delete the God of the Bible and replace Him with a god of his own creation, imagination, and rebellion [SANDERS: Genesis, Vol. I, The Bible Notebook Series, PastorLife.Com, Georgia Baptist Convention].

I forwarded this to Dr. Mike Minnix, Editor of PastorLife.Com, Georgia Baptist Convention, who told me he was adding this to the illustrations posted there. A few days later, I received a note from Dr. Ramsey Coutta, counselor, author of two books, and chaplain with the rank of Major in the U. S. Army, now stationed in Camp Shelby, after having served in Iraq. Whatever I had sent prompted Major Coutta to respond that the world continues to try to erase Jesus, but that they will never succeed. While some in the media, the political arena, and others in academia seems determined to “delete God” from America, many others seemed even more determined to erase Jesus. We are “spiritual” or “religious”, but the word Jesus or Christ is anathema to many, as evidenced in the effort to replace the date designations B. C. and A. D. With B.C.E (Before Common Era) and C. E. (Common Era). The media and many politicians are careful to avoid offending anyone, except Christians.

Bill Keller, in his newsletter, LifePrayer, September 13, 2007, illustrates just how much some people would like to erase Jesus:

What comic Kathy Griffin said to Jesus! I have to give this filthy mouthed atheist comic credit for at least being honest enough to say what most in the entertainment industry think and feel but would never say. Upon receiving the Emmy for Outstanding Reality Program for her show, “My Life on the D-List” this past weekend, Griffin said, “A lot of people come up here and thank Jesus for this award. I want you to know that no one had less to do with this award than Jesus.” Holding up her statuette, Griffin topped off her off-script speech by saying, “Suck it, Jesus. This award is my god now!”

And, yes, the audience applauded. Americans, not Iranians, were applauding an attack on Jesus! Only a few days later, Sally Fields, known for her family movies, accepted an award and after seeming to forget what she wanted to say, cried out, “If mothers were running the world there would be no (expletive deleted - she used God’s name in vain) wars!” When a panel on a Fox News program were discussing what happened, one person said, “That wasn’t too bad.” There have always been people who took God’s name in vain, but today, more than ever in America, the focus is Jesus. One elderly man lamented that his pastor announced that it is not necessary to pray in Jesus name. Even though I understand what his pastor meant (we should not use His name as a kind of formula

when praying), I believe in a day when the world is attacking Jesus, young people and children need to hear Jesus' name when they come to our services.

17:4 - SOME OF THEM WERE PERSUADED. *“Then some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, including a great number of God-fearing Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women.”* Not only was the mission strategy the same on this second missionary trip, the message was the same, and the response was by now predictable. Some of the Jews were persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah and joined Paul and Silas in professing Him as the Messiah.

Why, since the response was predictable, did Paul and Silas not begin with the Gentiles when they entered a new city? First, they wanted to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Second, there was every reason to believe they would be given an opportunity to announce to the Jews of that city that the Messiah had come, that Jesus of Nazareth suffered and died for our sins, He had been buried and raised from the dead, and that He had ascended to the Father to make intercession for our sins. Third, there would be “God-fearing Greeks” there, Gentiles who would be willing to hear them. Fourth, the Jews who were saved had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures and they would be able to teach others the Word of God.

GOD-FEARING GREEKS. Luke adds that “a great number of God-fearing Greeks” were converted to Christ. As stated in earlier volumes, there were Greeks in most of these cities who attended the synagogue services. Some became proselytes, while others either believed or were interested in learning more about the true God.

LEADING WOMEN. There would have been women who did not have the freedom to choose to go to the synagogue. They were slaves, servants, or married to people who would not permit them to worship with the Jews, or to worship any god they did not approve. There were also women, who like those in Corinth, who were required to be temple prostitutes for some period of time. The “leading women” of the city had more freedom to attend these services. They found in Judaism a respect for women they did not find in paganism. When they heard the Gospel preached, they found freedom and fulfillment in Jesus Christ that was extremely rare in the ancient world.

The Attack on Jason's House

17:5 - THE JEWS BECAME JEALOUS. *“But the Jews became jealous, and when they had brought together some scoundrels from the marketplace and formed a mob, they set the city in an uproar. Attacking Jason's house, they searched for them to bring them out to the public assembly.”* The response of the Jews who did not receive Jesus was predictable. They had seen it before. Luke tells us what motivated these Jews. They were jealous! Luke might have assumed that jealousy motivated their vile action, but the Holy Spirit knew their hearts. They were jealous of Paul and Silas because some of the Jews and many of the God-fearing Greeks were listening to them.

Jealousy is often the sin that breeds violence, slander, and discrimination. The Jews knew just where to find those scoundrels, and just how to work them into a frenzy or to mob activity. Sadly, the non-

believing Jew today can peel off a litany of atrocities committed by Christians against Jews. Just as sadly, many of them are true, but in many cases, they either do not understand the truth, or they have other reasons for blaming Christians for persecution. Hitler and Stalin have been identified by Jews as Christians who persecuted and slaughtered Jews. Those people, or the movement they led, killed more Christians than Jews, even though they never targeted any group as they did the Jews. Israel today owes its existence, in part, to Christians in America, England, and other nations. Evangelical Christians have supported Israel for decades, and remain committed to the protection of that little tiny nation that is today surrounded by enemies who want to see all Jews killed or driven into the sea.

Those nations are becoming better equipped to kill Jews than ever before. Only America holds them back, yet, those Jews are discriminating against Christians in Israel today.

SCOUNDRELS. The NIV paraphrases it, “bad characters from the marketplace.” “These were derelicts who lived in the streets of the marketplace” [NCWB].

ATTACKING JASON’S HOUSE. Those jealous Jews knew where to find the scoundrels and they knew how to motivate them to attack Jason’s house, which may have been where Paul and Silas were staying. One today may have a vision of scenes from an old B Western in which some powerful rancher gives alcohol to a bunch of loafers, and plants some of his men to work the crowd into a frenzy so they will charge the jail, break out the innocent hero and lynch him before he can expose some evil of which that rancher is guilty. We are not told all these Jews told these scoundrels, but it may well have been that they said offensive things about some of their gods. We will find the basic charges in the next verse.

17:6 - DRAGGED JASON. “*When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too...”* When the mob did not find Paul and Silas at Jason’s home, “they dragged Jason and some of the brothers” violently to make them stand before the city officials.

CITY OFFICIALS. I found in notes prepared 30 years ago, that these were actually “politarchs”, the name given the supreme board of magistrates at Thessalonica. Scholars point to this word as another proof of Luke’s accuracy.

TURNED THE WORLD. Now, we get an idea what charges the Jews had made against Paul and Silas. They had told them that everywhere they went they had “turned the world upside down”, and now they had come to Thessalonica to do the same thing there. The scoundrels of the market place may not have heard about Paul and his companions, but these Jewish leaders had heard reports about their work in Philippi and other places. These Jews had no idea how close they were to the truth. The Gospel of Jesus Christ does indeed turn the world upside down for those who believe in Him. This was only the beginning of the movement that would shake that continent for centuries to come.

17:7 - JASON HAS RECEIVED THEM. “*(A)nd Jason has received them as guests! They are all acting contrary to Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king—Jesus!*” Jason was

charged with harboring men who would “turn the world upside down”, so to them he was as guilty as they.

CONTRARY TO CAESAR’S DECREES. The Jews who worked up the crowd knew exactly what charge to make to force the hands of the magistrates. The mob accuses them of treason against Caesar. They would have to act. With the spread of emperor worship many decrees were issued and enforced regarding treason and the time would come when any person who refused to worship Caesar would be accused of treason. Christians would be slaughtered in the Roman arenas to entertain Caesar and the populace. Those days were just ahead of them, but even as Paul was proclaiming the Gospel, there were believers in Rome who were moving toward martyrdom, including members of the family of Caradoc, the mighty king from Briton (already mentioned) who was betrayed by a member of the royal family and taken to Rome to appear before Caesar. Because of his courage in refusing to bow before Caesar, he was permitted to live and his family was placed in the home of Lady Pomponia as a guarantee that the man who had defeated the Roman army in thirty pitched battles would not rebel against Rome. Of Caradoc’s four children who were led to faith in Christ by Lady Pomponia, all but Claudia were martyred. She wrote many of the hymns Christians sang in the first century. He brother Linus was the first bishop of the church at Rome, and he would be martyred after several years in that position.

ANOTHER KING-JESUS. The Jews in Thessalonica had taken Paul’s teachings about the Lordship of Jesus Christ and twisted it to serve their purpose. To charge them with setting forth another king was a serious charge. The Greek word for king here carries the same meaning as the Latin word for emperor.

Jesus may be “the sweetest name on mortal tongue”, but only to believers. The world hates Jesus and it hates His name. Certain segments of the church in America is in full retreat when it comes to any mention of Jesus. Many in politics, academia, and the media seem determined to avoid using the name Jesus, but they have no problem with Jewish or Islamic symbols. A Jewish friend told me he had been to a funeral and afterwards he asked his rabbi, “Why do they always have to talk about Jesus?” He told me he had gone to the home of a relative for Christmas and they kept talking about Jesus and he resented it. He looked at me and said, “Jews HATE.....” He stopped, but I knew what he had started to say. I might add that he was not speaking for all Jews.

17:8 - THE JEWS. *“The Jews stirred up the crowd and the city officials who heard these things.”* The Jews had stirred up the mob which had gone to the home of Jason, taken him and other believers, and dragged them violently through the streets, and brought charges of treason before the magistrates. Now, they stir them up more, less their victory be lost or minimized. Then, as Robertson notes, “The excitement of the multitude ‘agitated’ the politarchs still more” [ATR]. Clarke states it more forcefully:

“It is evident that there was no disposition in either the people or the rulers to persecute the apostles. But these wicked Jews, by means of the unprincipled, wicked lawyers, those lewd fellows of the baser sort, threw the subject into the form of law,

making it a state question, in which form the rulers were obliged to notice it; but they showed their unwillingness to proceed in a matter which they saw proceeded from malice, by letting Jason and his companions go off on bail” [CLARKE].

17:9 - A SECURITY BOND. *“So taking a security bond from Jason and the others, they released them.”* Normally, a security bond would guarantee that the accused would appear before the judge at an appointed time. But, here, it seems to mean that a bond was posted by Jason as assurance that he would see to it that Paul and Silas would leave the city not to return. “In 1Th 2:17. Paul may refer to this in mentioning his inability to visit these Thessalonians again” [ATR]. The got rid of Paul, but they did not get rid of Jesus Christ. A strong, influential church was established in Thessalonica and Silas and Timothy would minister there. Paul would write two epistles to this church and those epistles have been a source of blessings for believers for two thousand years.

On to Beroea Where They Search the Scriptures

17:10 - THE BROTHERS. *“As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas off to Beroea. On arrival, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.”* The “brothers” had to wait until it was night because the Jews, or the mob that had been stirred up by them, would no doubt have captured them, or attacked without the approval of the magistrates.

Dr. William R. Cooper, in an amazing, but unpublished paper, OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH, stresses how Clement, the third bishop of the Roman church, following Linus, son of Caradoc of Briton, and Anacletus, began to corrupt the church in a number of ways, including the introduction of a hierarchy. Clement wrote to the Church at Corinth, telling them:

“Subordination of rank and distinction of office are the necessary conditions of life. Look at the manifold gradations of rank in an army, at the diverse functions of the members of the human body,” going on to tell them that, “Ye did wrongly to thrust out presbyters who had been duly appointed” [COOPER, OLD LIGHT: 54].

I am a Southern Baptist and I have never, in all my years as a pastor, had the pastor of another Southern Baptist church to call and tell our church what we should do. Nor, have I ever had a denominational worker call or write to tell the local church what to do. I did receive a letter in which a well known denominational worker wrote to challenge the church I serve to give more. I explained the severe challenges the church had face in the past few years before I became pastor, and the progress we had made. I finished by reminding him that I was the pastor and he was not. Furthermore, whatever we decided to give was to be decided by the local church, and I did not want to receive another letter like that. We never did.

I will let Dr. Cooper provide the background for the letter by Clement of Rome to the church at Corinth:

“The reason for the rebuke is that the Corinthians had ejected certain priests (who can have no place in a Christian church, given that a priest is supposed to be an

intermediary between God and man) that had been clearly imposed on them by Rome. Yet, that is not all, for not only does Clement quite falsely state that Paul had rebuked them for the same offense in his day, but he goes on to call the Corinthian church the “enemies of God” and warns them to, ‘Ask pardon for your offences, and do not harden your hearts like Pharaoh. Else like Pharaoh, ye will also perish.

“Ignoring the none-too-thinly veiled threat, we have to ask whether Clement, the ‘bishop’ of Rome now thundering these anathemas, had ever read our Lord’s words where he says, ‘But be ye not called ‘rabbi,’ for One is your Master and all ye are brethren’”? At the birth of the New Testament church, there was one rank among Christians, that of brother. Yet, barely fifty years on and Rome, under Clement, has embraced another system altogether. That of bishops, priests and deacons whose titles convey authority over others, not servitude or service toward them. This, of course, was because the system of hierarchy belonged firmly to the world of paganism, Rome itself being the very sink of pagan religion and philosophy, and already we can see that, by the time of Clement, the church at Rome had embraced that system of worship that is fatal to any true understanding of God, His Word, or the church.

“The introduction of pagan ideas contained in Clement’s letter is not something imagined by us, because later in the epistle, he has this to say, ‘The end is near when all things shall be burned up by fire. Sop the prophets and Apostles testify - so the Sibyl has declared!’ Now, the Sibyl was the pagan oracle through which Apollo, Aphrodite, and all the other gods and goddesses were supposed to make their wishes known, and we may wonder what possible interest a Christian bishop could have had in such a blatantly occultic oracle. Sufficient, it seems, for a famous verse to become oft quoted and popular amongst the early ‘Christian’ worshipers in Rome: ‘*Dies irae, dies ill, solvet saeculum in flavilla, teste Saved, cum Sibylla!*’ - putting the psalmist and hence the Scripture on an equal footing with the pagan oracle” [COOPER: 54].

I had long been aware of the use of the word brother (brethren) to identify members of the early church with one another. What I had not considered was the depth of pagan influence on Clement.

17:11 - OPEN MINDED. “*The people here were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, since they welcomed the message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*” If Paul and Silas stuck to their mission strategy, they probably began their work in Beroea by going to the synagogue on the Sabbath, where they were invited to speak. Paul, we may safely assume, began with the Abrahamic Covenant and briefly reviewed God’s Messianic promises throughout what we know as the Old Testament. He would have moved quickly to the fulfillment of those prophecies in Jesus of Nazareth, who suffered and died, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the Father where He sits at the right hand of His throne, making intercession for us.

The message did not change but the response here was far different from the violent reaction in

Thessalonica, where those Jews who rejected the Gospel incited the Gentiles of the city to a mob action against Paul and Silas, as well as Jason and others. They were forced to leave Thessalonica, but they left a powerful witness in that city. Here in Beroea, they preached the same Gospel, but it was received in a far different spirit.

EXAMINED THE SCRIPTURES. It doesn't get any better than this! When Paul preached, the people (1) welcomed the message with eagerness, and (2) they "examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." The great advantage for those early missionaries was that they could begin their work in the synagogue where the people had the Scripture, whereas later missionaries would often be going into a pagan nation, learn the language, and then teach the people the truth. William Carey worked for many years before he saw the first convert. It was the same for Ann and Adinoram Judson. For many years, Christians read the book, *Through Gates of Splendor*, by Elizabeth Elliot, whose husband Jim Elliot and four of his friends were slaughtered by members of a remote native group they identified as Aucas in Ecuador. Survivors of some of those murdered missionaries were able to establish contact with those same savages, learn their language, and win a good number of them to faith in Jesus Christ. The primary task was to learn the language, develop an alphabet, and translate the Scripture in to the language of those people.

The Jews in the synagogue knew the Scripture, and God-fearing Greeks would have had no problem because the Hebrew Scriptures had been translated into Greek (the Septuagint). The Holy Spirit, Who miraculously inspired the Scripture, had miraculously preserved it, and now He miraculously illuminates the hearts of those who are searching the Scriptures daily for the truth. It doesn't get any better than that!

Millions of dollars are spent on new programs, ministries, and let's face it, on games and gimmicks by churches and denominations in America today. What we need is some hard core Bible teaching and preaching. According to one news report on September 18, 2007, after O. J. Simpson was arrested in Las Vegas, he asked for two books, the Bible and *The Purpose Driven Life* (by Rick Warren). Sadly after his arrest, the media kept showing Simpson smiling and tell reporters he didn't do anything. He said over and over, "God bless." Then we heard the tapes made in the room where he and some of his "posse" went into a room and, according to reports, at gun point demanded memorabilia he insisted were his. Simpson's angry, abusive language was filled with vile, vicious, vulgar words. I might add that while many profess that they have been blessed by Rick Warren's book, what lost people need is to go to the Word of God, and when they are saved they need to examine the Scripture daily for the truth.

Dr. William R. Cooper of Middlesex, England, whom I have already quoted, "translated" the 1388 Wycliffe New Testament and the 1526 Tyndale New Testament into modern English. In the year 2000, the newly released Tyndale NT outsold the first Harry Potter book in England. Right after that, Dr. Gene Jeffries, president of Cambridge Graduate School, showed me a copy of the Tyndale NT, the first to reach America. As a matter of fact I received a note on October 11, 2007, from Dr. Cooper informing me that he is sending me an autographed first edition copy of of the Tyndale New Testament.

While doing his work on the Wycliffe NT, Dr. Cooper discovered a personal letter inserted between Colossians and 1 Thessalonians, which is clearly identified as a non-canonical epistle, written in Latin, signed by Paul, and addressed to the church at Laodicea. He was aware of the fact that Paul mentions, in Colossians, a letter from Laodicea. Upon careful examination, Cooper determined that the letter had been translated from Greek into Latin, which meant that it was at least possible that Paul could have written the letter. He translated the letter from Latin back to Greek and then into English. He examined the epistle with an awareness of the work of modernists who knew of the letter but dismissed it as a forgery. I will let Dr. Cooper tell us his purpose in translating the letter, and in his book, *OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH*, under the title: *PART 2: PAUL'S 'LOST' LETTER TO THE LAODICEAN CHURCH*. The author's subtitle for this section reads, "a critical appraisal of a document in Middle English (1388) that is a translation from the Latin of a letter said to have been written by the apostle Paul (in Greek) and addressed to the church at Laodicea the same letter being mentioned in Colossians 4:16."

The following excerpts from Dr. Cooper's book will illustrate the importance of examining the Scripture.

The New Testament Canon

"We have already noted the fact that our Laodicean epistle has never occupied a place in the canon of the New Testament. Indeed, the first time we get a hint of its existence, apart from **Paul's own mention of it in his letter to the Colossians (4:16)**, is, as we have seen, in the Muratorian Canon of about AD 180. Then the letter seems to disappear from view until it emerges about two hundred years later in certain early manuscripts of Jerome's Latin Vulgate version of the New Testament - and from thence into the 15th-century Middle English translation of Wycliffe's followers. It is clear from reasons that we shall consider shortly, that **this Latin version of the epistle is not its original, but that it is a Latin translation from an earlier Greek original**. So, the question naturally arises that if this epistle was indeed not just in Greek, but from Paul's own hand, then why was it not included in the collection of other Pauline epistles that have come down to us in the New Testament? For the answer, we need to consider just how the canon of the New Testament came into being.³²

"Here we must try to consider a matter that is, even for the Bible-believing Christian, (we might say, *especially* for the Bible-believing Christian) a profound and wonderful mystery, for **the books of the New Testament (as do the Old) have a strange and mysterious quality that is quite unknown to any other literary work in human history**. Ordinary writings are but words written on paper. They can be good or bad or indifferent, wise or foolish. But the words of Scripture are something else besides, possessed of a power that the ungodly cannot even suspect. Indeed, it surprises even the godly from time to time.

“By way of illustration, **let us consider what happened to Martin Luther**, the 16th-century German monk who sparked off the Reformation in Germany, and which was soon to set all Europe ablaze. The well-known story is told, from his own pen, of how he was struggling with his inability ever to be righteous, no matter what good works or penances he might happen to do, when one day, as he was reading the New Testament, his eyes lighted on Romans 1:17 (itself a reference to Habakkuk 2:4), “The just shall live by faith.”

“**Now, Martin Luther was a Doctor of Theology, and he was familiar with these six short words** from sources other than the New Testament. Indeed, the words are cited and their meaning made clear in the *Theologica Germanica*, a 14th-century work which was thought of so highly by Luther that he took it upon himself to supervise it through the press in 1518.³³ **But when he had read the words, “The just shall live by faith,”** in the *Theologica*, they strangely had held no meaning for him. The words are the same words, and written in the same order, as those in Romans 1:17. **Yet, when he read them in Romans, it was as if his soul was set alight, and he was quite literally reborn - created anew - as he read them.** In fact, we know from Scripture that we are, quite literally, born again by the Spirit of God when we come to believe the Gospel, and this is the life-giving effect that these six short words had had on Luther’s mind and soul - but only when he had read them in the New Testament.

“It is an extraordinary and (humanly-speaking) an indefinable phenomenon of the books of Scripture that they have this transforming effect upon the reader, and we can explain the phenomenon in no better terms than that the words of Scripture are themselves made alive by the Spirit of God. **I know of no born-again Bible-believing Christian who has not experienced this miracle for himself, and who does not experience that life-giving, life-renewing effect in reading the Word of God often thereafter.** It is what distinguishes the Bible - the living Word of the living God Himself - from all other literature in human history, and it is what marks out the books and letters of the New Testament (and the Old) as originating in the heart of God to the men and women who lived in the very earliest days of the Church and to the Christian believer of today.

“... **So what is the evidence that we do have regarding the birth and growth of the New Testament canon?**

“Well, not much, because the process was essentially **an operation of the Holy Spirit rather than of man**, and as much in the heart of the individual believer as in the Church at large, and so the physical evidence is, not surprisingly, a little sparse. The first clue that we have, though, is that the process began with the writing of Matthew’s Gospel at an *extremely* early time of the church, within just a few short

years of our Lord's Resurrection in fact.³⁷ But there are other hints within the New Testament itself of the church soon beginning to rely upon a growing corpus of books and writings that are acknowledged and looked to as authoritative and inspired Scripture.

“...The “man in the pew” would moreover have had the inward witness of the Holy Spirit when he read the Scriptures, a Witness that is decidedly lacking amongst the apocryphal books and epistles, and which is rarely seen or witnessed in the councils of the church. The Synod of Hippo, we must remember, merely reiterated what the man in the pew was *already* reading and had long held to be Scripture. It did not, indeed *could* not, dictate what should or should not be accepted from that moment on [COOPER: *Old Light on the Roman Church*: 48-50, bold added by this writer].

17:12 - MANY OF THEM BELIEVED. “*Consequently, many of them believed, including a number of the prominent Greek women as well as men.*” “Consequently” means that as a direct result of their examining the Scripture, “many of them believed.” We may well remind ourselves of the statement Dr. Bill Cooper made that Martin Luther had read those six words from Romans 1:17 many times in the *Theologica Germanica*, without their having an impact on his life, “Yet, when he read them in Romans, it was as if his soul was set alight, and he was quite literally reborn - created anew - as he read them.” If we can get lost people to read the New Testament we can trust the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin, righteousness, and the judgment to come (John 16:8).

PROMINENT GREEK WOMEN. Once again, Luke calls to our attention the fact that “prominent Greek Women, as well as men were being saved. Are these women “prominent” because they are married to prominent men, or are they, like Lydia at Philippi, prominent because of their own accomplishments? Is it not also possible that he mentions this because of the influence of these women in the church, as well as in outreach to the lost in the area for years to come?”

17:13 - JEWS FROM THESSALONICA. “*But when the Jews from Thessalonica found out that God's message had been proclaimed by Paul at Beroea, they came there too, agitating and disturbing the crowds.*” There seems to be no hatred quite like religious hatred, and no bigotry quite like religious bigotry. There is a fanaticism here that burned within these Jews from Thessalonica that defies reason, but then they are not acting reasonably. They are acting as narrow minded fanatics with a thirst for blood that can only be quenched by persecuting Paul and Silas. It was bad enough that they persecuted them in their own home town, but they transported it to Beroea.

Sadly, many pastors today can tell stories of people who developed a hatred for them over a period of time and when given an opportunity, they would try to turn others against them, even after they had moved on to another church field. One pastor was warned that if he accepted he invitation to preach at another church in lieu of a call, that he should simply announce that he would be out of town, because if “some of them” know where you are going they may call the other church and try to turn them against you. I have found it most interesting that the people who have said the most cruel

things about me were often ones with whom I had spent the most time during times through grief, illnesses, or when they other special needs. I had driven to hospitals, sat with the family, counseled with the individual, and prayed with them. It never happened often to me, but I was aware of times when an individual sought to hurt me after I had moved on to another church.

On one occasion, an evangelist and his wife called and wanted to see me when they were in the area. We met at my sons' law office and they told me that a few people had made some strong comments about me in their presence. When it seemed to them that I was not sufficiently concerned about what one denominational worker a small group of pastors were saying about me, based on what they had heard, the evangelist said, "Dr. Sanders, you don't understand. They don't want you out of (their area), they want you out of the ministry!" The amusing part was that I had often spoken with two or three of the pastors he mentioned and you would have thought we were in total agreement on the inerrancy of Scripture, but in the presence of their director of missions they took the opposite position.

As to the small group of church members who were critical of me, I believe the Lord gave me the answer: "The worst thing they can do to me is to get me to act like they are acting." I added that I could thank the Lord for the experience because I might have served my entire life without ever knowing what it was like to be persecuted for righteousness sake, like the prophets of old. It was not pleasant, but I thank God for the experience. I would never want to go through it again, but I thank the Lord for what He taught me. And, like any other pastor, I am fully aware of the fact that Satan is my enemy and he will do anything he can to hurt me and to hinder my ministry. And he is not afraid to go to church!

I had spend many hours over a long period of time visiting members of one particular family, but I had become aware of the fact that a few family members had developed an attitude toward me that I found disturbing. Nevertheless, when word came that there had been a death in the family, I went to the home and tried to visit with them. I realized that the best thing I could do was to have prayer and then leave. A few hours later, a relative who had been at the home when I was there called me and said, "I want to apologize to you for the way my family treated you." It was not my imagination, but I could not figure out what I had done to offend them. In time, I learned that you don't have to do anything to some people. It may have been that I was friends with someone with whom they had had a falling out.

17:14 -SENT PAUL AWAY. *"Then the brothers immediately sent Paul away to go to the sea, but Silas and Timothy stayed on there."* The "brothers" sent Paul to the nearby port on the Aegean Sea. In other words, they slipped Paul out of town quietly and sent him on his way to Athens. However, he left Silas and Timothy there to continue their work. Paul was the primary target of the Jews from Thessalonica.

17:15 - ATHENS. *"Those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible, they departed."* Some of the "brothers" who escorted Paul down to the harbor sailed with him to Athens. Luke does not tell

us where was, but since his is not using the pronoun “we”, it may be assumed that he was not with them at this time. There is no indication that he accompanied Paul, and it is doubtful that he would have stayed with Silas and Timothy, who were left with instructions to join Paul at a later time. He may have sailed back to Troas on business or to see family members, but we can be sure he knew Paul’s plans and that they knew how to contact each other.

Paul in Pagan Athens

17:16 - WHILE PAUL WAS WAITING. *“While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was troubled within him when he saw that the city was full of idols.”* Paul, having been escorted by friends from Beroea to Athens, was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him. Since they did not arrive immediately behind Paul, it is reasonable to assume that they continued the ministry with the saints in Beroea, and planned to join him as soon as the work there was established, which would involve teaching sound doctrine, organizing the church, appointing leaders, and in general equipping the people to worship, teach, minister, witness, serve, and to witness to others.

Luke does not tell us that Silas and Timothy came to Athens, but in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 we are told that Timothy did go to Athens and Silas may have been with him. They were probably both sent back to the Beroea and Thessalonica. Later, they came from Macedonia to join Paul in Corinth (18:5; 2 Cor. 11:8ff).

ATHENS. Paul and Silas, on the Second Missionary Journey, had visited the churches planted on the First Missionary Journey by Paul and Barnabas. They had participated in the Jerusalem Conference and returned with a letter from James which affirmed that Gentiles are saved the same way Jews are saved, by grace through faith, as Paul and Barnabas had preached when they had been in the region earlier. They had been joined by Timothy at Lystra, and then when they moved on into new territory, they were joined by Luke the physician, probably at Troas. Paul had received a vision of a man from Macedonia asking him to come over and help them. The missionaries, in obedience to the heavenly vision, took the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Europe, planting churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea. Now, Paul is waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy to join him. Luke does not tell us where he was at the time, but this is obviously not one of the “we” sections.

Athens, the capitol of Attica, was the most celebrated city in ancient Greece, and one of the great cities in the history of mankind. Paul now finds himself walking through the streets of the very home of classical art and literature, a city that reveled in philosophy whether religious or political. Paul had already experienced a number of firsts in his life, but he had never stood in a city like Athens before. The Athenians boasted that there was no other city like Athens.

17:17 - THE SYNAGOGUE. *“So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with those who worshiped God, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.”* This was a distinctively Greek city, a pagan city, a city of philosophy and commerce, but there was a Jewish synagogue there. Following the mission strategy they Holy Spirit had given him before the

First Missionary Journey, he goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath. As in other places, he was given an opportunity to speak and “he reasoned” with them. He may have met with those who were interested at other times as well.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is reasonable and we need to follow Paul’s example and reason with people about the Gospel. Unfortunately, there are many, many people who never get beyond touchy-feely things. Great emphasis is placed on knowledge, wisdom, and truth, as well as praise and thanksgiving. I once heard the late Stephen Olford say that there was a famine in America, a famine of expository preaching. When the late Alexander McClaren went to a new church he asked the people, “What do you want, my head of my feet? You can have either, but you cannot have both.”

It is possible to let the world tell the church what to demand of the pastor. The world may well tell the pastor what to do to appeal to the world, but he must never lose sight of the fact that God has already commissioned the preacher to preach the Word. I have often said that the Lord did not call me to entertain His sheep, He didn’t call me to traumatize His sheep, and He didn’t call me to psychoanalyze His sheep. He called me to feed His sheep. Paul, here as in other synagogues, reasoned with both Jews and Greeks who worshiped God (God-fearing Greeks).

IN THE MARKETPLACE. “First he reasoned in the synagogue at the services to the Jews and the God-fearers, then daily in the agora or marketplace (southwest of the Acropolis, between it and the Areopagus and the Pnyx) to the chance-comers, ‘them that met him’ (pros tous paratugchanontas). Simultaneously with the synagogue preaching at other hours Paul took his stand like Socrates before him and engaged in conversation with (pros) those who happened by” [ATR]. Socrates had indeed taught in this very agora 450 years earlier. The “Athenian agora was crowded with works of art and beautifully painted porticoes in which philosophers lectured to their pupils [WALKER, Thomas, *Acts of the Apostles*: p. 372]. There would have also been booths there where people would find things they needed.

Paul did not play it safe in Athens. He might have continued going to the synagogue until he was forced out, and then turned to the Jews and God-fearing Greeks if or when he was forced out of the synagogue. During the week, he went to the marketplace and made contact with “those who happened to be there”, those who were buying and selling. We may infer from the words, “then, also” in vs. 18 that Paul was talking with the people he met there about things concerning the Lord. When he saw all those lost people there it stirred his soul so that he could not hold his peace.

17:18 - EPICUREANS. “Then also, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers argued with him. Some said, ‘What is this pseudo-intellectual trying to say? Others replied, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign deities”—because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.” Epicureanism was a school of philosophy which emerged in Athens around 300 B.C. According to Gary Poulan in the Holman Bible Dictionary:

“The school of thought was founded by Epicurus who was born in 341 B.C. on the Greek island of Samos. Epicurus founded his school (The Garden) in Athens. Around

him he gathered his students and refined his philosophy. Epicurean thought had a significant impact on the Hellenistic world and later, Rome. Paul met Epicureans as he preached about Jesus and the resurrection in Athens (Acts 17:18).

“Epicurean philosophy centered on the search for happiness. Pleasure is the beginning and fulfillment of a happy life. Often today, Epicurus’ ideas are distorted. Many think he proposed a life of sensual pleasure and gluttony. This concept is far from his philosophy and his own life-style. To Epicurus happiness could only be achieved through tranquillity and a life of contemplation. The goal of Epicureanism was to acquire a trouble-free state of mind, to avoid the pains of the body, and especially mental anguish. Epicureans sought seclusion from worldly temptations. Epicurus taught that a man should not become involved in politics or affairs of the state. These activities simply served to distract one from the life of contemplation.

“He believed in gods, but he thought that they were totally unconcerned with the lives or troubles of mortals. Still, according to Epicurus, it was appropriate to worship the gods because it leads to happiness.

“Even though Epicurean thought focused on the search for happiness and advocated withdrawal from the world’s affairs, it was by no means an egoistic philosophy. Friendship was a very important aspect of the philosophy. Indeed, friendship was seen as the best attribute of society. A true Epicurean was willing to give one’s own life for a friend. The ideal society was a group of like minds living together. Epicureans believed in equality. Both slaves and women were received as equals at the school.

“The Epicurean quest for happiness left little time for concern for afterlife. Epicureans believed in living happy and dying happy. Death did not concern them. They believed that death should be met with a serene mind. In death, the soul is asleep and can no longer be disturbed....

“Epicurean philosophy continued to have a significant impact on ancient civilization for several centuries after the death of Epicurus. Its influence waned considerably after the emergence of Christianity” [Holman Bible Dictionary, in the Bible Navigator Electronic Library, LifeWay Christian Resources - after this, HBD].

STOIC PHILOSOPHERS. Interestingly, there is no article in the HBD under the word Stoics, but Robertson carries a good overview:

Zeno (360-260 B.C.) taught in the Stoa (Porch) and so his teaching was called **Stoicism**. He advanced many noble ideas that found their chief illustration in the Roman philosophers (Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius). He taught self-mastery and hardness with an austerity that ministered to pride or suicide in case of failure, a

distinctly selfish and unloving view of life and with a pantheistic philosophy. Epicurus considered practical atheism the true view of the universe and denied a future life and claimed pleasure as the chief thing to be gotten out of life. He did not deny the existence of gods, but regarded them as unconcerned with the life of men. **The Stoics called Epicurus an atheist.** Lucretius and Horace give the Epicurean view of life in their great poems. This low view of life led to sensualism and does today, for **both Stoicism and Epicureanism are widely influential with people now.** ‘Eat and drink for tomorrow we die,’ they preached. Paul had doubtless become acquainted with both of these philosophies for they were widely prevalent over the world. Here he confronts them in their very home. He is challenged by past-masters in the art of appealing to the senses, men as skilled in their dialectic as the Pharisaic rabbis with whom Paul had been trained and whose subtleties he had learned how to expose” [ATR, bold added by this writer].

As mentioned earlier, there were many firsts in Paul’s life and this is probably another one. As far as we know, this is the first time Paul held a public debate with such philosophers, who, not surprisingly held “a natural contempt for all Jews and for rabbis in particular, though they found Paul a new type at any rate and so with some interest in him” [ATR]. Robertson, quoting Hackett, writes “In Epicureanism, it was man’s sensual nature which arrayed itself against the claims of the gospel; in Stoicism it was his self-righteousness and pride of intellect.”

“Knowing calls the Stoic the Pharisee of philosophy and the Epicurean the Sadducee of philosophy. Socrates in this very agora used to try to interest the passers-by in some desire for better things. That was 450 years before Paul is challenged by these superficial sophisticated Epicureans and Stoics. It is doubtful if Paul had ever met a more difficult situation” [ATR].

PSEUDO-INTELLECTUAL. Not surprisingly, these egotistical philosophers asked, “What is this pseudo-intellectual trying to say?” They were the experts and could not imagine a lowly Jew debating important these issues. Others replied, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign deities.” Why were they calling him a pseudo-intellectual and accusing him of introducing foreign gods? Luke tells us that it was “because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.” The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a stumbling block for both Jews and Gentiles.

17:19 - TO THE AREOPAGUS. “*They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, and said, ‘May we learn about this new teaching you’re speaking of?’*” The philosophers of Athens “took” Paul to the Areopagus, but they did not drag him there as the mob in Philippi had dragged him through the market place there. They took him without violence, to the Areopagus. “Mars Hill” is the translation [WALKER: 375]. Various commentaries provide basically the same information, but one may glean a little more information by reading a number of references. In *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*, we learn that:

“This was the place or court in which the Areopagites, the celebrated supreme judges

of Athens, assembled. It was on a hill almost in the middle of the city; but nothing now remains by which we can determine the form or construction of the tribunal. The hill is almost entirely a mass of stone, and is not easily accessible, its sides being steep and abrupt. On many accounts this was the most celebrated tribunal in the world. Its decisions were distinguished for justice and correctness; nor was there any court in Greece in which so much confidence was placed. This court took cognizance of murders, impieties, and immoralities; they punished vices of all kinds, including idleness; they rewarded the virtuous; they were peculiarly attentive to blasphemies against the gods, and to the performance of the sacred mysteries of religion. It was, therefore, with the greatest propriety that Paul was questioned before this tribunal, as being regarded as a setter forth of strange gods, and as being supposed to wish to introduce a new mode of worship” [BARNES].

The New Commentary on the Whole Bible provides a little more information:

“The **Areopagus** (otherwise known as “Mars’ Hill”) was a very famous judicial court where the worst criminals and great religious questions were dealt with. According to Athenian tradition, the institution had been established at least 1,000 years before by the city’s patron goddess, Athene. Athens had become a democracy during the fifth century b.c., so that **much of the power of Mars Hill had been taken away, but it still retained great prestige which even increased under Roman rule.** It seems that one of its primary responsibilities was **to determine whether or not to allow public lectures.** Paul was taken before the court, not to be put on trial, but to explain more fully what he had been talking about in the marketplace” [NCWB, bold added by this writer].

17:20 - SOUNDS STRANGE. *“For what you say sounds strange to us, and we want to know what these ideas mean.”* Formally, but courteously, they ask Paul to repeat what he had been saying in the marketplace.

“The council wanted to know about Paul’s **new teaching**, which was **strange** to their **ears**. In Athens, the ancient world’s intellectual center, **the Athenians and** foreign residents loved to debate **the latest ideas**. This openness gave Paul an opportunity **to** preach his message” [Bible Knowledge Commentary - BKC].

17:21 - SPENT THEIR TIME. *“Now all the Athenians and the foreigners residing there spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new.”* This verse is added parenthetically by Luke to provide a little background. “All the Athenians” is a general statement denoting those who were free to assemble at a particular time to discuss philosophy. “The foreigners residing there” were foreigners who came to Athens and stayed there for an extended period of time in order to study the latest philosophical ideas. Both the citizens and foreign residents spent their time “telling or hearing something new.”

Literally, they were continually seeking something newer, earnestly craving something fresher than they had heard before. “The new soon became stale with these itching and frivolous Athenians” [ATR]. Their desire to hear the very latest thoughts and ideas gave Paul an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. Now, this really was something new! Furthermore, this new belief would not grow stale. Today, those most excited about the Word of God are the ones who spend the most time with it. I read once that A. T. Robertson once announced to one of his classes at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, that he never picked up his Bible and read it that he did not see something he had never seen before. Few men have ever made a greater contribution to our understanding of the Bible than A. T. Robertson, especially with his *Word Studies in the New Testament*.

These were neither the first nor the last to crave something new. I recall a conversation with the late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman in which he lamented the fact that many modern theologians had gone overboard in their search for something novel. These Athenians have their modern counterparts who are also hooked on “something new”.

Paul’s Areopagus Address

17:22 - EXTREMELY RELIGIOUS. “*Then Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said: ‘Men of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect.’*” As any preacher knows, the introduction to a sermon is critical. In the introduction, a speaker may either gain or lose the attention of his audience. Paul certainly understood that. “Men of Athens” were classical words with which many great orators had opened their orations before this council. It was his formal greeting, but he does not waste time telling them of his background or credentials, nor does he try to flatter them with praise. This audience would not be impressed with that.

His introduction was brief and to the point. If he had written it out and then spent days rewriting it, he could not have improved on it. He said, “I see that you are extremely religious in every respect.” Years ago, when I preached on this passage, I read from the KJV, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” Then I had to explain that Paul didn’t really mean it like that! He did not try to gain their attention by offending them.

I preached from the KJV for many years and every verse I ever memorized was from the King James Version, but I studied from the New American Standard Bible. I was on the board of trustees with LifeWay Christian Resources, attending my first committee meeting as a member of the Broadman and Holman Committee when Dr. Ed Blum was introduced as the General Editor of the new Holman Christian Standard Bible, a work in progress. That day, we had to make the decision as to whether or not we would stay the course with this new translation or discontinue it. We made the decision to continue the translation process and to publish the new word-for-word translation. Like the NASB, it is a word-for-word translation, not a “version” of an earlier translation. For example, the KJV is a “version” of earlier works, eighty-five percent of which was Tyndale. At the same time, the HCSB is as readable as other modern translations. For the first time ever, translators were in touch with each

other by the Internet, and for the first time ever, a translator could, with a click of a key, call up every use of a particular Greek or Hebrew word and see how it had been translated in every case. No other translation has ever been so thoroughly checked for consistency.

This verse demonstrates the importance of a literal translation. You could imagine how these philosophers would have responded if he had dismissed their philosophy as ignorant superstition! In that setting he may have lost more than the attention of his audience.

17:23 - OBJECTS OF YOUR WORSHIP. *“For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.”* Everywhere he went, he observed altars, temples, shrines, and statues to a pantheon of gods. No doubt the one that stuck in his mind more than any other was an altar with the inscription, “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD”. Considering Paul’s mind and his theology, this must have been sadly amusing. They worshiped a God who lacked the ability to communicate with them or to reveal his identity. In his third book in his initial trilogy, *He Is There and He Is not Silent*, Francis Schaeffer stresses that God is there (book one), and that He reveals Himself to man. He communicates with man. Any god who cannot do that really should remain an unknown god.

The Holy Spirit must have given him the idea for a sermon when he saw that altar. Someone has pointed out that this is the only mention of a pagan altar in the NT. Some tell us there were actually several altars “to the unknown god”. Years ago, I read various explanations of this altar. For example, one, as I recall, stated that there was a tradition that said that the philosophers of Athens observed all their altars, temples, and shrines and they began pondering the possibility that there might have been a god whom they have overlooked. According to one story, they released a flock of sheep and let them graze until they were filled; when the sheep lay down and went to sleep, they erected an altar to the Unknown God. It is sufficient to say that “The Athenians, who feared they might overlook venerating some deity they did not know about, dedicated an altar **TO AN UNKNOWN GOD**. When Paul referred to this, he did not emphasize the **altar** but their ignorance of the true God” [BKC]. Another commentary suggests that the altar “was probably built to commemorate some divine occurrence that they couldn’t attribute to any other god. Whatever the explanation, Paul used this as the basis for speaking to them about the shallowness of their religion” [NCWB].

WHAT YOU WORSHIP IN IGNORANCE. Paul uses “what” not “who”. The Greeks did not revere a personal God but an abstract idea. “This was similar to his message to the idolaters of Lycaonia (14:15-17). Paul’s subject was not Jesus as the Messiah; rather, he spoke about the living God as opposed to the materialistic and pantheistic religion of the Greeks. Notice the authoritative way in which Paul brings the truth to these people” [NCWB]. Let me repeat a statement from Francis Schaeffer, which had an application here:

“We must never forget that **the first part of the Gospel is not ‘accept Jesus Christ as Savior,’ but ‘God is there.’** Only then are we ready to hear God’s solution for

man's *moral* dilemma in the substitutionary work of Christ in history”
[SCHAEFFER, The Complete Works of..., Vol. 1; p. 144, bold added by this writer].

I PROCLAIM. This is emphatic. They had called him a babbler, one who speak strange things (vs. 20), but he is a preacher of the true God. He is about to proclaim the God who is there first. Only then will he move on to the “accept Jesus Christ as Savior” part.

17:24 - THE GOD WHO MADE THE WORLD. “*The God who made the world and everything in it—He is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in shrines made by hands.*” Dr. Eddleman chose the title, *An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts*, after talking with a friend who had written a book which he titled, *A Practical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*. A friend once sought to help me in my ministry by informing me that I should not have asked Dr. Eddleman to preach a revival for me because “He is a preacher’s preacher, not a people’s preacher.” I recently mentioned that comment to my wife Becky and she said, “He preached the simplest sermons I have ever heard.” I once listened to him preach in a revival and on Friday evening I realized that I could recall each of his six consecutive sermons and follow the basic outline of each. I also had an opportunity to sit and question him on a number of occasions. I have never talked with a more brilliant man and I still go back and check his commentary on “Acts from time to time. In his comments on this verse, he writes:

“**Made** means not chance or accidental creation. **The world** is ‘the cosmos, an orderly harmonious systematic universe’ (Webster). Opposite to chaos. (He was) not a God for first one thing and then another as were deities represented among the thirty thousand idols and altars in Athens. **All things therein** includes both the major aspects and the minutiae of the universe as being the fruit of God’s purposeful creation” [HLE: 248].

The Epicureans denied that any god had created the world, holding that all matter is eternal. Paul proclaims God as the Creator here, whereas he had begun with Abraham and the Messianic Covenant when he was peaching in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, and there can be little doubt that he had used the same Scriptures in proclaiming the message of salvation in other synagogues he had visited. “The greatest Greek philosophers could not see any difference between God and the universe. Therefore, their religious concepts were cloudy. In order to overcome this, Paul made an authoritative statement as to the basis for all true religion” [NCWB]. He is proclaiming that the God who was unknown to them created all things.

A number of years ago I heard a preacher make the statement that Paul blew his opportunity in Athens (my words, not his). He reasoned that Paul had departed from his usual message by forgetting the Scripture and debating philosophy. He assumed that Paul’s ego got in the way and he forgot to use the Scripture and God did not bless his effort. I thought, “What an unfortunate statement for a preacher of the Gospel to make?” Well, that is not exactly what I thought. I really thought that was a really dumb thing to say, theologically speaking of course.

In my mind, I responded to that statement. First, the statement unfairly judges Paul. How do we know Paul let his ego run away with him? I might have been tempted to try to impress those philosophers, but that does not mean that Paul had that problem. Second, from the statement, one might infer that the speaker was saying Paul was not being led by the Holy Spirit. However, I am sure that preacher would tell us that the Holy Spirit was leading him to make his statement!

The simple fact is that Paul was absolutely right in reviewing the Messianic Covenant in a Jewish synagogue, and then announcing that the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, had come and suffered and bled and died for our sins, and that He arose from the dead, and ascended to the Father where He is making intercession for our sins. That message would have been absolutely meaningless to these Greek philosophers. They not only did not know the Hebrew Scripture, they detested the Jews.

When speaking with pagan philosophers, there is no better place to start than at the beginning, and the beginning means creation. Sadly, many pastors are not prepared to deal intelligently with the biblical account of creation. When I was in junior high school, I went to my pastor and asked him about some things a teacher was saying in my class. He gave me the same ambiguous answer others have used: however it happened, however the evolutionists say it happened, we know that God was the One behind it all. If evolutionists tell us it took millions, then billions of years to get from the beginning to where we are to day, there are always Christians who will adopt a position to accommodate that theory (the gap theory or the day/age theory, for example).

The boy in the pew should be able to look to the man in the pulpit for some answers, and all Christians should know enough about Creation to offer a defense when questioned by the secularist, agnostic, or atheist. I have, for some time, been intrigued by discussions about Intelligent Design (ID). Evolutionists are strongly opposed to having Intelligent Design taught in public schools, as an alternate theory along with evolution. Their reasoning is that those who teach Intelligent Design may bring God into the debate. I will go beyond that: Intelligent Design demands and Intelligent Designer!

For years, Dr. Henry Morris, a hydrologist who founded the Institute for Creation Research (ICR), and Dr. DeWayne Gish, a paleontologist, stressed that the available evidence supports creation more so than evolution. For example, the Second Law of Thermodynamics creates serious problems for evolutionists. Dr. Gish, who debated evolutionists in universities around the world, pointed to the fossil record for proof for special creation. He challenged evolutionists to produce a transitional life form in any fossil. Many others continue the research and release their findings on a regular basis. Ken Ham, *Answers in Genesis*, with whom I had an opportunity for a lengthy visit when we both arrived early for a meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Pastors Conference, a number of years ago, often stresses that we have the testimony of the only One who was there at the time of Creation. Ken Ham often speaks to children and young people on the subject of creation, and he stresses that the Book of Genesis is the foundation for the rest of the Bible. I have often stressed that if you don't have a Creator at the beginning, you don't need a redeemer today because you will not have a Judge at the end.

Paul knew exactly what he was doing when he began his defense before the most brilliant philosophers of the day by pointing to creation and stressing that he served the God who created all things. For those who question his wisdom, let me stress that there was a positive, though limited response that day. There is more to that story, however. The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to include the basic thoughts expressed that day and He has led countless preachers to proclaim the message from this chapter.

LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. The God they did not know not only created all things, all things are subject to him, “and he gives meaning to their existence. This was in contrast to the ideas of blind Force and Fate, which the Greeks believed in” [NCWB]. “Earth is ‘ges’, where man inhabits, not ‘kosmos’ which is more inclusive” [HLE: 248].

DOES NOT LIVE IN SHRINES. This is an idea the Jews understood (1 Kings 8:27; Isa. 66:1, 2; Acts 7:48) and all Christians should appreciate the point. What Paul is saying would help to define the nature of the God he was proclaiming to this group, but it was not the kind of God they had embraced before.

17:25 - NEITHER IS HE. *“Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things.”* The idea is that God is not worshiped by human hands (KJV). The true God, the One who was really unknown to Athens, is not served with men’s hands as though He were dependant upon them. He can think and act for Himself. He uses men to serve His purpose, but He is not dependant upon them. The Epicureans, like Deists, miss this point by alienating God from the universe, as far as His maintenance, support, and sovereignty are concerned.

These Greeks needed to understand this. The sovereign God we worship cannot be confined to a physical temple. He has absolutely no need that can be provided by human hands. He demands that we obey Him and serve Him, not because He needs us, but because we need to serve Him.

GIVES LIFE. Pagans of all ages and all places must give life to their god, since he cannot give life either to himself or to human beings. “This Supreme Personal God is the source of life, breath, and everything. Paul here rises above all Greek philosophers” [ATR] in claiming that the supreme personal God is the source of all life. In his own unique way, Adam Clarke captures the force and focus of this verse:

“These words are elegantly introduced by St. Paul: God gives life, because he is the fountain of it: he gives breath, the faculty of breathing or respiration, by which this life is preserved; and though breathing or respiration, be the act of the animal, yet the pnohn, the faculty of breathing, and extracting from the atmosphere what serves as a pabulum of life, is given by the influence of God, and the continued power thus to respire, and extract that pure oxygen gas which is so evident a support of animal life, is as much the continued gift of God as life itself is. But, as much more is necessary to keep the animal machine in a state of repair, God gives the ta panta, all the other

things which are requisite for this great and important purpose, that the end for which life was given may be fully answered. St. Paul also teaches that Divine worship is not enacted and established for GOD, but for the use of his creatures: he needs nothing that man can give him; for man has nothing but what he has received from the hand of his Maker” [CLARKE].

17:26 - FROM ONE MAN. *“From one man He has made every nation of men to live all over the earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live...”* They did not know the Genesis account of creation and so they could not have really appreciated the fact that God began by creating one man, Adam, and that all people are descended from that one man. A few years ago, someone reported that scientists had determined from DA tests that all human beings are descended from one common set of parents. Paul knew that two thousand years ago.

HE HAS MADE EVERY NATION OF MEN. Paul is making a crucial point that all people need to understand when he affirms the unity of the human race

“with a common origin and with God as the Creator. This view runs counter to Greek exclusiveness which treated other races as barbarians and to Jewish pride which treated other nations as heathen or pagan (the Jews were laos, the Gentiles ethnê). The cosmopolitanism of Paul here rises above Jew and Greek and claims the one God as the Creator of the one race of men. The Athenians themselves claimed to be antochthonous (indigenous) and a special creation” [ATR].

HAS DETERMINED. Paul added that the Creator “has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live.” Is not that what Job wrote some two thousand years earlier? “He makes nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges nations, then leads them away” (Job 12:23). It is a fact that God was responsible for the division of people groups at the Tower of Babel when He confused the languages. However, it would be a far too narrow view to hold that God placed all people groups where He wanted them and determined that there should be no contact between races and nations. Things may have been less complicated in ancient times as people began crossing those boundaries to trade with others, to form alliances, and to intermarry with others. “Paul opposed both Stoical fate and Epicurean chance, saying that men and nations live according to God’s sovereign arrangement of history (**the times**) and location (**the bounds of their habitation**)” [NCWB].

The Old Testament emphasis on God’s plans for the Gentiles, or His provisions for the nations of the world are deeply imbedded in the Abrahamic Covenant. Jesus commands us to reach out to the nations of the world when He gave us the Great Commission, and it is a commission, not a great suggestion.

We might also add that it was not God who bought and sold the 60 million slaves who served masters in Rome. At the same time, God was absolutely responsible for the rise and fall of nations and empires, as well as the forced replacement of some nations, including the resettlement of the Northern Ten Tribes (Israel) and the Babylonian Captivity, from which only a remnant returned to

Judah.

17:27 - MIGHT SEEK GOD. “...*(S)o that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.*” Even though Paul does not explain this point, it is understandable that one Bible scholar would conclude that

“The design of thus placing them on the earth--of giving them their habitation among his works--was that they should contemplate his wisdom in his works, and thus come to a knowledge of his existence and character. All nations, though living in different regions and climates, have thus the opportunity of becoming acquainted with God, Rom 1:19,20. The fact, that the nations did not thus learn the character of the true God, shows their great stupidity and wickedness. The design of Paul in this was, doubtless, to reprove the idolatry of the Athenians. The argument is this: "God has given to each nation its proper opportunity to learn his character. Idolatry, therefore, is folly and wickedness; since it is possible to find out the existence of the one God from his works" [BARNES].

Paul stresses, in the catalog of Gentile sins, in Romans One, that the nations of the world had rejected the Creator and started worshiping the objects He created. They turned their backs on Him and gave them over to those sins that are bound to fill the hearts of those who reject Him. We may consider God's condemnation of Israel and Judah for rejecting Him:

“Be horrified at this, heavens; be shocked and utterly appalled. This is the Lord's declaration. For My people have committed a double evil: **They have abandoned Me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water**” (Jer 2:12-13, bold added).

17:28 - IN HIM WE LIVE. “*For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'*” Paul quotes from “the Cretan poet Epimenides (c. 600 b.c.) in his poem called *Cretica* . Paul used it to say that God is the living and immanent principle of all existence” [NCWB]. The proof of God's nearness was not in stoic pantheism, “but real immanence in God as God dwells in us” [ATR]. Contrary to the philosophy of the Epicureans, and the Deists, the God who was unknown to the Athenians, not only created life, He sustains it. He is the provider of every essential of life. He placed earth 93 millions miles from the sun. At 92 million miles all life would be consumed by the heat of the sun, and at 94 million miles all life would freeze. He provides the food and water necessary for man to live on earth. We could prepare a long list, but one word should make the point. Gravity!

Luke was a medical doctor and there were physicians in Athens, but medical science was still in its embryonic stage, and would remain so for centuries. Today, we understand much more of the mystery of the human body with all its systems and functions. The more we learn the more we discover what we do not know. When we look at the circulatory system, the skeletal system, the digestive system, and the nervous system, we should recall these words: “For in Him we live and

move and exist.” To the Psalmist, He reveals this great truth: “For it was You who created my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know [this] very well” (Psalms 139:13-14).

YOUR OWN POETS. “This was quoted from *Phaenomena* by the poet Aratus, a Greek who lived about three centuries before Paul. In context, the statement affirms the fact that all men are God’s creatures inasmuch as their very lives come from him. Paul elsewhere quoted the Greek poets 1 Cor. 15:33; Titus 1:12) [NCWB]. This verse reveals how well Saul of Tarsus was prepared to become the apostle to the Gentiles. Who among the original apostles could quote the Greek poets? He is saying here that the God who was unknown to the philosophers of Athens created all things and He sustains all things. Whether one acknowledges Him or not, He is responsible for our existence, and for our survival on this planet.

17:29 - BEING GOD’S OFFSPRING. “*Being God’s offspring, then, we shouldn’t think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.*” Nowhere had the art of idol making been raised to such heights as they had in Athens. It was the logical conclusion, if they agreed with their own poets that they were “God’s offspring”. However, we shouldn’t think that “the divine nature” is fashioned by “human art and imagination” from “gold or silver or stone”. The conclusion is both logical and “inevitable: **since humans have been created by God, the divine Being, He cannot possibly be in the form of an idol, an image conceived and constructed by man** (cf. Rom. 1:22-23) [BKC]. Robertson offers technical assistance here:

“That the Godhead is like (to theion einai homoion). Infinitive with accusative of general reference in indirect discourse. To theion is strictly “the divine” nature like theiotês (Rom 1:20) rather than like theotês (Col 2:9). Paul may have used to theion here to get back behind all their notions of various gods to the real nature of God. The Athenians may even have used the term themselves” [ATTRR].

Paul is trying to get behind their superficial notions about deities to reveal the true nature of God. This was a challenge as he stood before intellectuals who not only believed they were superior to all other races, but were also convinced that they had cornered the market on knowledge and wisdom.

17:30 - THEREFORE. “*Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent...*” We can learn a lot from the “therefore’s in the Bible. Usually, when we see the word, we should remember the foundation that has just been laid, and then look ahead to see what the speaker is building on that foundation.

OVERLOOKED. Had God really overlooked their ignorance of Him. Does he excuse the sins of pagan peoples? Not according to the first chapter of Romans. Paul uses the same word 17:23 when he mentioned THE UNKNOWN GOD, and added, “Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.”

He has made his case, and now he drives home his point. “Therefore” points back to the time when the Creator was still the Unknown God to Athens. Paul’s reference to “the time of ignorance” was not intended to offend these scholars and philosophers who were so proud of their wisdom. The time before the full knowledge of God came to them through Jesus Christ was a time of ignorance (insufficient knowledge) of God (vs. 23).

REPENT. Repentance denotes a change of mind and heart, and these philosophers are now commanded to turn from their meaningless idols to the living God and commit themselves to Him. Even though they had not previously known Him, “God now commands all people everywhere to repent.” God’s special revelation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ takes away forever any plea of ignorance. They may have tried to justify their lack of knowledge of God in the past, but now no one can plead ignorance. Now, God commands all people everywhere to repent. Repentance is a change of mind accompanied by a change or direction for his or her life.

This is a difficult verse for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it seems on the surface to contradict certain other passages (Col. 1:6; 23; Titus 1:11; and Romans 1). There is no real contradiction as we see in the comments on the entire verse in The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

“**God overlooked** human **ignorance** revealed in idol-making, that is, *He was patient*. Though people are under His wrath (Rom. 1:18) and are *without excuse because of natural revelation* (Rom. 1:19-20), God “in His forbearance (*anochē-*, ‘holding back, delay’) left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (Rom. 3:25). This parallels Acts 14:16, “In the past, He let all nations go their way”... *All through time the Gentiles were responsible for the general revelation* given to them; now with the worldwide proclamation of the gospel, the Gentiles are also *responsible to special revelation*. That response is to obey God’s command **to repent** of their sins” [BKC, italics added by this writer].

17:31- BECAUSE. “(B)ecause He has set a day on which He is going to judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead.” He is about to reveal the reason they must repent (vs. 30).

SET A DAY. They must repent because God “has set a day on which He is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed.” The Greek, set a date (*estêsen hêmeran*),”is the first aorist active indicative of *histêmi*, to place, set. God did set the day in his counsel and he will fulfil it in his own time” [ATR]. God has set a day when He will judge the world “in righteousness by the Man (Jesus) He has appointed.”

This is a definite statement about a definite future event. The Day of Judgment is fixed in eternity. It is a certainty and all people everywhere need to be warned to repent, whether in “civilized” Christian countries or in the most primitive pagan culture. Paul preached the whole Gospel and judgment is an integral part of the message. Believe in Jesus and you will go to heaven; refuse Him

and you will go to hell. A very godly lady recently told me that she had spent a fortune trying to have family members prayed out of purgatory. When I asked her how she went about that, she said, “You just write out a check and take it to the priest and if it is not enough he will tell you.” She went on to say, “Now I know there is only a heaven and a hell. No purgatory.”

IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. God is a holy God and His holiness demands that the guilty pay for their sins. In that final judgment of lost people there will be no miscarriage of justice. The only way to escape the wrath of God is to trust in Jesus so that His righteousness will be imputed unto you.

Let us be very clear about this. The Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost for a specific purpose, and that purpose is summarized by Jesus:

“When He comes, He will convict the world about **sin, righteousness, and judgment**: about sin, because they do not believe in Me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see Me; and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged” (John 16:8-11, bold added).

When Paul stood before Felix in Caesarea, his testimony shocked the governor: “Now as he spoke about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became afraid and replied, “Leave for now, but when I find time I’ll call for you” (Acts 24:25). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to convict individuals of sin, to persuade them that they must be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, or face God on the day of judgement, when the One they rejected will be sitting in judgment on them.

A popular television preacher has reportedly declared that he does not preach on sin, repentance, or judgment because he just wants people to feel good. We never preach the complete Gospel, which means we never preach the true Gospel, if we do not preach “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, KJV). If you believe in Jesus Christ, His righteousness is imputed unto you and, clothed in His righteousness, you may stand in the presence of the Lord forever. Those who reject Him will spend eternity in hell. Jesus Himself will say, “Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I never knew you.” Those who believe in Him will hear Him say, “Come ye blessed of my Father.”

PROVIDED PROOF. Paul came now to the part of the Gospel that divided people wherever he preached it. The people who boasted of their devotion to THE UNKNOWN GOD were not about to give up their “religion” for some strange “superstitions”. But, in other places the Jews were divided over the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The simple fact is that they might have investigated it if they had been as committed to knowledge and wisdom and they professed to be. How could they have been so narrow minded, so blind that they would not investigate something as wonderful as this? Just ask a Twenty-first Century evolutionist why he is so strongly opposed to special creation without ever looking into it.

Paul states in no uncertain terms that God “has provided proof of this to everyone by raising Him (Jesus) from the dead. Witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus were many and accessible, but these pagan philosophers had heard all they wanted to hear. If this seems inconceivable, consider how many professing Christians today laugh at any claim that the Scripture is the inerrant Word of God.

Today, even in America, many in the media and many in academia seemed determined to drive Jesus Christ out of the public arena, even if it means tolerating Islamic claims, passing on Jewish symbols, and advancing New Age religious philosophies.

I was visiting with an elderly saint at my health club this very day (Sept. 21, 2007) when I heard him lament his pastor’s statement that it is not necessary to pray in Jesus’ name, so people in the church where he has been a faithful member for many years pray, “in His name”. I told him that I recently clicked the Recycle Bin on my computer desktop and the word GOD popped up. I wondered what it was and clicked on it. Then, I got the question, DO YOU WANT TO DELETE GOD? I could not hit that key for several seconds. I just kept looking at it and thinking, that is exactly what a lot of Americans are doing every day. A few days later, I forwarded a message to Major Ramsey Coutta, a chaplain in the Army, who earned a Ph.D. from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. I do not remember the message but I remember the response from this very astute young man. He said, “Some people are trying to erase Jesus, but they will never do it.”

I responded to my friend at the health club by pointing out three computer terms, either of which may be applied to the world’s attitude toward Jesus. Some would “delete” God, some would “erase” Jesus, and some would simply click the button minimize key and “minimize” Jesus. God forbid that we minimize Jesus by denying Him or even putting off Jesus after God has provided proof that He is the Messiah, the Savior, by raising him from the dead.

17:32 - RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. *“When they heard about resurrection of the dead, some began to ridicule him. But others said, ‘We will hear you about this again.’”* Apparently Paul got no further than the Resurrection. To the Epicureans who held that there was no life after death the idea of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was absurd. The Stoics, however, believed in a future existence but not this kind. They looked forward to being absorbed into the divine being, much like the Hindus today. We should add here that New Age religious concepts have their roots in Eastern mysticism, which in turn, has its roots in ancient Gnosticism. This is a satanic concept which that old serpent introduced in the Garden of Eden (you shall be as God), and then launched afresh by Nimrod, he founder of Babylon.

For those who believe New Age religions movements came on the scene and then faded away in the mid-nineties, let me suggest a book by Rah Yungen, *A Time of Departing, Lighthouse Trails*, Silverton. OR, 2006. Yungen insists that many Christians have blended Christianity and New Age so subtly that they talk about their practices and no one seems the wiser. To support his claim, he quotes a number of Christians “leaders”:

Zen Buddhism should be taught in every 5th grade class in America” (Jack Canfield,

author of *The Road Less Traveled*).

“I do yoga, tai chi which is a Chinese martial art and three kinds of meditation - vipasana, transcendental, mantra (sound) meditation” (Jack Canfield, author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*).

“We need to become aware of the Cosmic Christ, which means recognizing that every being has within it the light of Christ” (Matthew Fox, author of *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*). [Yungen; 10].

Yungen offers many examples to support his claim that New Age is now deeply ingrained in Christianity in America.

During the seventies and eighties, preachers were warning us against Secular Humanism. We heard it all the time. Then sometime around 1990, we began reading reports that more and more people stated in various studies that they believe in God. Preachers announced once again that we were reaching America for Christ. Sadly, very few pastors and teachers realized what was happening. The old Humanism against which we were warned received a major religious injection of New Age religious philosophy and religion. Then in the Mid-nineties, we began hearing less and less about New Age and more and more about Postmodernism. Postmodernism is an umbrella term under which both Humanism (modernism) and New Age (postmodern) can operate without too much friction.

When you turn on Fox News and watch Bill O'Reilly, you may hear someone talk about being spiritual, or religious. On one Hannity and Colmes program, the guest was a young woman who had gotten a lot of attention for her indecency. It seems that she was trying to straighten out her life because Sean Hannity made the statement, “You say you are religious, right? She looked at him as though she didn't know how to respond. He asked the question again, and then asked, “You are a Christian?” She said, “I prefer to say, “I'm spiritual.”

On October 17, 2007, President George W. Bush greeted the Dalai Lama of Tibet before the speaker of the House and Senator Robert Byrd presented him with the Congressional Medal of Honor for his contribution to peace, much to the protestations of China. The president made a plea for religious freedom and that is good, The disturbing thing is that Tibet has been the source of a lot of New Age spirituality that has swept across America. We need to heed the warning Paul wrote and sent to Timothy:

“Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared” (1 Tim 4:1-2).

SOME BEGAN TO RIDICULE HIM. Some, not all, of those philosophers began ridiculing him and kept on ridiculing him (the tense is imperfect). It is interesting to compare the simple

message that Jesus died for our sins and God raised him from the dead to some of the really bazar things those pagans in Athens believed in the middle of the First Century. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was God's proof that Jesus was His Son, the Messiah, but when Paul mentioned it, they began to ridicule him to such a degree that he could not continue. Those who were not ridiculing Paul dismissed him with the assurance that "We will hear you about this again." Governor Felix would dismiss Paul, promising to call for him when he had a more convenient season (Acts 24:24ff), but he did so because of the fear of judgment. Here, the mockers could not be brought under control so that Paul could continue, but they do not attack him either.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is ridiculed in the world today. The prince of this world will see that it continues. Those who ridicule the Gospel on the grounds that they trust science, not religion, are not aware that something supernatural is going on in their life even as they mock those who believe in the special creation, the Flood, the virgin birth, or the Resurrection. No one can be more smug or arrogant than one who has all the answers.

17:33 - PAUL WENT OUT. *"So Paul went out from their presence."* Paul was dismissed and he left the Areopagus. He must have been disappointed, but he fared better than Socrates who was sentenced to death for setting forth strange philosophies. Paul may have left in the company of those who wanted believed, or wanted to hear more, but his public address was interrupted so that he could not continue.

17:34 - SOME MEN JOINED HIM. *"However, some men joined him and believed, among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them."* A few people believed and one man, Dionysius, is mentioned by name, as well as "a woman named Damaris." "Ancient tradition says that Paul chose Dionysius to be the leader of the small group of Christians at Athens" [NCWB]. Damaris would not have been among those who heard Paul that day on Mars' Hill.

"Paul was not driven away from Athens, but there is no record of further work there, nor any mention as to how long he remained. The commercial men of Thessalonica and Corinth believed Paul's message more readily than the highly educated and well-cultured Athenians. Paul apparently never found it necessary to communicate with the church at Athens, and there is no indication that he ever visited there again" [NCWB].

It is interesting that some who spend a lifetime studying the writings of Paul, sit in judgment on him when it comes to his efforts in Athens. To some, he blew it because his ego got the best of him and he tried to match wits with philosophers instead of proclaiming the Scripture. However, and it bears repeating, these people, unlike the Jews in the synagogues in other cities, knew nothing of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Others have asked whether or not Paul's ministry in Athens was a failure. One writer responds to that question in this way:

“This is difficult to assess. There is no record of a church being founded in Athens. Paul later referred to the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:15) in Corinth as ‘the first converts’ (lit., ‘firstfruits’) of Achaia. (Athens was in Achaia.) How could this be if some were converted in Athens, as Acts 17:34 asserts? Probably the solution is found in thinking of Stephanas as the firstfruits “of a church” in Achaia. Also possibly the term “‘firstfruits’ can be used of more than one person. If no church was begun in Athens, the failure was not in Paul’s message or method but in the hardness of the Athenians’ hearts” [BKC].

I am going to take issue with those who believe Paul’s ministry in Athens was a failure. In fact, I believe they are way off base. Like James Garner’s character in *Support Your Local Sheriff*, Paul was “just passing through” on his way to another place. He had left Bereoa and gone to Athens, but it seems that he was actually on his way to Corinth. There is no reason to assume that his next stop on the Second Missionary Journey was going to be Athens. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit was making the decisions, not Paul. A more positive approach is to assume that Paul, having escaped a bad situation in Thessalonica and Bereoa, sailed to Athens where he waited for Silas and Timothy to join him to report on the situation there after his departure. While waiting, he visited a local synagogue and witnessed in the market place until he caught the attention of certain philosophers who invited him to speak to them on Mars Hill. He took advantage of that opportunity and saw a few people saved before hearing the report and sending his partners in missions back to Bereoa and Thessalonica, with instructions to meet him in Corinth as soon as possible.

As mentioned in an earlier passage, William Carey and Ann Adoniram Judson worked for years in a strange land before they saw the first converts. Were they failures? Of course not. When I was in seminary in New Orleans, a group of friends went down town to attend a crusade service in the French Quarters. When we arrived, we found that the service was to be held in Pete Herman’s night club. The evangelist suggested that we go into Pete Herman’s bar and invite patrons to come into the night club side to hear him preach. I was a boxing fanatic at the time and immediately recognized the name of the man who had held the world championship in the Bantam weight division (as I recall, from 1918 - 1922). I was talking with Peter Hermon himself when we heard the music. The service had begun and I was still in the bar side. When I walked through the door from the bar side to the night club side, the man who was leading the singing spotted me and in his songs he appealed to me and to a young woman who worked in one of the joints on Bourbon Street, the only person attending the service, other than those of us from the Baptist Seminary. Was that service a failure? Not if that young woman was saved when she talked with the evangelist after the service. How can we accuse Paul of being a failure when he took advantage of a rare opportunity and saw a few people saved?

It was well worth the effort for the few who were saved in Athens, even if he had to have been disappointed in the outcome of his work there. No church was established in Athens at this time, but Paul left a witness there when he left to go to Corinth.

SPECIAL NOTE: For those who may wonder why Paul bothered to try to reason with these pagans, a quote from Francis Schaeffer might help:

“In historic Christianity a personal God creates man in His own image, and in such case there is nothing that would make it nonsense to consider that he would communicate to man in verbalized form. Why should He not communicate in verbalized form when He had made him a verbalized being, in his thoughts as well as in communication with other men? Having created man in His own image, why should He fail to communicate to that verbalizing being in such terms? The communication would then be three ways: God to man, and vice-versa; man to man; and man to himself....

“Why should God not communicate propositionally to the man, the verbalizing being, whom He made in such a way that we communicate propositionally to each other? Therefore, in the biblical position there is the possibility of verifiable facts involved: a personal God communicating in verbalized form propositionally to man - not only concerning those things man would call in our generation “religious truths,” but also down into the area of history and science.

“God has set the revelation of the Bible in history; He did not give it (as He could have done) in the form of a theological textbook. Having set the revelation in history, what sense then would it make for God to give us a revelation in which the *history was wrong*? God has also set man in the *universe*, which the Scriptures themselves say speaks of this God. What sense then would it make for God to give His revelation in a book that was wrong concerning the universe? The answer to both questions must be, ‘No sense at all!’”

“It is plain, therefore, that from the viewpoint of the Scriptures themselves there is a unity over the whole field of knowledge. God has spoken, in linguistic propositional form, truth concerning Himself and truth concerning man, history and the universe.....The unit is there because God has spoken truth into all areas of our knowledge.

“At the same time, one must avoid the opposite mistake of saying that because God has communicated truly concerning science, all scientific study is wasted. This is a false deduction. To say that God communicates *truly* does not mean that God communicates *exhaustively*.” [Francis Schaeffer, -THE COMPLETE WORKS OF Francis Schaeffer, Vol I, *The God Who is There*, Crossway Books, Westchester, Il. p. 99-100].

I have read Francis Schaeffer for many years. I noted in the front of Volume I in the Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer each time I read (very carefully) each book in the this volume. I read it

in 1986, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1994, and now in 2007. I will never forget reading a quote from Martin Luther the first time I read the first book in the series, *The God Who Is There*:

“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point” [Schaeffer, Vol. I, p. 11].

Paul was confessing Jesus Christ at the point of attack when he proclaimed him to the philosophers on the Areopagus. How many times have I failed to confess Christ, while professing faith in Him, because I did not speak up when it counted?!!

Chapter 18

The Gospel Goes to Corinth

18:1 - TO CORINTH. “*After this, he left from Athens and went to Corinth...*” Athens had been an interruption in Paul’s mission strategy and he had changed his tactics to take advantage of his opportunity while he awaited the arrival of Silas and Timothy from Berea. In order to appreciate the next mission opportunity on The Second Missionary Journey it is important to know something about the city of Corinth. In the introduction to my study in the First Corinthians, (*The Bible Notebook* Series, Vol. 1), I have the following brief introduction to the city to which Paul now begins and extended work:

THE CITY OF CORINTH

Corinth owed its importance to its geographical location. It was located on the isthmus linking northern Greece with the Peloponnesian Peninsula. There were two harbors, one on the Adriatic Sea to the west and the other on the Aegean Sea to the east. Crossing the narrow isthmus at Corinth enabled ships and sailors to avoid the treacherous Peloponnesus. Larger vessels unloaded cargo and passengers at one port and they were hauled overland to the other. Small vessels were hauled four miles overland on a road composed of wooden rollers over which men pulled the ships.

Corinth, with a transient and cosmopolitan population, was a center of commerce and industry. Slavery was one of the factors that brought so many nationalities to Corinth. The city had an estimated population of 600,000. It has been estimated that 400,000 of these were slaves, many of whom were talented and cultured people.

Corinth was a great entertainment city. The Isthmian games were held nearby every other year. These games were second in importance to the Olympian games which were held every four years. The gladiators were particularly popular in this city that loved bloody sports.

Corinth was also a major religious center where the ancient Greek gods and goddesses were still worshiped. Eastern mystery religions were popular and the Egyptian religion of Isis was a favorite of many. The Jews had a synagogue there.

The most outstanding physical feature of Corinth was the massive plateau known as Acro-Corinth which rose nearly 2,000 feet from the surrounding land. At its foot the city grew and flourished. At the top its flat summit is where the 1,000 sacred prostitutes served Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

The most famous cult there was that of Aphrodite. In the old city of Corinth (destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and rebuilt in 44 B.C.) the worship of Aphrodite was popular. Aphrodite was worshiped elsewhere in Greece, but her worship took a unique form in Corinth... The mixture of sexual immorality and religion was similar to the Baal worship of Old Testament times. In fact, the worship of Aphrodite in Corinth was probably an imported version of the Phoenician worship of Astarte (Astareth or Ashtareth in Old Testament). Astarte was the female consort of Baal. We cannot be sure that this blend of religion and immorality was still practiced in Paul's day, but it probably did [DEAN - pp. 13f for Paul's Urban Mission Strategy).

PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP TO CORINTH

See Acts 18:1-8

1. In Corinth on his second missionary journey, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, lived with them, and worked at tent making with them (18:2-3).2. They preached each Sabbath in the synagogue (18:4).
3. The arrival of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia added a dimension of urgency and intensity to Paul's preaching (18:5).
4. Paul was driven from the synagogue and forced to move his ministry to the home of a proselyte named Titius Justus who lived near the synagogue (18:6-7).
5. Crispus, a leader of the synagogue, and many Gentile Corinthians were converted (18:8).
6. Paul was encouraged in his ministry in Corinth and received a vision from the

Lord. He remained in the city for 18 months (18:9-11).

7. The Jews brought Paul before Gallio, Roman proconsul of Achaia, and demanded that he be punished for his contentious teaching. Gallio, regarding their requests as a Jewish dispute, refused to involve himself, and allowed the Gentile crowd to rough up Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, who had replaced Crispus (18:12-17).

8. Paul left Corinth, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him (18:18). After leaving Corinth, he sailed from Cenchrea to Ephesus (with Aquila and Priscilla). Leaving his friends in Ephesus, he sailed to Caesarea and then to Jerusalem. He later went to Antioch, passed through Phrygia and Galatia again, and returned to Ephesus where he remained for nearly three years (Acts 18:19 - 19:1).

In Paul's absence, the spiritual conditions within the church greatly deteriorated. He probably heard reports about conditions at Corinth from time to time. [THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR: Fall 1983, p. 27-28]. While Paul was at Ephesus, four distinct factions developed at Corinth (identified as followers of Paul, Apollos, Peter, and Christ). Paul addressed these factions in two letters. He wrote a letter to Corinth prior to the letter called I Corinthians in the New Testament. He refers to this letter in I Corinthians 5:9.

The Corinthians responded to Paul's letter with a letter of their own. In this letter, they asked a number of questions. Though the questions are not given, the structure of I Corinthians gives us the clue to what these questions were. The first verse of chapter 7 begins, "Now, concerning the matters about which you wrote." Then he proceeded to discuss Christian marriage. In 8:1 we have "Now concerning food offered to idols" (see 12:1 and 16:1).

[SANDERS, Johnny L., 1 Corinthians, Practical Principles for the Local Church, Vol 1, pages 2-4, the Bible Notebook Series, now posted on the PastorLife.Com website, Georgia Baptist Convention, Dr. Mike Minnix, Editor].

18:2 - FOUND A JEWISH MAN. *"(W)here he found a Jewish man named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul came to them..."* Luke introduces us to a Jewish from Pontus, who, may not have been a disciple at the time. There were Jews from Pontus at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon believers and many people were saved that day (Acts 2:9). There is no reason to believe Aquila was among those worshipers in Jerusalem on that day. There was another

"Aquila who made the famous A.D. translation of the O.T. was also from Pontus. Paul 'found' (heurôn, second aorist active participle of heuriskô) though we do not know how. Edersheim says that **a Jewish guild always kept together whether in street or synagogue so that by this bond they probably met**" [ATR, bold added by

this writer].

Aquila, whose name is Latin, had been forced to leave Italy when Claudius ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Jews had a way of getting under the skin of the Roman authorities, whether in Jerusalem, Caesarea, or Rome. Suetonius, the Roman historian, claims “that the Jews were in a very disturbed state there through the instigation of one Chreestus” [WALKER: 388]. This would be the Latin author’s natural name for Christ. The teachings of Christ may have caused a division among the Jews in Rome as it had in other places. If non-believing Jews there had reacted there as they had in Thessalonica we can see why the emperor was provoked. The decree of Claudius was should be dated either A. D. 49 or 50, with A. D. 50 being the probable date. If that is the case, the trouble in Rome coincides with issues Judaizers had brought up which called for the Jerusalem Conference (A. D. 50 or 51).

The decree was not fully carried out because there was a Roman church there when Paul sent the Epistle to the Romans to that church. Of course, some who left may well have returned, which is exactly what Priscilla and Aquila did in time.

Because they knew how to play the political game, they had lobbied the highest officials and secured an edict that declared Judaism a legal religion and they did not have to go before an altar to Caesar and burn a pinch of incense and say, “Caesar is Lord.” They were able to persuade the authorities that Judaism was a monotheistic religion, but they could still count on Jews to be loyal to the emperor. When Christians sought the same privilege, the Jews lobbied so strongly against them that Christianity was declared an illegal religion, and thus the persecution that saw Christians slaughtered by Roman gladiators or torn to pieces by half starved lions in the Roman arenas for the entertainment of the citizens of Rome. Apparently, they had pushed too far this time and were driven out of the city of Rome for a time.

PRISCILLA . The wife of Aquila, Priscilla (or Prisca) is receptive to the Gospel when she hears the message. Interestingly, her name is usually listed before her husband’s. This is unusual, but it is possible that she was more involved with the work than Aquila. Another possibility is that she had the more dominant personality of the two. Some had speculated that she may have been of nobility and that would have accountable for her name appearing first. Regardless of the reason, Luke seems perfectly comfortable listing the wife first.

18:3 -THE SAME OCCUPATION. *“(A)nd being of the same occupation, stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.”* Paul had apparently met Aquila and Priscilla through a trade guild because it was their common trade as tentmakers that they had met. They mat well have met in the market place as they shopped for materials. It was the rigid custom of the Jews to teach their children a manual trade. Every rabbi had a secular trade. Robertson writes of a Rabbi Judah says: “He that teacheth not his son a trade, doth the same as if he taught him to be a thief” [ATR]. The tents they made were portable tents made of leather or of cloth made from goat’s hair, called cilicium after Cilicia (See the Appendix for a this writer’s study on the Cooperative Program to see how one denomination supports its missionaries today).

“They worked as partners in the common trade. Paul worked for his support elsewhere, already in Thessalonica (1Th 2:9; 2Th 3:8) and later at Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:18, 26; Acts 20:34; 1Co 16:19). They moved again to Rome (Rom 16:3) and were evidently a couple of considerable wealth and generosity. It was a blessing to Paul to find himself with these people. So he "abode" (emeren, imperfect active) with them and "they wrought" (êgazonto, imperfect middle), happy and busy during week days” [ATR].

It is possible that they were already Christians, but Paul may have led them to the Lord. They welcomed him into their home, something that was not uncommon in that day (He and his companions had been invited to stay in the home of Lyida in Philippi and Jason in Thessalonica. Through this godly couple, Paul would have learned much about Rome, and it may have been during this time that the Holy Spirit began leading him to focus on Rome and to make plans to visit the church there.

Paul was not afraid of hard work. He was used to it. The modern social welfare system in America had blessed millions, but a collateral effect has been that millions have never been taught a trade and never told that they should work to provide for their own needs or those of their family. I was stalking with a lady who sat with elderly patients who needed long-term care. She was a Christian lady who lamented the fact that many of her acquaintances in the African-American community with whom she was familiar did not work. She was burdened by the moral climate in which she lived. I mentioned the billboard I had seen along side the highway near where we were talking. It read, “Pregnant and scared?” She said, “Rev. Sanders, they are not scared to get pregnant. They want to get pregnant. They can get welfare, child care, food stamps, and free medical service.”

I have often talked with men who worked in plants or paper mills who would say, “These young people won’t work like we did when I was their age.” The first time I heard that statement their parents’ generation was saying that about them. I grew up on a farm in the Mississippi Delta and my parents were buying our farm. It was “our farm”, not “their farm”. I worked for the family and I worked long hours, chopping cotton, picking cotton, clearing land, pulling turn rows, and running water furrows, and that along with my regular chores. My mother called me at 4:15 every morning so I could milk cows, feed hogs, and tend to other things that had to be done every morning before walking to the county line, a mile-and-a-quarter from our home. I had to repeat the chores every evening. When I was out of school, I did that and then put in ten hours a day in the field. I envied share-cropper’s kids because while I was working my friend would wave at me as he headed into town every Saturday at noon to hang out with their friends. We didn’t hang out, we worked.

A few years later, I understood that many young people would take a part time job and work for spending money, which they spent on clothes, movies, and other forms of entertainment. It was good that they were earning their own money. However, in time I made a discovery. Some of them worked for money to spend only on their own pleasure. There was no sense of responsibility. I was working for the family. I did not get paid for anything except picking cotton, and then I got paid like

everyone else - well not exactly like everyone else, because, while I led the field when we were chopping (hoeing) the cotton, I was a very poor hand when it came to picking cotton. I was finally given responsibility for hauling hands, carrying the sacks for women who better cotton pickers than I, weighing and emptying sacks, and then at times, hauling the cotton to the gin. I tithed when I earned money, and I bought my clothes. Basically, I worked for my family.

I would discover in time that many parents did not have an opportunity to involved their children in their work. In a case like that, they must find some other way to teach their children to work, and to help them develop a sense of responsibility. Boys growing up without a father are at a disadvantage, but some overcome that disadvantage. My father, Joe. B. Sanders, and my wife's father, B. F. Turner, were both orphaned at an early age. My father was reared by had grandmother, and at age twelve or thirteen he dropped out of school and began pulling a cross-cut saw, cutting timber, with grown men to make a living for them. My father-in-law lived with two bachelor uncles, but he was able to graduate from high school before he had to find a way to make a living, but he worked all his life.

Many who grew up during the Great Depression were determined that "my children are not going to grow up like I did" so they spoiled them by giving them everything they could afford and not requiring them to work. It did not bother me that my parents did not have that attitude, and in time I came to appreciate it. We must teach our children how to work and then try to motivate them to work responsibly. Hard work will not a Christian make, but a Christian should be the best workers on any job, or at any task.

18:4 - HE REASONED. *"He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade both Jews and Greeks."* If I were advising a young man entering the ministry on how to become a popular preacher, I would leave off the lesson on reasoning with people. A lot of people don't want to hear that. Today, the masses want to be entertained by a preacher who will stroke the ego, pat them on the back, and "make them feel good about themselves." When I was growing up, many people wanted to hear a preacher who traumatized people - read, "scare the devil out of them." Myh young sister once commented on a visiting preacher and my mother, always trying to find good in any preacher, said, "Maybe he was trying to scare the devil out of the lost people." To which, my father, who more often listened without commenting, said, "You don't scare the devil, you only scare the man."

I would encourage every young man who is called to preach to study the word of God, as Paul urged Timothy (2 Tim 2:15), so that you can teach people the word of God. I would encourage every young preacher to discipline himself to study and carefully prepare expository sermons and trust the Holy Spirit to use them to reach lost people and train those who are saved. I would stress that God did not call me to entertain, traumatize, or psychoanalyze the congregation, He called me to feed His sheep. Paul was reasoning with in the synagogue who were well trained in the Old Testament Scriptures. They would not be deceived by an orator, no mater how entertaining or dramatic he was, if he could not "reason" with them from the Word of God.

SYNAGOGUE EVERY SABBATH. Paul reasoned with the people “in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade both Jews and Greeks” that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. Retired three star General Dutch Shoffner and I have remained in close contact since I met him at his sister-in-law’s funeral. His brother John and I had hunted and fished together for several years when I was in my late twenties and early thirties before John moved to Arkansas.

The more I learned about General Shoffner, the more I came to appreciate just how much every American is indebted to him for his role in protecting our freedom during the Cold War. He commanded everything we had in Europe for some time during the Cold War, working closely with the Germans and the French armies. He had fought the Communists in Viet Nam, and today his sons, Major Andy Shoffner and Lt. Col. Allen Shoffner, command American troops in the war against terrorists. Andy has served two deployments in Iraq and Allen has in both Afghanistan and is at this time commanding a battalion in Iraq.

General Shoffner has sought to teach me the difference between strategy and tactics. If the tactics do not support the strategy, the army is in trouble. The same thing may be said of Christian soldiers, especially missionaries and pastors. Paul’s strategy has not changed, and his tactics change only when it is necessary. As in other places, he began by going to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and reasoning with both the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. He always continued reasoning in the synagogue until he was forced out, and then he turned to the Gentiles, planing a church made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

18:5 - SILAS AND TIMOTHY. “*When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching the message and solemnly testified to the Jews that the Messiah is Jesus.*” Silas and Timothy had been left in Macedonia, but Paul had sent word for them to join them when the brethren from Thessalonica or Berea who had accompanied him to Athens returned (Acts 17:16). Paul had come from Athens (vs. 1) after he had been mocked by the Greek philosophers when he mentioned the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He had begun the work at Corinth, and he had been anxiously awaiting word from the Christians in Thessalonica. “The arrival of Silas and Timothy greatly encouraged Paul. They brought financial assistance from the Christians at Philippi, and also good news of the faith and love of the Thessalonian Christians (see 1 Thess. 3:1-10). At that time Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonian church” [NCWB].

OCCUPIED WITH PREACHING. Barnes writes that Paul “was borne away by an unusual impulse. It was deeply impressed on him as his duty....His love to Christ was so great, and his conviction of the truth so strong, that he laboured to make known to them the truth that Jesus was the Messiah” [BARNES]. Robertson summarizes:

“Paul held himself together or completely to the preaching instead of just on Sabbaths in the synagogue (verse Acts 18:4). The coming of Silas and Timothy with the gifts from Macedonia (1Th 3:6; 2Co 11:9; Php 4:15) set Paul free from tent-making for a while so that he began to devote himself (inchoative imperfect) with fresh consecration to preaching. See the active in 2Co 5:14. He was now also

assisted by Silas and Timothy (2Co 1:19)” [ATR].

Paul was greatly encouraged by the presence of Silas and Timothy, and their assistance in the work enabled Paul to devote more time in preaching and “solemnly testified to the Jews that the Messiah is Jesus.” He was also preaching to the Greeks, but for a period of time he concentrated on reaching his fellow Jews with the Gospel. Why was he showing such partiality? Actually, he was focusing on those with a background in Scripture. First, they had the background to understand the message about the Messiah, and second, they would make the best teachers during those early days of the church in Corinth.

18:6 - THE RESISTED. “ *But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his clothes and told them, “Your blood is on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”* The original denotes organized resistance or opposition to Paul.

BLASPHEMED. The word means to speak evil against, or in the case of the Holy Spirit, to attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil. I had heard a few evangelists preach on The Unpardonable Sin when I was growing up, so when I was called to my first church, while still a student at Mississippi College, I decided that my people needed to hear a sermon on the horrors of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. I went to see my faculty advisor, Dr. E. R. Pinson, who taught me a number of Bible classes (in those days when Baptist colleges and universities had Bible departments instead of religion departments!) and told him what I wanted to preach on, and asked for advice. His advice was simple, “Pick another subject.” It didn’t take too long to get over the hurt feelings, but I have never forgotten the wisdom of the professor who would become my friend.

These Jews resisted the Gospel and blasphemed Jesus Christ. His name may be the “sweetest name of mortal tongue” to Christians, but it is still met with blasphemous responses from Jews, Muslim, and people from other religions, as well as lost people. However, of all people, the Jews commit the greatest offense because they had the greater reason for accepting Jesus as the Messiah. They still do. When the president of Iran stood in that auditorium at the Columbia School of Journalism (9-24-07) and blended references to Jesus and Mohammed, he was blaspheming the name of Jesus. On Fox News, Sept. 25, 2007, there was a report of a homosexual version of the Last Supper (staged somewhere in California), complete with a vile picture of people dressed in strange dress, decorated with sex toys, or so it was reported. One guest on the news program was highly offended, but another took the time worn stance that what they did was protected under freedom of speech. When a comedian makes a vile comment about Jesus, there is always someone to defend it under the banner of freedom of speech, or they will tell us that it’s a comedy routine and we have to expect such behavior.

Let’s face it, these people know Christians are not going to bomb their homes or cars. They know that they will not respond the way radical Muslims will, given an opportunity. There is another way to look at this. Whether we are talking about the Jews of Antioch, Thessalonica, or Corinth who rejected Jesus or the modern comedian or the homosexual who blasphemes Christ, they will all stand before Him in judgment. He has the final say. The Muslim will confess Jesus continually in torment

in hell forever. They cannot hurt Him, they can only destroy themselves. They worship a god who is not, and therefore cannot, whereas we worship a living God who had conquered death, hell, and the grave. He is the God who can. Blaspheme him today and you will confess Him forever, but that confession will come from a place called hell.

SHOOK OUT HIS CLOTHES. Most commentaries provide basically the same comments. Clark writes:

“This was an action similar to that of shaking the dust of the feet; see on Matthew 10:14. See a parallel act, and its signification, in Nehemiah 5:13: Also I SHOOK MY LAP, and said, So shall God SHAKE every man FROM HIS HOUSE and FROM his LABOR; even thus shall he be SHAKEN OUT and EMPTIED. St. Paul's act on this occasion seems to have been the same with this of Nehemiah, and with the same signification; and it is likely that he was led by a Divine impulse to do it—thus signifying the shaking and emptying out of this disobedient people, which took place about sixteen years afterwards” [CLARKE].

YOUR BLOOD. Paul declared, “Your blood will be on your own heads.” No matter how much he loved his own people, no matter how much he tried to reach them, when they persist in rejecting Christ, and especially when they deceive others with their unbelief, they are bringing the wrath of God down on themselves. In his letter to the church at Rome, he will show that his burden for his people had, if anything, become even more intense, yet, when the rejected Jesus Christ their blood was on their own heads. There is a note of finality in his words, “I am clean.” God would not hold him responsible for their rejection of the Messiah. He is saying, “I am not to blame for your destruction. I have done my duty. The gospel had been fairly offered, and deliberately rejected; and Paul was not to blame for their ruin, which he saw was coming upon them” [BARNES].

I WILL GO TO THE GENTILES. True to his mission strategy, he had gone to the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews first. Then when their leaders turned the majority against him he turned to the Gentiles, taking with him believing Jews and Gentiles to begin a new and very interesting church. This church would require a lot of his attention, including a special visit on the Third Missionary Journey, and one other visit, as well as two inspired Epistles which are included in the New Testament Canon, and at least two non-canonical letters, one of which he references in each inspired letter to Corinth.

18:7 - WENT TO THE HOUSE. “*So he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.*” Paul and his companions break with the synagogue and “went to the house of a man named Titius Justus.” This does not mean that he moved out of the home of Aquila and Priscilla, but that instead of preaching and reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue, he now teaches and preaches in the home of Titus Justus, who may have been an influential Roman.

WORSHIPER OF GOD. As we have seen (13:3), there were Greeks and other Gentiles who

attended synagogue services, came to believe in the God of Israel and worshiped Him. Some became proselytes, while others came to hear about God and to worship Him in a segregated service, with the circumcised in one area and Gentiles worshipers (God fearing Gentiles) in another. There was also a court for women. Titius Justice was obviously a sincere worshiper of God who, under the influence of Paul's teaching, became a follower of Jesus Christ. His house was next door to the synagogue where the Jews rejection of Christ had forced Paul to relocate.

18:8 - CRISPUS. *“Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed the Lord, along with his whole household; and many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized.”* In 1 Corinthians 1:14f, Paul tells us he baptized Crispus himself. He was Jewish but he had a Latin name. Since he was the leader of the synagogue, his conversion must have provoked Jewish anger and hatred more than ever. At the same time, it affirmed Paul's mission strategy in going first to the local synagogue when he went to a new city. A Jewish leader who really knew the OT Scripture, would be a valuable asset in reaching lost people, especially Jews, for Jesus Christ. Also, he would have been especially equipped to teach new converts.

MANY...BELIEVED...WERE BAPTIZED. The original suggest that this was a frequent occurrence. People were being saved on a regular basis. This was the beginning of the church at Corinth. Many of the Gentiles believed in Jesus as their Savior, and those who believed were baptized. This is exactly what Peter had spelled out on the Day of Pentecost, when he said that those who asked should all believe (second person, plural, imperative, active), and that those who believed should be baptized (third person, singular, imperative, passive). The mode of baptism was immersion, which defines the Greek word.

18:9 - A NIGHT VISION. *“Then the Lord said to Paul in a night vision, “Don't be afraid, but keep on speaking and don't be silent.”* The Lord spoke to Paul “in a night vision”, and encouraged him not to fear, but to “keep on speaking and don't be silent.” It seems that “Paul's successes had so angered the unbelieving Jews that he probably feared being driven violently from the city. Paul was reassured by this vision” [NCWB]. So, it seems that the occasion for this communication through a night vision may have been the increased opposition by the Jews in Corinth. They were trying to silence him but the Lord told him to “keep on speaking and don't be silent.” Like Peter and John, he decided to obey God and not man.

18:10 - I AM WITH YOU. *“For I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to hurt you, because I have many people in this city.”* Paul knew the voice of Jesus, he had heard it before. The Lord spoke to him on the road to Damascus and again in Troas (Acts 16:9). “This promise changes Paul's whole outlook. Jesus had spoken to Paul before, on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:4), in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17), in Troas (Acts 16:9), in great crises of his life. He will hear him again (Acts 23:11; Acts 27:23). Paul knows the voice of Jesus” [ATR].

Jesus, in the Great Commission, had promised, “I will go with you, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth” (see Matt 28:20). Paul has been sent out as the apostle to the Gentiles and he was faithful to that calling, but he must have needed the encouragement - or we need the assurance today when

we read this. We must remember that, at this time, very little of what we know as the New Testament, had been written. The Epistles of Paul would cover a good part of the New Testament, and when we add the letters or books written by Luke and John, we see that most of the New Testament was still in the future. We draw great strength and encouragement today from the Scripture that was yet to be written when Paul received this night vision.

NO ONE WILL LAY A HAND TO HURT YOU. Robertson points out that this is the “future direct middle indicative of *epitithêmi*, old and common verb, here in direct middle to lay or throw oneself upon, to attack. Jesus kept that promise in Corinth for Paul. *Tou kakôsai* is genitive articular infinitive of purpose of *kakoô*, to do harm to. Paul would now face all the rabbis without fear.”

I HAVE MANY. Jesus promises to protect Paul as he reaches out to Corinth because, as He says, “I have many people in this city.” Again, Robertson shows us that the Lord’s words (*laos estin moi polus*) are the dative of personal interest. “There is to me much people,’ not yet saved, but who will be if Paul holds on. There is the problem for every preacher and pastor, how to win the elect to Christ” [ATR].

Paul faced the kind of trials in Corinth that would make almost any pastor keep his resume’ updated. One pastor, who had been the object of criticism, slander, and innuendo for a number of years finally discovered that all he had to do to gain the favor of his critics was to let it be known that he “sided” with a particular faction. He did not want to be a part of a faction, he simply wanted the people to come together. On a number of occasions, after praying that the Lord would move him to another church, ended up praying, “Lord if you move me out of this situation, who would I ask you to call to this church?” The Lord never promised that his servants would be healthy, wealthy, and wise: what He promised was, “I will be with you.” When I was still a young pastor, I was called to a church that had a history of problems with pastors. At first, I wondered when they would turn against me, but after several years it became very clear that these people loved their pastor and supported him. In fact, members would say, “We think we are doing very well. We are on the right track, if you just don’t get discouraged and leave us.” After one pastor had been there a little under a year, and his successor had been there less than six months, they had a public image that needed a lot of attention before people in the small city would take that church seriously. There were many times when I would pray, “Lord, you have more at stake here than I. If You don’t give up on them, why should I?” There was also one time in my ministry when I prayed, “Lord, I thank you for letting me go through that persecution. I might have served my entire ministry without ever having suffered as some of the prophets of old. I might never have understood the blessing you promised: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake...”

18:11 - HE STAYED THERE. “*And he stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*” Paul stayed in Corinth 18 months on the Second Missionary Journey, and possible two years all together. During this time, he continued to preach the Gospel, with special emphasis on reaching the Gentiles of this sinful city. During this time the Gospel spread throughout the whole region, as he wrote in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, and Timothy our brother: To God’s church at Corinth, with all the saints who

are throughout Achaia” (2 Cor. 1:1).

TEACHING. I can recall a number of people who seemed to apologize for their pastor because, as they would say, “He’s a good teacher, but he’s not a preacher.” Many in my parents’ generation wanted to hear some one who “really preached hard.” They went to church and were disappointed if they didn’t “feel something”. A lot of pastors responded (performed) in such a way as to traumatize the flock. Many from my sons’ generation want the preacher to keep it light and easy, someone who deals with current issues in a reassuring way. Some want a pastor who will offer them painless counseling, while others simply want to be entertained.

The late Stephen Olford was among the most powerful preachers of the past century. If you asked preachers and denominational workers who they had rather hear than any other preacher, the name you could expect to hear was Stephen Olford. I sat on the same row with Dr. Olford when we received our doctorates from Luther Rice Seminary (now, University) in 1978, in Jacksonville, Florida. I heard him speak and I visited briefly with him. I have often said that when I shook hands with Stephen Olford and looked into his eyes, I sensed that I was looking into the eyes of a man of great humility, and at the same time, a man of great power. I have never been more impressed with any other preacher. For many years, he was a great influence on preachers and preaching in America and around the world. He appealed to preachers to preach the Word, stressing that, to him, there was a famine in America, and it was a famine of expository preaching. He was right.

If you traumatize people they will soon forget it. If you entertain them and they leave feeling happy, they lose it the first time someone cuts them off at the intersection. Feed people and they will grow. They may not “brag” on their new preacher, but if you feed the sheep, there is a strong possibility that they will grow in the word, and that ten years later they will still be growing. Any preaching that does not contain an element of teaching is not worth hearing. My younger brother and my older son are both attorneys who are used to doing some serious writing and speaking and they don’t want their time wasted by a preacher who is unprepared, one who tries to manipulate the people, or one who does not articulate the truth with conviction. They really don’t go to church to hear the first person pronoun (“I’ll tell you what I believe!”). They are more interested in what God has to say and they don’t want their time wasted. When the well prepared pastor preaches the Word, people are not bored, unless there is something wrong with them. Try picturing a modern day congregation waving, shouting, “Amen! Preach on preacher! Come on, tell it like it is.” Now take that congregation and set them down in front of Jesus while He is delivering the Sermon on the Mount! Or set them down in front of Paul while he is “reasoning” with a congregation.

18:12 - GALLIO. “ *While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack against Paul and brought him to the judge’s bench.*” Gallio is an interesting man who enjoys a number of distinctions beyond his interesting decision in this case (v. 14f).

“Brother of Seneca the Stoic (Nero’s tutor) and uncle of Lucan the author of the *Pharsalia*. His original name was M. Annaeus Novatus till he was adopted by Gallio the rhetorician. The family was Spanish. Gallio was a man of culture and refinement

and may have been chosen proconsul of Achaia for this reason. Statius calls him ‘dulcis Gallio.’ Seneca says of him: Nemo enim mortalium uni tam dulcis quam hic omnibus (No one of mortals is so pleasant to one person as he is to all)” [ATR].

Eddleman notes that “Only Luke of all ancient historians used the term ‘proconsul’ concerning him, but one (Seneca) does speak of his being in Achaia where he caught a fever”, which Luke corroborates [HLE: 257]. Robertson adds that there is archaeological proof that Gallio was proconsul in Achaia: “a whitish grey limestone inscription from the Hagios Elias quarries near Delphi (a letter of Claudius to Delphi) has been found which **definitely names Gallio as proconsul of Achaia**” [ATR, bold added by this writer]. This affirms Luke as an historian, in spite of the insistence that the Gospel writers were not historians. Some who seek reasons for dismissing the Gospels as mere religious tracts written to teach moral lessons may well have other reasons of which they are unaware for wanting to reject them as the inerrant Word of God. It is interesting how many people there are on the news programs today who openly proclaim to be a Christian also proclaim their support for same-sex marriage. When Bill O’Reilly repeatedly proclaims his support for homosexual unions, stating that he has no problem with that, he exposes his ignorance of the Word of God and shows that one can be religious and be totally blind to the truth. We continue with more on Gallio:

“The province of Achaia after various shifts (first senatorial, then imperial) back and forth with Macedonia, in A.D. 44 Claudius gave back to the Senate with proconsul as the title of the governor. It is amazing how Luke is confirmed whenever a new discovery is made. The discovery of this inscription has thrown light also on the date of Paul's work in Corinth as it says that Gallio came in the 26th acclamation of Claudius as Emperor in A.D. 51, that would definitely fix the time of Paul in Corinth as A.D. 50 and 51 (or 51 and 52)” [ATR].

THE JEWS. Luke tells us that “the Jews made a united attack against Paul and brought him to the judge’s bench.” At this point, much of the persecution of Christians has been at the instigation of Jews. Is this an anti-Semitic statement on Luke’s part? Were the persecutors anti-Semitic? No, they were anti-Christ. None believing Jews were persecuting Jewish believers.

Sadly, most Jews are quick to point out that the persecution of Jews by Christians is well documented. I heard Dr. H. Leo Eddleman tell of his experience in Israel when he was preaching to a group of people and a tall young Jewish man stood up and demanded to know why he was over there preaching to them about Christ when all the major atrocities committed against Jews had been at the hands of Christians. He pointed to people like Stalin and Hitler, ignorant of the fact the infant Stalin’s being baptized three times face forward did not make him a Christian.

We must be uncompromising in our stand for the truth, even as we are uncompromising in our opposition to unwarranted discrimination against Jews or people of other faiths. However, the Lord holds us accountable when we do not discriminate in issues involving false doctrine or immorality, as Jesus stresses in the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in the Book of Revelation. In

Pergamum, there were some who held the teaching of Balaam (Rev. 2:14). Jesus condemned those church members in Thyatira because, in His words, “you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and teaches and deceives My slaves to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols” (Rev 2:20). The church at Thyatira also drew harsh criticism from the Lord because, as He adds, “you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans” (Rev 2:15). There is no common agreement as to the teachings of the Nicolaitans, but it is obvious that He has in mind false teachings, low morals, or both. Tolerance is not the standard for doctrinal purity. We must discriminate on theological and moral issues, but we must avoid discrimination on the bases of physical differences.

It is true that evil men, in the name of religion, have persecuted Jews. The corrupted church of the Middle Ages certainly bears its share of the responsibility for discrimination and persecution of Jews, and for many it did not end there. A Jewish attorney said that when we was growing up in New Orleans some kids called him “Christ killer”. However, in the First Century, much of the persecution of Christians came because the Jews demanded that the Roman authorities squash this new movement which they considered a heresy and a corruption of Judaism. The focus of their persecution of Christianity was Paul, the obvious leader of this movement. Luke’s language denotes a violent assault against Paul.

JUDGE’S BENCH. This was the “bema” (Greek), a movable seat for the administration of justice. “The proconsul was sitting in the basilica in the forum or agora. The Jews had probably heard of his reputation for moderation and sought to make an impression as they had on the praetors of Philippi by their rush (sunepestê, Acts 16:22). The new proconsul was a good chance also (Acts 25:2). So for the second time Paul faces a Roman proconsul (Sergius Paulus, Acts 13:7) though under very different circumstances” [ATR].

18:13 - THIS MAN...PERSUADES PEOPLE. These same Jews had invited Paul to speak in their synagogue, then they had rejected his message, forcing Paul and others who followed Jesus Christ to leave the synagogue and worship elsewhere. The fact that they could look next door to the synagogue and see large numbers, including many Jews, attending those services fueled their opposition, but when they saw, and possibly heard Paul teaching the people, they became enraged, and violently took him and dragged him before Gallio. Their charge was specific: “This man,” they said, “persuades people to worship God contrary to the law!”

18:14 - GALLIO SAID. “*And as Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of a crime or of moral evil, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you Jews.’*” Paul was capable of responding to the charges, but before he had an opportunity, Gallio demonstrated his wisdom as a judge over such matters. He also revealed his disdain for the Jews, but Luke does not tell us whether his attitude toward them here is based on their race or their behavior. It might seem strange to use the words wisdom and disdain in the same sentence, but regardless of the motivation, he saw through the charges against Paul.

He states that “if it were matter of a crime or of moral evil”, he would have heard them. When he

added that it would have been in order for him to “put up with you Jews”, they had to know this was not going to be their day. It is altogether possible that the news of successful attacks on Paul in Thessalonica and Beroea, and even the persecution in Philippi had reached Corinth, leading them to believe that their fanatical assault would force the hand of Gallio, but he was having none of that. Had he seen such behavior from the Jews before? The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem certainly knew how to force Pilate’s hand when they demanded the crucifixion of Jesus, and these Jewish leaders would have known about that.

Luke is stating the facts here, as Paul does from time to time, and while the Gentile Luke may be a target for charges of anti-Semitism, Paul does not deserve this label. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, who inspired this Scripture, was certainly not anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism is a serious sin, as is hatred for Gentiles by Jews. **Here is a thought to ponder:** What about one who is anti-Semitic on a personal basis, but supports Israel for theological reasons? Is that possible? Here is another thought for consideration: Are we so obsessed with the fear of discrimination against others for so many reasons that we may be manufacturing some of them? **Is it possible that my ignorance of another culture, race, religion, or system is enough to declare me a racist, sexist, or bigot, even if I am not aware of the issues?** We have two infallible guides in all relationships: The Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

18:15 - IF THESE QUESTION. *“But if these are questions about words, names, and your own law, see to it yourselves. I don’t want to be a judge of such things.”* To this pagan judge, statements about the Messiahship of Jesus Christ were simply a matter of words and names, none of which meant anything to him. Are these the words of a wise judge, or a disinterested proconsul who simply wants them to go away? Matthew Henry’s comments on this judgment offer food for thought:

“It was right in Gallio that he left the Jews to themselves in matters relating to their religion, but yet would not let them, under pretense of that, persecute another. But it was wrong to speak slightly of a law and religion which he might have known to be of God, and which he ought to have acquainted himself with. In what way God is to be worshipped, whether Jesus be the Messiah, and whether the gospel be a Divine revelation, are not questions of words and names, they are questions of vast importance. Gallio spoke as if he boasted of his ignorance of the Scriptures, as if the law of God was beneath his notice. Gallio cared for none of these things. If he cared not for the affronts of bad men, it was commendable; but if he concerned not himself for the abuses done to good men, his indifference was carried too far. And those who see and hear of the sufferings of God’s people, and have no feeling with them, or care for them, who do not pity and pray for them, are of the same spirit as Gallio, who cared for none of these things” [MATTHEW HENRY - Matthew Henry Concise Commentary, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources].

YOUR OWN LAW. We may safely assume that the Jewish mob, in demanding that Paul be condemned, were using “words, names”, and references to their law. Compared to Roman law, Jewish law was meaningless to Gallio. So, by the way, would the Jewish Law and prophets have

been viewed as foolish by the Greek philosophers in Athens. Paul knew that and found common ground in Creation and the Creator.

18:16 - DROVE THEM FROM. “ *So he drove them from the judge’s bench.*” Gallio abruptly dismissed the court and drove these Jewish accusers from his bench. He immediately saw that the charges were bogus and ordered the court to be cleared, a crushing blow to the Jews, but a decided victory for the Christians. This was not the first time God had used a pagan to protect His servant and to preserve a witness to His grace. He had raised up Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome and used them as one moves a piece on a chessboard to accomplish His purpose and to preserve His covenant. He can use a pagan judge, even when he seems unfair, to protect Paul. After all, had He not promised Paul in a night vision (18:9-10) that He would protect Him?

18:17 - THEY ALL SEIZED SOSTHENES. “*Then they all seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the judge’s bench. But none of these things concerned Gallio.*” Who is intended by “they all” here? As we watch the twenty-four hour news networks, we are treated to a mob scene in the streets of some Middle East city on a regular basis. I have often wondered how all these able bodied young Palestinian (Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian) men ever make a living. A cartoon is published in a newspaper a thousand miles away, or a politician makes the wrong statement halfway around the world and immediately the streets are filled with frantic, waving, shouting men, crying out against Americans and insisting that all Jews should be killed (and driven into the sea! I have always found that an interesting statement). The Jews had attracted the crowd that would turn against them when they took Paul and violently dragged him before the judgment bench of Gallio. Young people should be warned to avoid crowd activity, and at the first sign of mob activity, they should get away from that crowd.

Mississippi College and Milsaps had enjoyed a natural rivalry for decades before an incident caused both schools to break off the annual football classic. I was a witness to some of those events, but a distant witness. It was a few days before the football game when someone came into my dorm one night and announced that there was something going on outside. When some of us got outside, I saw two male students in a convertible, one from Mississippi College and one from Milsaps, who had been detained by a group of students. I also saw our student body attorney, a good friend, begging the students to let them go. I saw one young man jump over and hit the students in the car on the back of their heads, a cowardly act I would never forget. When the student body attorney finally persuaded the students to let them go, they drove off the campus and My friends and I went back into the dorm. A few minutes later, someone else came in and told us that those young men had flipped the car on Highway 80 near the campus.

We drove to the site of the accident in my car and learned that someone had tried to cut them off and when they swerved, the car had turned over. They described the car that had caused the accident and when my friend and I drove back to the dorm and parked there was a car that met the description parked in front of the south door of Ratliff Hall. As I walked by, I reached over and placed my hand on the hood and discovered that it was warm. At that moment, someone from a dark window called

down, “Who do you think you are, Dick Tracey?!”

I had joined a group of male student, I believe it was a few days earlier, who drove to the Milsaps campus to shout some challenges to the Milsaps students about the upcoming game. When we arrived, some of the students rushed onto the campus and into a fraternity house, where they did some small amount of damage (pulled a phone cord loose and turned over a desk, thing like that). I stayed by the car, refusing to participate. Yet, when word got back to Mississippi College, the students involved were called together and told that we each had to pay a small amount to cover the damage. Some naturally told that I had participated. I paid my share and then announced that I never set foot on the camps. If I had simply denied it up front many would have doubted my word.” Such is the nature and character of even a modest mob!

BEAT HIM. The Gentiles standing near the judge’s bench “seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the judge’s bench. But none of these things concerned Gallio.” Such was the attitude of this Roman official toward the Jews? He was well aware of the fact that the Jews had been driven out of Rome, so he probably considered them trouble makers. He was not concerned about their reporting this to the emperor.

The Return Trip to Antioch of Syria

18:18 - HAVING STAYED. *“So Paul, having stayed on for many days, said good-bye to the brothers and sailed away to Syria. Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He shaved his head at Cenchreae, because he had taken a vow.”* By “many days”, Luke probably intends the time between this interlude and his departure, not the entire eighteen months he was in Corinth. When he left Corinth, he was bound for the Holy Land. There has been some speculation that he may have sailed on a pilgrim ship taking Jewish passengers to Palestine for one of their great holy days. However, even if he had begun his voyage on such a ship, Paul has specific stops in mind and a pilgrim ship of Jewish worshipers would not have made those stops a high priority.

HE SAID GOOD-BYE. He had not been driven out of Corinth by the Jews, but left when he was led by the Holy Spirit. The Lord had promised in the “night vision” that He would be with Paul and that no harm would come to him.

SAILED FOR SYRIA. Paul and Barnabas had served in the church at Antioch of Syria before they went on the First Missionary Journey, and it was with their blessings and prayers that they were sent out. Paul and Barnabas had parted after their disagreement over taking John Mark, who had quit them on the first mission trip. Barnabas wanted to give him another opportunity but Paul absolutely refused. Barnabas took John Mark and went back to Cypress and Paul chose Silas to accompany him on this second mission trip. The church at Antioch had not financed their missionary journey, but they seemed to have been what today we might call the sponsoring church. In an earlier volume I stressed that it is important for missionaries to give regular reports to their sponsoring church, group of churches, or to the denominational entity that supports them.

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA. As noted in the first mention of Aquila and Priscilla, the wife would be mentioned first after our introduction to them. This was not the normal way of referring to a husband and wife in that day, and Bible students have offered a number of explanations, including the possibility that Priscilla was of the nobility (which has no real support); that she was the one who more active in the Lord's work (which seems logical, since Aquila may have been more involved in their tent making trade than his wife); or that she may have simply been the more talented or the more outgoing of the two.

SHAVED HIS HEAD. Luke tells us that Paul "shaved his head at Cenchreae, because he had taken a vow." Cenchreae was "the eastern harbor of Corinth, about ten miles distant, where a church had been formed (Ro 16:1)" [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources - after this, JFB]. Robertson notes that this is the imperfect active showing

"the continuance of the vow up till this time in Cenchreae, the port of Corinth when it expired. It was not a Nazarite vow which could be absolved only in Jerusalem. It is possible that the hair was only polled or trimmed, cut shorter, not 'shaved' (xuraô as in Acts 21:24) for there is a distinction as both verbs are contrasted in 1Co 11:6 (keirâsthai ê xurâsthai). **It is not clear what sort of a vow Paul had taken nor why he took it. It may have been a thank offering for the outcome at Corinth** (Hackett). Paul as a Jew kept up his observance of the ceremonial law, but refused to impose it on the Gentiles" [ATR, bold added by this writer].

18:19 - EPHESUS. "*When they reached Ephesus he left them there, but he himself entered the synagogue and engaged in discussion with the Jews.*" Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. "It was a sail, right across from the west to the east side of the Ægean Sea, of some eight or ten days, with a fair wind" [JFB]. For the student of the Scripture, this mention of Ephesus will be a reminder of things to come, beginning with the account in Acts of Paul's work there, and continuing with The Epistle to the Ephesians, as well as John's extended ministry there. Ephesus was a great city, located on the Cayster River. It was the capital of the Province of Asia, "the home of the worship of Diana (Artemis) with a wonderful temple, Paul at last had reached, though forbidden to come on the way out on this tour (Acts 16:6). Here Paul will spend three years after his return from Jerusalem" [ATR].

ENTERED THE SYNAGOGUE. If there is one thing we might have anticipated, it was that Paul would be in the synagogue on the Sabbath. This might be a good time to stress that the Sabbath Day was a Holy Day and that Paul and other Christians continued to go to the synagogue on he Sabbath until they were forced out by the Jews who rejected the Gospel. At some point (and this may well have been associated with Paul more than other missionaries), Christians began worshiping on the First Day of the week. One Bible scholar stresses that the church officially made the change at a later date, and laments the fact that we are not today observing the biblical Sabbath. Dr. Hollis, Green, who taught for a number of years at Luther Rice Seminary, stressed the importance of our being sure that we keep Sunday, the First Day, as the Lord's Day, because in doing so we get the

week off to the right start. The sad fact is that most people who profess to be Christians in America couldn't care less what day we observe as the Lord's Day. There is no holy day for more and more Americans. They are more into recreation, shopping, visiting relatives, and football. When we put anything between ourselves and the Lord it is called idolatry by Paul in Colossians.

ENGAGED IN DISCUSSION. This was the fulfillment of a personal dream for Paul He is now preaching in Asia! It did not take long for Jewish leaders in any synagogue Paul visited to discover that he had been trained in the Law, and that he might have something interesting to say to the congregation. They would not have missed the fact that Paul had recently shaved his head, and they would have understood that it had something to do with a vow. When Luke say Paul engaged them, we can be sure the subject would move quickly to fact that the long awaited Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, had died on a cross in Jerusalem, and on the third day he had risen, and after numerous appearances, He ascended to the Father where he sits at the right hand of the Father's throne, making intercession for us. Paul, as he had done in other places, used reason and logic to prove that Jesus is the Messiah.

In January, 2005, my wife Becky and I attended the retirement banquet for Dr. Jimmy Draper, who had served as president of LifeWay Christian Resources for the previous fifteen years. We listened to a number of speakers, one of whom was a young man whose father had been a friend of Dr. Draper's for many years. In fact, they had swapped rides when they were in seminary. Dr. Draper had flown to Houston when his friend had surgery and while there, asked his friend's son, who was a young pastor, "How many do you run in Sunday School?" The young man challenged, "That's all you want to know! Why does everyone want to know how many we run in Sunday School? Why doesn't anyone ask us how we are engaging the culture." This young man repeated that at the banquet and he seemed rather intense as he told us what he had said. At one of our committee meetings a few weeks later, a friend, Ed Ethridge, made the statement, "We don't need to engage the culture, we need to confront the culture!"

Who is right? Paul engaged these scholars in conversation about the Law and the Prophets. This was absolutely appropriate. Ed Ethridge was also right. While we should engage people in conversation, we must confront the culture. While a panel on Fox News, on Saturday evening, September 29, 2007, were discussing a homosexual representation of the Last Supper, someone made the statement that he didn't think that was a statement against Jesus, "It might be in poor taste, but it was not about Jesus." He went on to add that you cannot discriminate against the majority, and "90% of Americans are Christians." I wanted to shout, "And you have just proved that you are not one!" He passionately pontificates on every subject introduced on the program each week, but has no clue as to what makes one a Christian. The homosexual culture is not engaging Christians, it is attacking Jesus Christ and His church! The church is often too afraid of offending someone that it does not confront the culture.

Let me stress one other point about homosexuality in America today. It is not the same old homosexuality! It is not simply a moral evil, it is a social, political, cultural, and even a religious issue that does not seem to be going away. He are forcing changes in our culture, and from what we

have seen in San Francisco, they are carrying the fight to the church. Since the detestable portrayal of the Last Supper, two homosexuals attracted national attention when they went through the line and received communion in a Catholic church. Understandably, many Catholics were upset, and rightly so. What is not so easy to understand is that many people said it was no big deal. We can be sure that those homosexuals in San Francisco who were involved in this attack on Jesus have not hurt Him in any way. They will have an opportunity to stand before him - or fall on their face before him - and explain just what they were trying to do.

We must seek to engage people in dialog first, but if they attack the church, denigrate the Last Supper, mock Jesus Christ, and seduce our young people, we must confront them with the truth. Paul engaged religious leaders in conversation. John the Baptist did not engage Herod, he confronted him with his sin.

18:20 - ASKED HIM TO STAY. *“And though they asked him to stay for a longer time, he declined...”* Paul had only a brief time to visit with these Jewish leaders and they invited him to stay longer. He declined, however, because he had a schedule to keep.

18:21 - IF GOD WILLS. *“(B)ut said good-bye and stated, “I’ll come back to you again, if God wills.” Then he set sail from Ephesus.”* Paul said good-bye to the Jews at the synagogue but promised to return if the Lord willed it. There is no doubt in my mind that Paul had personal visions of a Third Missionary Journey. He may have been convinced at this time that this is where the Lord would use him next. In fact, he left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus. He may well have planned to rejoin his friends and plant a church there as he had done in Corinth. He stresses the one condition: it must be God’s will. Everything he did was under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

18:22 - CAESAREA. *“On landing at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.”* When he left Corinth, he was planning to go to Antioch of Syria (v. 18) to report on this second mission trip. On the surface, it would seem that Paul landed in Caesarea and then went to visit the local church before going on to Antioch of Syria. Luke’s language, however, shows that he landed in Caesarea of Palestine and then traveled up to Jerusalem where he visited the church there. It had long been the custom to say one was going “up” to Jerusalem, and “down” from Jerusalem. There would have been no special reason for visiting the church in Casarea (though he may have contacted the saints there (Philip lived there). Clarke adds an interesting note here:

“If St. Paul went up to Jerusalem at this time, which we are left to infer, for Luke has not expressed it, (Acts 18:22,) it was his fourth journey thither; and this is **generally supposed to have been the twenty-first year after his conversion.** His first journey is mentioned Acts 9:26; his second, Acts 11:30; his third, Acts 15:4; and his fourth, Acts 18:22, the place above” [CLARKE, Bold added by this writer].

Jerusalem was still the center for the spread of the Gospel and it would remain so for several more years, yielding to other cities after the death of James and the destruction of the Temple in A. D. 70. I believe this was the fourth of Paul’s five visits to Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts 9:26; Acts

11:30; Acts 15:4; Acts 18:22; Acts 21:17). “The apostles may or may not have been in the city, but Paul had friends in Jerusalem now. Apparently he did not tarry long, but returned to Antioch to make a report of his second mission tour as he had done at the close of the first when he and Barnabas came back (Acts 14:26-28). He had started on this tour with Silas and had picked up Timothy and Luke, but came back alone. He had a great story to tell” [ATR].

THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

18: 23 - HE SET OUT. *“He set out, traveling through one place after another in the Galatian territory and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.”* Paul may have been traveling alone at this time (Note the use of “he”, not “they”). He may have been having left Ephesus alone to sail to Caesarea, go up to Jerusalem, and then down to Antioch of Syria. He is obviously visiting churches planted on the First Missionary Journey with Barnabas, churches visited on the Second Missionary Journey with Silas. He may well have been accompanied from church to church in the Galatian territory and Phrygia, by Silas, but Timothy may have been left behind, possibly in Ephesus, and Luke had left them at some point before he left Corinth.

STRENGTHENING ALL THE DISCIPLES. I have heard many preachers declare with conviction that the church exists for one reason, and that is to win souls. The Great Commission stresses both evangelism (including missions) and discipleship. The church exists to win the lost, train the saved to win more souls, to worship, counsel those who need it, and to serve others who need us (with an eye to leading people to faith in all areas of our ministry).

Some today speak of marketing their church. One man contacted me and told me that he had been to a meeting in which the pastor declared, “we are not marketing young people” the way another church in the area was. Paul visited the churches of these provinces, “strengthening all the disciples”. Would anyone charge that Paul was not interested in winning the lost? Would anyone suggest that he was not being led by the Holy Spirit. For anyone who dismisses the importance of “strengthening” the disciples, I would suggest a test. Find a copy of a sermon by Thomas Chalmers or Jonathan Edwards and ask any number of members in the average church today to read and explain what those great preachers had to say. Bear in mind that those in their congregations understood them. They may not have had a computer, Internet, cell phone, television, an air conditioned building, or even a modern translation of the Bible, but they understood sermons that challenge pastors today!

Paul certainly never neglected evangelism, but he would have stressed the importance of preaching and teaching sound doctrine, ministry to the poor, help for widows and orphans, and counseling for those in need. There are many people who associate some special distinctive with various denominations today: Presbyterians preach Calvinism, Methodists sprinkle, Baptists believe in once saved, always saved. I was attending a meeting of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources in Glorieta, New Mexico, when then president, Dr. Jimmy Draper, shared his list of Baptist Essentials. I returned home and then contacted Dr. Draper and asked him send me his list.

He gave me permission to use it, so I will share it here:

- 1) Salvation by grace through faith, plus nothing.
- 2) The Lordship of Jesus Christ
- 3) Sufficiency of Scripture
- 4) Autonomy of the Local Church
- 5) Religious Liberty
- 6) Trinitarian view of God (One in essence, three in person)
- 7) The Great Commission

Jimmy Draper stressed that there are many “distinctives” but these are “essentials.” Some would be surprised to discover that “once saved, always saved” does not appear in the list. That is certainly a distinctive, but it would be covered as a sub-point under number one.

The Training of Apollos

18:24 - APOLLOS. *“A Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was powerful in the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus.”* His name was a contraction of Apollonios. He was from the city of Alexandria, “the celebrated city of Egypt on the southeastern shore of the Mediterranean, called after its founder, Alexander the Great. Nowhere was there such a fusion of Greek, Jewish, and Oriental peculiarities, and an intelligent Jew educated in that city could hardly fail to manifest all these elements in his mental character” [JBF]. Apollos, a Hellenistic Jew, was eloquent after the manner of the Greek and Roman orators, and he was well grounded in the Scriptures, after the manner of the Jewish scholars in Alexandria.

There was a time when Baptists were a young, growing denomination, viewed by many as lacking in scholarship. A member of a Baptist church in Omaha was surprised to hear a television reporter refer to “Baptists and other Pentecostals.” There are two issues that may have contributed to this image. First, when the Baptist movement was very young, many preachers did not have the same education the Episcopalian, Methodist, or Presbyterian, or Methodist pastors had. In the second place, each Baptist church is autonomous, so one church may seek a highly educated pastor, while another decides to call a man who is young and inexperienced and give him an opportunity to pursue his education (a student pastorate). Yet another church might call a mature man who did not have an opportunity to get an education, or did not take advantage the opportunity he had. Some of those men are serious students of the Word, and do not hesitate to call on a fellow pastor, a denominational worker, or seminary professor when they need help.

There came a time when early Baptists realized a need for seminaries to train those young men the Lord called to preach and the men and women He calls for missions, religious education, or counseling. For many years, Southern Baptists ministers have a choice between six well established and highly accredited seminaries, owned and operated by the denomination, as well as Luther Rive University, Mid-America Seminary, and Criswell College for Biblical Studies, which are Sothern

Baptist in theology, but operate independently. There are still other independent institutions, like Cambridge Graduate School where great value is place on biblical scholarship. Years ago, Dr. A. T. Robertson was recognized as one of those scholars who helped gain respect for Baptist seminaries and Baptist writers. He opens his heart on this subject as he comments on the note that Apollos was powerful in the Scriptures:

“Being powerful (dunatos verbal of dunamai and same root as dunamis, dynamite, dynamo) in the Scriptures (in the knowledge and the use of the Scriptures), as should be true of every preacher. There is no excuse for ignorance of the Scriptures on the part of preachers, the professed interpreters of the word of God. **The last lecture made to the New Testament English class in Southern Baptist Theological Seminary by John A. Broadus was on this passage with a plea for his students to be mighty in the Scriptures.** In Alexandria Clement of Alexandria and Origen taught in the Christian theological school” [ATR, bold added by this writer].

John A. Broadus was another man who was powerful in the Scriptures. I was serving on the Broadman and Holman Committee as a member of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources when I learned that “Broadman” was not some great early Southern Baptist leader. Rather, someone came up with the idea of naming the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Sunday Board (now, LifeWay Christian Resources) after two great leaders, John A. Broadus and Basil Manly, thus the name “Broadman”.

We are blessed today to have many men who are powerful in the Scriptures. That must not be limited to seminary or college professors, or even to pastors. There are Lay-persons who are powerful in the Scriptures. Dr. William R. Cooper was a prison official in England when he began a twenty-five years quest for knowledge, much of which focused on the Table of Nations, found in Genesis 10 and 11. The results of his research are found in his amazing book, AFTER THE FLOOD. As mentioned elsewhere in our study of Acts, Dr. Cooper went on to “translate” the 1388 Wycliffe New Testament and the 1526 Tyndale New Testament into modern English. In September, 2007, I received an e-mail message from my friend in which he stated, “I’m working on 1 Corinthians in my transcript of Murdoch Nisbet’s Scots NT of 1520. He’s a canny wee mon, ye ken! Again, thank you, my friend. Bill.”

I consider Bill Cooper to be powerful in the Scripture, but recently, when I asked him to comment on “Azazel” in Leviticus 16, he asked Dr. James J. S. Johnson to do a Hebrew study for us on the word. Dr. Johnson proved that he is also powerful in the Scripture. There are many others, and I have been privileged to know many of them. At the same time, I would like to stress the fact that a layman should be “powerful in the Scriptures.” My son John has studied the Bible since he was a young child. On one occasion, I became concerned about whether or not he was studying his Sunday School lesson. I asked each week and finally he said, “I read every Sunday School lesson three times. When I get a new book I read the entire book right then. Then, each week I read the lesson for the coming Sunday and the one after that.” Throughout the years, I have given him various translations of the Bible, including the Illustrated Holman Christian Standard Bible which is only the most recent. I have also given him commentaries, and books by people like John

MacArthur, and he reads them. John is an attorney and it is interesting to see him approach certain passages with his special training and discipline.

18:25 - INSTRUCTED. *“This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught the things about Jesus accurately, although he knew only John’s baptism.”* Apollos had been instructed “in the way of the Lord” in Alexandria and, as we have seen, he was “powerful in the Scriptures” (v. 24). The note that he had been “instructed in the way of the Lord”, implies that he had been taught about the Messiah.

FERVENT IN SPIRIT. Any person who knows “the way of the Lord: and is “powerful in the Scriptures” should be genuinely “fervent in the Spirit”. This kind of person does not seek to dazzle people with theatrics. Years ago, when my son John was about eleven years old and my younger son Mark was four, we were on vacation and we went to a church I had driven by in the past. My first surprise was the discovery that Mark, though only four years old, really belted out the hymns. People all around us were looking at this little boy who was singing with his whole heart. My wife later said, “I’ve been trying to tell you that.”

That was one memory I have from that visit, but there is another. The pastor was out and a young evangelist was preaching that morning. He put on quite a show, marching around on the platform, making a big show of removing microphones and announcing that he didn’t need a microphone to be heard. His was an interesting performance that day, interesting but disappointing. I didn’t want to comment on the sermon because I did not want to leave my sons with a negative impression, but as I started driving out of the parking lot, John said, “Daddy, I had the feeling he was saying, ‘Here I am, look at me.’” I doubt that anyone had this impression of Apollos.

SPOKE AND TAUGHT. Apollos preached and taught the Word of God, as he knew it. Robertson notes that this is the “imperfect active, was teaching or inchoative, began teaching, accurately. He taught accurately what he knew, a fine gift for any preacher” [ATR].

HE KNEW ONLY JOHN’S BAPTISM. Apollos knew the Old Testament Scriptures and he knew “John’s baptism.” He knew that John was the forerunner of the Messiah, that he preached repentance, and that he baptized people. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance (not ritual or ceremony), “as Paul said (Acts 13:24; Acts 19:4), as Peter said (Acts 2:38) and as the Gospels tell (Mark 1:4, etc.). That is to say, Apollos knew only what the Baptist knew when he died, but John had preached the coming of the Messiah, had baptized him, had identified him as the Son of God, had proclaimed the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but had not seen the Cross, the Resurrection of Jesus, nor the great Day of Pentecost” [ATR]. Apollos’ exposition was “accurate but limited, for he had not known about Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension, etc. He needed to know the truth more accurately” [NCWB].

18:26 - BEGAN TO SPEAK. *“He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. After Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him home and explained the way of God to him more accurately.”* Apollos was not only “fervent in spirit” (v. 25), he spoke boldly concerning that which he knew, not realizing what he did not know. He was speaking in the same synagogue where Paul had spoken

during his brief visit there. Priscilla and Aquila were attending that synagogue and when they heard him speak they realized that he knew only the baptism of John. He did not know about the crucifixion, the resurrection, the appearances, or the Ascension. They took him to their home and explained the part of the Gospel he had not heard. It is a blessing for many young Christians when someone with the wisdom and maturity of Priscilla and Aquila is willing to take them under their wing, not only to encourage them, but also to correct them. Dr. Irene Steward began attending a Sunday School class in our church after I baptized her. She had grown up in the Roman Catholic Church, and had reared her children in that church. One Sunday, she made a statement in the Sunday School class and the teacher, Mrs. Ella Mae Taylor, listened but did not comment. Later that day, Mrs. Taylor called and told her that the statement was not scriptural, and explained the Scripture to her. Dr. Steward was very appreciative of her teacher's interest and understood that it was not comfortable for her to make the call. Here was a lady with a high school education calling a lady with numerous graduate degrees to explain the Scripture "more accurately" to her.

18:27 - TO ACHAIA. *"When he wanted to cross over to Achaia, the brothers wrote to the disciples urging them to welcome him. After he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace."* It would be interesting to speculate as to why Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, and how he knew about the work at Corinth. In the first place, he had gone to the home of Priscilla and Aquila, where they had instructed him in the Gospel (v. 26). It is reasonable to assume that they had told him about the work in Corinth. Robertson writes that "The Codex Bezae adds here that certain Corinthians who had come to Ephesus heard Apollos and begged him to cross over with them to Corinth. This may very well be the way that Apollos was led to go. Preachers often receive calls because visitors from other places hear them. Priscilla and Aquila were well known in Corinth and their approval would carry weight. But they did not urge Apollos to stay longer in Ephesus" [ATR].

Whatever motivated Apollos to go to Corinth, "the brothers wrote to the disciples urging them to welcome him." A letter of recommendation can open a lot of doors, and in this case it helped Apollos. However, Paul may refer to this letter later and note that he himself needed no such letter of commendation himself: "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or like some, do we need letters of recommendation to you or from you?" (2 Cor 3:1).

GREATLY HELPED. Apollos "helped those who had believed through grace." Paul was inspired to write that we are saved "by grace, through faith, and not of works" (Eph. 2:8-9). The Jewish leaders preached redemption through the works of the Law, but Paul and Apollos preached that we are saved by grace through faith.

Apollos was so effective at Corinth that some of the members would, in time, divide along party lines, and one party was the group that elevated Apollos. Paul wrote to that church:

"Now I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction. For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by members of Chloe's household, that there are quarrels among you. What I am saying is this: each of you says, 'I'm with Paul,' or 'I'm with

Apollos,” or “I’m with Cephas,” or “I’m with Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was it Paul who was crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul’s name?” (1 Cor 1:10-13).

18:28 - REFUTED THE JEWS. *“For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating through the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.”* Apollos “vigorously”, and apparently, very effectively refuted the Jews in public”, probably beginning in the very synagogue where Paul had been heard, and then driven away. Remember, this is the place where the Jews dragged Paul before Gallio, only to be driven from his presence.

JESUS IS THE MESSIAH. This is the Good News!. This is the Gospel. The news should have been welcomed by all Jews, but sadly, most rejected the message then, as they do today. Those who know Jesus as Lord and Savior must proclaim to the world that he is the Messiah, the Anointed of the Lord, the Redeemer. This was the Gospel Apollos preached in Corinth, “So forceful was Apollos’ ministry that factious believers at Corinth formed an Apollos party (1 Cor. 1:12). There is no indication that Apollos promoted such a faction and Paul nowhere held him accountable for it” [BKC]. Paul wrote in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,

“So, what is Apollos? And what is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, and each has the role the Lord has given. **I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.** So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:5-7, bold added by this writer).

Please see volume VI in the Bible Notebook Series to continue with the study of Chapter 19.

APPENDIX

THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

by

Johnny L. Sanders

2000

For months Americans focused such attention on Y2K with all its potential problems that a very special anniversary was overlooked. It is understandable that America in general would not be aware of this anniversary, or that its significance would have been appreciated by the average person had they known about it. But the year 2000 marks the seventy-fifty anniversary of the Cooperative Program, and for Southern Baptists to fail to mark the significance of this anniversary would be a shame. The Cooperative Program is, in the minds of many, the single greatest program to have been conceived and implemented during the entire 2,000 year history of Christianity for the spread of the Gospel around the world.

From its inception in 1925 until the present the Cooperative Program has had the mark of God on it. Never in the history of the church has there been any program comparable to the program adopted by Southern Baptists for the implementation of various ministries in obedience to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

A DEFINITION. The Southern Baptist Convention, in 1979, adopted the following definition of the Cooperative Program (CP):

“The Cooperative Program is a financial channel of cooperation between the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention which makes it possible for all persons making undesignated gifts through their church to support the missionary, education, and benevolent work in their state convention, and also the work of the Southern Baptist Convention.”

BACKGROUND. As a denomination, Southern Baptist trace their roots back to 1845 when Baptists of the North and Baptists of the South were unable to resolve their numerous differences. Baptists of the South were led by the Holy Spirit to form a new convention - the Southern Baptist Convention. Its founders had one steadfast purpose: “Eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort for the propagation of the Gospel.” Claims of critics to the contrary, the major issue in forming the Southern Baptist Convention was not slavery but missions.

Both Northern Baptists and Southern Baptists shared an equal commitment to missions, but Southern Baptists chose to follow a new direction in both organization and methodology. Prior to that time those interested in each different mission cause formed a society for the support of their cause. Some of those causes were foreign missions, American Indian missions, schools, and orphanages. There was no coordination of ministries, the various societies answering only to their contributing members. There was a lot more competition than cooperation in planning mission work, approving missionaries, and financing mission work. Missionaries were often responsible for soliciting support for their work.

In a major departure from the traditional method, Southern Baptists brought together all its missions commitments under one umbrella, with the convention electing trustee boards to administer each area of work.

They began with the Foreign and Domestic Mission Boards (currently the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board) and soon added literature production (currently LifeWay Christian Resources.) Through the years, the Southern Baptist Convention has added theological education, minister's retirement (The Annuity Board, now Guidestone), radio and television, and other ministries. Yet, every cause was left on its own to raise money [CC].

Full implementation of the new method would take a number of years. From 1845 until 1919 the various agencies were constantly making appeals to local churches for support of their ministry. There were some obvious problems with this method, including overlapping pledge campaigns, and frequent emergency appeals. In 1919, the Southern Baptist Convention was facing severe financial deficits, in part because of the expanding missions commitments.

That is when something exciting began to happen. Southern Baptist Convention leaders proposed the Seventy-Five Million Campaign, a five year pledge campaign that, for the first time, included everything—all the work of all the state conventions, as well as that of the Southern Baptist Convention [CC].

In the first six months pledges exceed the goal. However, economic conditions following the end of the First World War caused total receipts to fall short of the goal and the convention had to struggle with the shortfall for almost twenty more years. The shortfall notwithstanding, this campaign was a turning point for Southern Baptists. It was during this time that convention leaders and churches discovered the wisdom and power of cooperation. During the Seventy-Five Million Campaign convention leaders began planning how to continue and expand this God-given discovery. It was obvious that the key to the success of this new system was to encourage regular giving by individuals and churches.

-Churches were encouraged to unify their own loosely knit financing patterns and to teach members more of the biblical principles of stewardship. In 1925 the new system of missions support was christened the Co-Operative Program. It was a plan, pragmatic name, yet the most fitting one, for cooperation was its secret [CC].

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

1. Southern Baptists are urged to bring their tithes and offerings to the Lord's House on the Lord's Day. In addition to the tithes and offerings (undesignated gifts given above the tenth), church

members often give money which is designated for a specific cause or ministry (i.e. special missions offerings, building fund, etc.). The church decides what percentage of the undesignated gifts will be used to support missions through the Cooperative Program (CP). In addition, messengers elected by the local church attend the annual state and national conventions to help decide how CP funds will be used.

2. The local church, having determined what percentage it will give to missions through the CP, forwards that amount to your state convention office. The state convention receives the gifts sent from local churches and then it decides how much of these gifts will be sent on to the Southern Baptist Convention for support of International missions, North American missions, and other SBC ministries. On an average the state conventions forward to the Southern Baptist Convention is about 37 percent of the funds received from churches that are affiliated with that state convention.

3. Each state convention then distributes the funds budgeted for each of its ministries. As already noted, the state convention determines what percentage of its receipts it will send to the Southern Baptist Convention. However - and this is important - the state conventions do not determine how the SBC distributes its funds.

4. The money forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention is distributed to support the work of the International Mission Board (IMB), the North American Mission Board (NAMB), six Southern Baptist seminaries, the Annuity Board, The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, and the year-long operation of the Southern Baptist Convention.

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

1. Many Southern Baptists may be surprised to know that Cooperative Program gifts are supplemented by other sources. Colleges and universities supplement the CP gifts by charging tuition, camps also receive fees, hospitals receive patient fees, and some SBC entities sell literature to support their work. It is noteworthy that LifeWay Christian Resources and the national Women's Missionary Union receive no CP funds. They rely primary on literature sales. As a matter of fact, LifeWay Christian Resources actually makes regular contribution to the Cooperative Program on the national level.

2. There are a few special offerings which local churches receive in support of mission causes, including the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. The International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board receive about half of their support from these offerings.

3. Many states promote a state missions offering for some aspects of their work. Louisiana Baptists annually promotes the Week of Prayer for State Missions and the Georgia Barnette Missions Offering. In addition, Louisiana Baptists support the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home with a

special offering and the Fall Food Roundup.

4. World Hunger offerings have increased in recent years as a grassroots response to world needs.

5. More and more Southern Baptists are participating in short-term mission projects. Usually, those who volunteer for short-term mission projects receive assistance from local churches and from interested individuals. Both the individual short-term missions volunteer and his/her local church are blessed with a fresh awareness of missions needs. This ministry often enhances their love for the Lord, and heightens their appreciation of missions, missionaries, and the impact of the CP.

They discover that the CP is the basic, foundational, ongoing support structure that keeps our missionaries on the field, supplies their needs, and enables them to bring in a harvest of souls on a daily basis.

It also assures you and your church that every dollar of spending is planned, approved, and accounted for in annual reports and audits.

More importantly, CP unites all of us together into a missions team fulfilling the Great Commission. From the pew, to the convention worker, to the missionary on the farthest field, CP funds crisscross the denomination, forming a network of ministry [CC].

6. The local association receives gifts from local churches, with each local church determining what percentage it will give the association. Since each Southern Baptist church is autonomous, no associational, state, or SBC entity can assign either a percentage, or a specific amount to the local church. However, a church or association may, under some circumstances, receive help for a community ministry either from a Baptist State Convention's Cooperative Program receipts, or from the North American Mission Board's Cooperative Program funds.