

The Bible Notebook

THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Volume 6

(Chapters 19-22)

A Verse by Verse Study

By

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DEDICATION

To
Andy Shoffner, Lieutenant Colonel, US Army

&

Allen Shoffner, Colonel, US Army

*And to the Officers and Men and Women
Who Serve with Them*

THE DEDICATION

This is the sixth volume in a series of studies from the Book of Acts. Each volume is dedicated very prayerfully to someone the Lord placed on my heart at the time. For some time, I have wanted to dedicate a volume to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. We are indebted to each of them, and it is with all of our troops in mind, I decided to dedicate this volume to LTC Andy Shoffner and to his brother LTC Allen Shoffner. I had dedicated another volume to their father, General Dutch Shoffner (Retired Three Star, U. S. Army), to whom America and Western Civilization owes a debt of gratitude. The space here does not afford me the opportunity to discuss the significance of that statement, especially when I am reminded of the scope and gravity of his contributions to our freedom.

In this dedication, I would like to mention Allen and Andy Shoffner in order to express my appreciation to them and to all those who serve their country and the free world in the global war against terror. I submitted my proposal to General Shoffner and he suggested that I might consider adding the words, “*And to the Officers and Men and Women Who Serve with Them*”. As soon as I read those words I knew that was exactly what I was wanting to say. God bless America! And God bless those who risk all to protect her and defend her.

FOREWORD

The Bible Notebook (The Sanders Bible Notebook) is the umbrella term for a series of verse by verse Bible studies, in which this writer seeks to deal with the key words or phrases in each verse. Some volumes are completed commentaries, while others need further editing, research, and documentation. I developed the format for The Bible Notebook over a number of years. It is a very simple format in which I deal (in almost all volumes) with each verse rather than a section or a paragraph. The Scripture (in most cases in the Holman Christian Standard Bible - HCSB) is printed verse by verse, along with the commentary. **I have targeted what I perceive as a gap between the critical commentary and the devotional commentary. I seek to provide a little critical help and then make applications and offer illustrations.** These studies are written with the layperson and the pastor without seminary training in mind, but many well trained pastors and teachers have found The Bible Notebook to be helpful as a quick reference.

The Bible Notebook would not be practical in hard copy because it is somewhat verbose in places. However, it is suited for the electronic medium, and most of the books may be viewed on the PastorLife.Com website (the official website of the Georgia Baptist Convention, Dr. Mike Minnix, Editor).

ACTS, CHAPTER 19

Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus

I have been waiting for Chapter 19 since I began this work months ago, in part because of discussions I had with the late Dr. Leo Eddelman while he was writing his commentary, *An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts*. At that time, some who were involved in the Charismatic movement of the day were targeting mainline churches with a missionary zeal. They testified of great blessings from their experience of a “second blessing” they claimed was manifested in their gift of tongues. However, when some of them tried to force this ecstatic form of worship on others the results were divisive in many churches and downright chaotic in others. Churches were at times divided during the sixties and seventies over this movement, as were some families and friends. The more recent emphasis on a “private prayer” language underscores the need for a careful study of the situation at Ephesus. Sufficient for the moment is the neglect of prayer in native language of people everywhere. My reasons for including his note will become obvious as we look at verses 2-6.

19:1 - APOLLOS. *“While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples.”* 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 (see notes on 18:24 in Vol. V in *The Bible Notebook* by this writer). In Volume V, I offered the following notes on Apollos:

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 [*Sanders Bible Notebook*, Vol. V, notes on 18:25 - after this, JLS].

Apollos left Ephesus and traveled to Corinth where he was well received by many of the people in the church there. After Priscilla and Aquila had instructed him, he became a powerful preacher of the Gospel and after a period of time, traveled to Corinth where “his ministry was so powerful that a formidable party in the Church of that city gloried in his type of preaching in preference to Paul’s (1Co 1:12 1Co 3:4), no doubt from the marked infusion of Greek philosophic culture which distinguished it, and which the apostle studiously avoided (1Co 2:1-5)” [*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* - after this, JFBC].

PAUL TRAVELED. Luke tells us that “Paul traveled through the interior regions and came to Ephesus.” Paul has already begun *The Third Missionary*. For a brief background, see comments on 18:23 in Volume V of *The Bible Notebook Series* by this writer. The missionary to the Gentiles had stopped at Ephesus at the close of *The Second Missionary Journey*, met visited with the leaders of

the synagogue there, left Priscilla and Aquila there, and then sailed on to Caesarea; after which he went to Antioch of Syria where he reported on the major events of the Second Missionary Journey in which he worked with Silas, Timothy, and sometimes with Luke, in visiting churches established on The First Missionary Journey by Paul and Barnabas. After visiting those Galatian churches they moved on to Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, and Corinth, where Paul labored of the Lord for 18 months. On this Third Missionary Journey, Paul spent some three years in Ephesus.

EPHESUS. The pagan city of Ephesus became the main focus of Paul's work during this third missionary endeavor.

“Ephesus was the home of the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple, according to its ruins, was 239' wide and 418' long, four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens! As a commercial center, Ephesus was the leading city of the province of Asia. Its present-day extensive ruins reveal the glory of its past. However, the Cayster River silted its harbor full and the site was later abandoned. During Paul's time the city was approaching its zenith. [Bible Knowledge Commentary, QuickVerse Electronic Bible Library, Parsons Technology - after this, BKC].

HE FOUND SOME DISCIPLES. What we are reading here is real history, involving real people doing real things at a real time in a real place. Francis Schaeffer often stressed the importance of time/space history in biblical studies. While we are dealing with supernatural events, the supernatural direction of and empowerment by the Holy Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the places and people are real historical places and people: real people doing real things at a real time in history. Two words should not be skipped over here. The first is the word “found” and the second is “disciples”.

That Priscilla and Aquila would find Apollos is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that Paul would find these disciples at Ephesus. He may have met them when he stopped off there en route from Corinth to Antioch (Ch. 18), but there is a reason to jump to that conclusion. If they had heard him speak, they would have the full Gospel then. It is more reasonable to assume that Paul met them at the synagogue or through some contact in the market place. My first thought was that he may have met them through Priscilla and Aquila, or even Apollos, but if they had met either of them, they would have known the full truth.

The word “disciples” tells us that they were “followers” and that they were “learners”. Jesus' disciples followed after Him to learn from Him. It is the conviction of this writer that the surprise is not that Paul found these disciples, the surprise would have been if he had not found them. The Holy Spirit was bringing them together.

19:2 - ASKED THEM. *“(A)nd asked them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ ‘No,’ they told him, ‘we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’”* It did not take Paul long to discern a problem with these disciples. How did he know there was something missing? He was

blessed with the spirit of discernment, which is obvious, but anyone who is grounded in sound doctrine (truth) will be able to detect false, flawed, or inadequate theology. All Paul had to do was listen to these disciples. When he discovered that their knowledge was incomplete, he had a choice: he could criticize them, or he could probe their understanding with questions.

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. Paul asked them a question: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Paul is led by the Holy Spirit to ask these disciples if they had received the Holy Spirit at the time they believed. This is a logical question and the answer would reveal a lot.

WHEN YOU BELIEVED. This is a critical verse in any study of Acts or any study of salvation, sanctification, or the ministry of Holy Spirit. The King James has, “He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” Millions have read this in the KJV, and indeed millions continue reading that beautiful version of the Bible. However, you will note the difference one word can make as you read the Holman Christian Standard Bible, which I began using when Vice President Ken Stephens of LifeWay Christian Resources and president of The B&H Publishing Group, began sending trustees hard copy printouts of individual books as they were completed.

This is a key verse and we must understand what Paul is asking before we continue. I love the King James Version of the Bible, but let’s face it, the KJV is 400 years old, and languages are constantly changing as new words are added to keep up with culture and technology. Furthermore, over a period of time we redefine words. Many today did not grow up reading, “thee”, “thou”, and “saith”, and they are turned off by it. Sadly, some have turned to weaker versions of the Scripture. For the “King James only” people, let me stress that I would like to see them try to read a copy of the original KJV. My friend, Dr. William R. Cooper of Middlesex, England has “translated” the 1526 Tyndale NT into modern English. As a matter of fact, he sent me a signed first edition Tyndale NT in modern English. Dr. Gene Jeffries had shown me the first copy to reach America after the first printing in 2000, along with the original Tyndale. I could not read the Tyndale NT, but Dr. Cooper can, and does. He also translated the 1388 Wycliffe NT into modern English and is now working on the 1520 Nisbitt Scot NT.

The KJV is 85% the Tyndale Bible. William Tyndale opened the door for all English speaking people to have the Scripture translated from the original language into English. John Wycliffe translated the NT from the Latin (Vulgate). The King James Version is a wonderful version and I love certain passages better in the KJV than any other, especially those familiar passages like Psalm 23 and the Model Prayer, and those passages I memorized when I was participating in the Memory Work Drills and Bible Drills as a teenager.

That said, there is a problem in the KJV rendering of this question. It is not antiquated terminology or archaic language. The problem is with the translation, and we must get this right. I mentioned already the conversations I had with the late Dr. Leo Eddleman about

this verse. He was writing his commentary, *An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts*, at the time, and I was preparing a simple study guide. I spent a lot of time talking with him, in person or on the phone, and this was a key verse we discussed. Dr. Eddleman told me that J. Edgar Hoover said he had the best working knowledge of Hebrew of any non-Jew in the United States, but he had majored in Greek in seminary. He translated it as the HCSB renders it, and then he provides his literal rendering, “the Holy Spirit, did ye receive, having believed?” [H. Leo Eddleman, *An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts*, Book of Life Publishers, Dallas, 1974, p. 268 - after this HLE]. This

“Emphasizes that the coming of the Holy Spirit at the time one believes is normative. Seldom has mistranslation been so destructive of clarity as the KJV rendering of this question... The simultaneity of the participle ‘having believed’ and the indicative verb ‘received’ is structured to demand that believing and receiving the Holy Spirit are two aspects of one experience. For some reason Paul had doubts about these believers” [HLE: 268].

WE HAVEN’T EVEN HEARD. Luke records their response: “No,’ they told him, ‘we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” Like Apollos, they had heard the good news that John the Baptist, the last prophet of the Old Covenant, had announced. They, or some of them, must have gone to Jerusalem for Passover or Pentecost during the time when John was preaching and heard him announce that God had fulfilled His Messianic promises. Paul’s question is both courteous and probing, and their response sincere and revealing.

They had believed when they heard the message John preached and then returned to Ephesus where they continued in fellowship with one another. They had not “even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” Were they saved? They believed in Jesus Christ, but they were not quite in the same position as the one hundred, twenty disciples in the upper room, including the eleven apostles, who were praying and waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Those earlier saints were believers, but this is a unique situation. This is not a pattern for the church to follow, as the context makes very clear. **Those who receive Jesus Christ are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation**, not through some second blessing. The truth here is determined by what the Scripture says, not by what “I feel in my heart.” **If what you feel in your heart does not agree with what God says in His word, you must conclude that it was not God who put it in your heart!** The Bible is our authority. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, protected by the Holy Spirit, and with our hearts illuminated by the Holy Spirit, the Scripture is our absolute authority! The arrogance of one who reads the Bible and then sets it aside for some other authority is only surpassed by his ignorance of the inspired Scripture.

19:3 - WITH WHAT. “*Then with what [baptism] were you baptized?’ he asked them. ‘With John’s baptism,’ they replied.*” It is interesting to read various conclusions drawn in the commentaries. For example, Robertson writes that John “preached also the baptism of the Holy Spirit which the Messiah was to bring (Mark 1:7; Mat 3:11; Luke 3:16). If they did not know of the Holy Spirit, they had missed the point of John’s baptism” [Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources - after this, ATR]. However, that assumes that these

men had heard John preach enough to understand his complete message.

Either these men were sincere worshipers of the One of whom John prophesied, they were ignorant men who had missed the point of John's message, or they were simply confused. Rather than draw either conclusion, since Luke provides no more information, is it not reasonable to assume that these men had heard John the Baptist, believed, repented, been baptized, and continued in fellowship, waiting for some further information about the Messiah? That conclusion opens another question. Had they gone to the synagogue in Ephesus and told the leaders there what they had heard and how they had responded? If so, their message had been rejected, so these men continued in fellowship with one another.

Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, of whom he speaks, is probing to try to determine just where these men were in their understanding and in their experience with the Lord. There are two or three possibilities we may consider: (1) One might conclude that, since these men had said, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit", that they could not have been true believers because verse 2 reveals that when one is saved he receives the Holy Spirit (he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation). (2) In the second place, we may conclude that these men were in the same position as those believers in Jerusalem before Pentecost, or even before the Crucifixion. If that raises a question, remember that Jesus had told His closest followers, the apostles, that he would be put to death and buried, but that he would be resurrected, yet on the morning of the Resurrection, not even His chosen apostles expected it. Did that mean that they were lost? Of course not. (3) There is also the possibility that these men were sincere, but very limited in their knowledge of what the Lord was doing, but they were open to new information.

We must also understand that we are not to look at everything we find in Acts as a pattern that will be followed in every situation. Some who believed spoke in tongues, others did not. That does not speak of the spirituality of the individuals involved so much as it speaks of the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in such things. He can and will act according to His purpose. The Book of Acts is the book of history in the New Testament and we learn a lot from Acts that has an application for us today, but for our systematic theology we must turn to the Pauline Epistles and the General Epistles. The thing to remember with reference to the Holy Spirit is that when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior the Holy Spirit comes into our heart, but in the early church He exercises His sovereignty in the manifestation of His presence and His work.

19:4 - BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE. *"Paul said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the One who would come after him, that is, in Jesus."* This is an interesting statement, but the student of the Word must remain focused on the Word and not go off on a tangent. This is not teaching baptismal regeneration - if it is, then the critics who constantly seek contradictions in the Scripture would find their first one right here. Baptism is not equated to repentance, nor does it produce repentance. Rather, the baptism of John the Baptist was a testimony to repentance. If there is no change on one's life the symbol (testimony) is meaningless.

There are specific things we should glean from the baptism of John, and then from Christian baptism

in general. First, the mode of baptism was immersion (the Greek word leaves no doubt about that for it means to take beneath the surface and bring forth again). Second, water, whether one is immersed, sprinkled, or baptized three times face forward, can produce neither Justification nor Sanctification. Third, John the Baptist was a pivotal figure in the Biblical story of Redemption. **John the Baptist was the final Old Testament prophet who fulfilled all promises concerning Elijah, the representative prophet.** Each Sabbath Day in each synagogue there was a reading from the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (represented by Elijah, even though he was not a writing prophet like Isaiah or Jeremiah).

Jesus stated it so there should never be any mistake: “**For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; if you’re willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who is to come**” (Matt 11:13-14, HCSB, bold added by this writer). I once heard Dr. Leo Eddleman quote verse 13 to disprove the claim that Jesus saved the thief on the cross without his being baptized because they were still under the Old Testament, and that Jesus had to die before His New Testament was effective. This verse assures us that the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled, possibly when John cried, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

BELIEVE IN THE ONE. Eddleman made the point that, “During the transitional period from John to (the) days immediately following Pentecost repentance and believing appear as two concomitant aspects of the same experience: two acts in simultaneity. In moving thus from John to Jesus, we do not find the phenomenon of changing the law: rather it is a fulfilling” [HLE: 268]. Believing is not new. It was “the response God sought from the earliest times in order for man to put himself in the way of receiving the Lord’s salvation: ‘and he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness’ (Gen. 5:6)” [HLE: 268f].

THE ONE WHO WOULD COME AFTER HIM. While it is possible that these disciples of John had heard his message and believed that the Messiah was about to make his presence known, but had heard no more about the Messiah, some, including Robertson, discount that they knew the truth at all:

“This is John's identical phrase, ‘the one coming after me’ as seen in Mark 1:7; Mat 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:15. It is not clear that these ‘disciples’ believed in a Messiah, least of all in Jesus. They were wholly unprepared for the baptism of John. Paul does not mean to say that John's baptism was inadequate, but he simply explains what John really taught and so what his baptism signified” [ATR].

Robertson sees these twelve men as false disciples of John, or at the very least, men who held a false belief, and he may be right. However, I will reserve such judgment on the grounds that it is possible that, rather than a false faith, their commitment may have been based on inadequate or limited truth. There is not question that they were ignorant of the Gospel. They do not appear to have been in the same category as Apollos, who knew more, but not yet enough about Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

19:5 - THEY WERE BAPTIZED. *“On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord*

Jesus.” This verse seems to support Robertson’s position that they did not know the message of John when they were baptized by John. We will let him make his point:

“Apollos was not rebaptized. The twelve apostles were not rebaptized. Jesus received no other baptism than that of John. The point here is simply that these twelve men were grossly ignorant of the meaning of John’s baptism as regards repentance, the Messiahship of Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Hence Paul had them baptized, not so much again, as really baptized this time, in the name or on the authority of the Lord Jesus as he had himself commanded (Mat 28:19) and as was the universal apostolic custom. Proper understanding of "Jesus" involved all the rest including the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Luke does not give a formula, but simply explains that now these men had a proper object of faith (Jesus) and were now really baptized” [ATR].

It is obvious that they were not in the same position as Apollos because they needed to be baptized and he did not. As noted earlier, Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos speak and 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. There are two possibilities here: (1) either Apollos had a different relationship with Lord (he knew the truth), whereas something was lacking in these disciples at Ephesus, or (2) Apollos may have been baptized without Luke including that. The second “possibility” seems most unlikely, however.

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS. In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His followers to win lost people to Him, disciple them, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20). There is no contradiction here, no matter what the “Jesus’ name only” people may claim. I hold a trinitary view of God, one in essence, three in personality, one God, thee Persons. I cannot explain the Trinity but I am convinced that the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Trinity from beginning to end.

Those who hold a unitary view of God can come up with illustrations to reinforce their claim, but I still reject it. For example, one may say that God was playing the role of the Father during the Old Testament period, the Son during the earthly ministry of Christ, and the Holy Spirit from Pentecost forward. I sat under professors in seminary who rejected the Trinity and I remember one example one used to explain the New Testament doctrine of one God. He said, “I am the son of my father, the husband of my wife, and the father of my son. I am one person but I relate to others in different ways.” I heard one person use H₂O as an illustration. You take a pot of water and as long as you keep it between 32 degrees and 212 degrees Fahrenheit, you have water. If it goes below 32 degrees it becomes ice, and if you heat it to 212 degrees you get steam. That is true but the illustration is inadequate to portray the Trinity. Francis Schaeffer said that it was the doctrine of the Trinity that led him from agnosticism to the theism. His eyes were opened when he realized that God did not have to create man because He was lonely or inadequate in any way. There has always been horizontal fellowship within the Godhead.

Here, to baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus, highlights the fact that, while Paul found them in ignorance of the Lord Jesus, they now knew Him. They had known John's baptism, now they are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Baptism does not save, it does not regenerate or redeem, but it is important and it is commanded, as I point out in the comments on Acts 2:38, (Volume One in this series). I accepted the pastorate of one church right after seminary and discovered that over 90 people had made a profession of faith in that church who had never been baptized. Someone had not proclaimed the complete Gospel to them. While I was a student at Mississippi College, I led the mission trip to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson for two and one-half years, and during part of that time I was preaching at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. The chaplain, R. B. Hicks, told me that I could go to any camp at Parchman and "tell them I sent you" and they will let you preach. One Sunday morning he told me he wished I had some extra clothes so I could help him baptize a number of people. After talking about it he went home and found some of his old clothes and I dressed in them and baptized a number of people (44 or 45 on two different Sundays, in addition to those he baptized). We were surrounded by guards and trustees holding guns as we baptized. The chaplain took our Lord's command so seriously that he contacted a number of churches and asked them if they would receive people into the membership of their church if he baptized them at Parchman. They agreed and he had someone build something like a large horse trough out of concrete blocks. We baptized them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - but we were also baptizing them in the name of the Lord Jesus.

19:6 - PAUL LAID HANDS ON THEM. *"And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak with [other] languages and to prophesy."* Very little, if anything, is said about the practice of laying on of hands in the New Testament period at this point. This had been done by Peter and John in Samaria (Acts 8:16) and in the case of Paul in Damascus (Acts 9:17). Here, it was followed by a special visitation by the Holy Spirit, who "came on them" and manifested His presence in supernatural power.

OTHER LANGUAGES. Here, the first consideration is the statement itself. Robertson helps with that:

"They spake with tongues (elaloun glôssais). Inchoative imperfect, began to speak with tongues as in Jerusalem at Pentecost and as in Caesarea before the baptism. Prophesied (eprophêteuon). Inchoative imperfect again, began to prophesy. The speaking with tongues and prophesying was external and indubitable proof that the Holy Spirit had come on these twelve uninformed disciples now fully won to the service of Jesus as Messiah. But this baptism in water did not "convey" the Holy Spirit nor forgiveness of sins. Paul was not a sacramentalist" [ATR].

One of the most baffling issues in the history of Christianity has been the tongues issue. It was such a serious problem in the church at Corinth that Paul was inspired to write a lengthy passage in The

First Epistle to the Corinthians, (Chapters 12-14) in an effort to try, not to promote the movement, but to control it. Volumes have been written on the subject and for a quick reference I would recommend the book, *Alive In The Spirit*, by Dr. Gene Jeffries. It should be sufficient here to note that we do not see a set pattern of formula for tongues in the Book of Acts. The disciples at Pentecost spoke in tongues and Gentile believers spoke in tongues in the home of Cornelius, but others did not.

A teenaged boy stopped by my house a number of years ago with his brother, who was working on a school project with my son John. When they went to John's room to collect materials, the older brother stayed in the den with me. I asked him if he had received Jesus Christ as his Savior. He hesitated, and then said, "You see, we believe you have to speak in tongues to be saved, and I have never spoken in tongues." His grief was apparent. He wanted to be saved but he was told that if he was saved he would speak in other tongues.

It should be sufficient here to point out that in this very Book we are told that in order to be saved one must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). At no point are we told that we must speak in other languages in order to be saved, or as proof of our salvation. In fact, believers spoke in tongues on only a few occasions. There is no pattern. For example, in Samaria, "...Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:17) and there is no mention of tongues or languages. In contrast, believers in the home of Cornelius did speak in other languages:

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speaking in [other] languages and declaring the greatness of God.

"Then Peter responded, 'Can anyone withhold water and prevent these from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days" (Acts 10:44-48).

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and indwelt 120 Jewish believers and they spoke in other languages. In Caesarea, in the home of Cornelius, Gentile believers receive the Holy Spirit and speak in "other languages" in the presence of the circumcised believers - as a testimony to "the greatness of God". We need to get this point: The gift of tongues in the home of Cornelius was a sign to the Jewish believers there that what had happened to these Gentiles was real and it was from God.

As Dr. Gene Jeffries moves toward the conclusion in his book, *Alive in the Spirit*, he make a convincing statement for those who follow his logic and his interpretation of Scripture:

"With respect to the sign gift of TONGUES, I have researched and written so

thoroughly that it seems hardly necessary to reiterate it all here (he then refers the reader to his Appendix). Let it be sufficient to say that tongues were ever and always a language; and that whatever the language discerned, it was *there to bring Jewish people to faith in Christ*. Every mention of tongues in the New Testament had Jews present. When they are lost, they are evangelized as prophesied in Isaiah 28:11; when they are saved (as with Peter and his company in Acts 10), tongues served as an authenticating sign during the transitional era between the dispensations of Law and Grace. They served to indicate to Christians that the Gospel had indeed been extended unto Gentiles.

“All thoughts that tongues are some kind of ‘angelic language’ or are only one’s ‘private devotion with God’ are totally without Biblical foundation, the sincerity of some earnest believers notwithstanding” [Jeffries, Gene L., *Alive in the Spirit*, 2005, P. 72].

Eddleman added that “the issue at Corinth has yet to be compared to these three instances (Samaria, Caesarea, and Ephesus). Significantly, these twelve from Ephesus did more than speak in tongues (they prophesied). Prophesying heads lists of charismatic gifts in I Corinthians 12-14, while glossolalia was at the bottom of the list” [HLE: 269].

QUESTION: Why did the Holy Spirit empower these men in Ephesus to speak in “other” tongues? First, remember that this gift was a testimony to Jewish believers in the home of Cornelius that those Gentiles were saved in exactly the same way as Jews, and that they received the Holy Spirit and were empowered by Him in full measure, with the same manifestation as Jews at Pentecost. Here in Ephesus, those who were so gifted were Jews, not Gentiles. Furthermore, churches had been planted on two previous missionary journeys, so that is not a declaration of a new direction or new phase in the spread of the Gospel. What then is it? For one thing, it is a declaration of the sovereignty of God in giving gifts and manifesting His power. We should praise Him for it, but that does not mean that we should form a theological system around it.

19:7 - ABOUT 12 MEN. “*Now there were about 12 men in all.*” In an ancient system in which number are used to signify truth or facts. The number 12 is the number for organized religion (12 tribes, 12 apostles, 12 gates). However, the word “about” implies that Luke is simply recording the approximate number. There seems to have been no other significance to the number.

Paul in Lecture Hall of Tyrannus

19:8 - THE SYNAGOGUE. “*Then he entered the synagogue and spoke boldly over a period of three months, engaging in discussion and trying to persuade them about the things related to the kingdom of God.*” Following the mission strategy which he had adopted at the beginning of the First Missionary Journey, Paul follows a major Roman highway to a major population center where he begins his ministry by going to a synagogue on the Sabbath Day. This was the logical place to meet

Jews in a city full of Gentiles. Here, they met to worship each Sabbath.

SPOKE BOLDLY. Paul had been trained as a Pharisee and when Jewish leaders learned that he had studied under Gamaliel they would naturally want to see if he had anything to say to the members of this synagogue. He did! Just as the apostles and other disciples in Jerusalem had spoken boldly after Pentecost, Paul speaks boldly in the synagogue in Ephesus. The Greek shows that Paul kept on speaking boldly for three months, persistently trying to persuade people to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

TRYING TO PERSUADE. The verb, as Robertson points out, is the “Present active conative participle of peithô, trying to persuade (Acts 28:23). Paul’s idea of the Kingdom of God was the church of God which he (Jesus, God’s Son) had purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28, calling Christ God). Nowhere else had Paul apparently been able to speak so long in the synagogue without interruption unless it was so at Corinth. These Jews were already interested (18:30)” [ATR]. In other places, like Antioch of Pisidia, it did not take as long for opposition to force Paul out of the synagogue.

Paul was able to continue to speak boldly in the synagogue for three months. He may well have addressed the assembly at first, and if so he would have followed the same basic prophetic outline he had used in proclaiming the message of the Messiah in other synagogues, including the call of Abraham, the Messianic Covenant, and the coming of Jesus to fulfill all the Messianic prophecies. He would have told them about the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, His work as Mediator between God and man, and His promised return. In time, Paul may have spent more time meeting with leaders, small groups, or interested individual, “engaging in discussion and trying to persuade them about the things related to the kingdom of God.” It does not take long to discover that Paul’s concern at Ephesus was theology, not sociology, psychology, or political science. He remained focused on the “things related to the kingdom of God”. This is an example for the church in the Twenty First century. We may use any number of programs, ministries, and approaches, but we must never take our eyes off the cross.

19:9 - SOME BECAME HARDENED. *“But when some became hardened and would not believe, slandering the Way in front of the crowd, he withdrew from them and met separately with the disciples, conducting discussions every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.”* Here the imperfect tense shows both growing disbelief and disobedience, “both ideas as in Acts 14:2; Acts 17:5, first refusal to believe and then refusal to obey” [ATR]. As in other places, some of the people received Paul’s message with great interest, but others did not believe, and those who did not believe Paul and receive Jesus as Savior soon became hardened enemies of Paul and of Jesus.

This should not be surprising. Pharaoh began by hardening his heart against God but before long the Lord began to harden his heart. Normally, it is not God who hardens the hearts of non-believers, it is Satan. When you hear the Gospel the Holy Spirit, who inspired every word of Scripture, will convict you of sin, of righteousness in Christ, and the judgment to come. However, if you persist in closing your eyes to the truth you risk becoming blind to the Light of the World. In Ephesus, those Jews

who rejected the message soon became hardened against the messenger.

MET SEPARATELY WITH THE DISCIPLES. Paul took those who believed and began meeting separately with them. He withdrew from the synagogue, as he had done in Corinth (18:7).

This accomplished two things: (1) it permitted new converts to hear the word without being subjected to abuse, and (2) it allowed him to answer their questions and explain the Scripture without interruption from those who were growing more and more hostile to Paul and the Gospel.

LECTURE HALL OF TYRANNUS. Paul met with believers, “conducting discussions every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.” These Bible studies may have been conducted in the evenings, but he may have met with some during the day as well. Tyrannus “was probably a converted teacher of speech or philosophy. This hall served the same purpose as did the home of Justus in Corinth” [NCWB].

19:10 - FOR TWO YEARS. *“And this went on for two years, so that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.”* The two years was probably in addition to the three months that he had already spent there when he was preaching in the synagogue, and may not cover the entire time he spent in Ephesus. Elsewhere, it seems that Luke is telling us that Paul was in Ephesus three years.

“Sometime during those two years Paul must have made another unmentioned trip to Corinth, since the next recorded visit is twice called his third visit (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1; see also 2 Cor. 1:15, 16). Toward the end of Paul’s two-year stay at Ephesus, he probably wrote the first letter to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 16:8). Some scholars believe that he also wrote a letter to the Galatians at this time” [New Commentary on the Whole Bible, QuickVerse Electronic Library - after this, NCWB].

THE PROVINCE OF ASIA. Rather than the Continent of Asia as we know it today, this denotes the Roman province which covered a part of Asia Minor “of which Ephesus was the principal city. The name Asia was used sometimes to denote that single province. Ephesus was the capital; and there was, of course, a constant and large influx of people there for the purposes of commerce and worship” [BARNES’ NOTES ON THE NT, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources - after this - BARNES].

BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS. Luke tell us that “all the inhabitants of the province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.” The Jews had a background in the Old Testament Scriptures, which gave them a significant advantage in understanding the Gospel, and it was an advantage to Paul when he preached to the Jews. Many Gentiles heard and believed the Gospel. Not only did these Jews and Greeks have a totally different background, there is evidence of hostility between Jews and Gentiles in the area. The Gospel was overcoming racial barriers, gender barriers, and class barriers!

Paul continued in Ephesus for two years after believers left the synagogue and moved to the hall of Tyrannus. He probably remained in Ephesus, teaching the people there but the Gospel soon began spreading throughout the province, “even to the Lycus Valley including the rest of the seven churches of Rev 1:11; Rev 2:1; Rev 3:1. Demetrius in verse Acts 19:26 will confirm the tremendous influence of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus on Asia. Forty years after this Pliny in his famous letter to Trajan from Bithynia will say of Christianity: ‘For the contagion of this superstition has not only spread through cities, but also through villages and country places’ [ATR]. Such was the success of the Gospel, and such was the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul Confronts the Occult

19:11 - EXTRAORDINARY MIRACLES. “*God was performing extraordinary miracles by Paul’s hands...*” By “extraordinary miracles”, I believe we are safe in assuming that Luke means an increase in the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit. This was a special ministry that would touch the entire province of Asia, and include many cities and towns in which many souls were saved and numerous churches were planted, as the seven churches of Asia Minor to whom Jesus addressed letters in the Revelation would testify.

A single miracle is an extraordinary manifestation of the power of God, but Luke here is underscoring a major increase in the supernatural in Ephesus. Those television evangelists (televangelists) who major in healing ministries today, and those who are impressed (and obsessed) with those individuals and their continuous display of healing, extra-biblical messages from God, and sensational testimonies should pay close attention here. In the first place, these were genuine miracles in which the manifestation of the power of Holy Spirit in the ministry of Paul parallels the miracles of Peter (see 5:15-16).

“Quite clearly God’s hand of blessing and endorsement was on Paul. Apparently the **handkerchiefs and aprons** were tangible symbols of God’s power through His apostle; these objects had no magical powers in themselves. Certainly this is no basis for people trying to repeat such miracles today. As seen many times in Acts, miracles confirmed the work of the apostles (2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12; cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4)” [The Bible Knowledge Commentary, QuickVerse Eletronic Library - after this BKC].

When I was a young pastor, I was often asked if I believed in miracles. I do believe in miracles, but I have a problem with modern day miracle workers. I watched a very popular one in action when I was about twelve years old, and with help from my father, I began to see how this man manipulated the crowd, played on the fear he created in some, and played on the earnest longing for healing in others. I witnessed deception and misdirection, but did not fully understand it until we watched a neighbor who had walked through the long line of people who were looking for the sensational young faith healer to heal them. When she came to the evangelist, he put his hands on either side of

her head and proclaimed he “HEALED!” When she came back to her family she still could not speak and she could not hear. Her family took her home and watched for any indication that she had been healed, but after two weeks they gave up and wrote to the headquarters of that organization, explaining that she had not been healed. They received a reply: “She probably got out of her place in line”! That makes one wonder what happened to the one who had her place in the line! I have also wondered what kind of response I would have gotten if I had contacted the Oral Roberts organization and told them what I had witnessed first hand.

I believe in divine healing, having personally experienced physical blessings from the Lord that went beyond medical science. I later learned that I had a pinched nerve between two metatarsal joints in my left foot, but two “foot specialists” almost totaled me out when I was about 36 years old. I prayed for instant healing; I prayed for overnight healing. What I received was something far more important. If I had been healed overnight I might well have continued to serve as pastor of a church with a lot of members (in a day before the modern mega-church movement), and I may well have become an accomplished fisherman and hunter (my secretary’s husband was a professional guide, and I was hooked) Instead, I became open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and began to study, and in time, produce Bible studies for others. If the Lord had “done it my way”, I may have forgotten all about the problem within a matter of weeks or months. But was not allowed to forget my dependence on Him.

Over a period of twenty-five years, I saw the Lord sustain me physically, keep me in His work, provide for my family, and give me strength and healing as circumstances seemed to demand. I remember very clearly a number of times when the Lord blessed me and moved me forward incrementally so that I could continue in His ministry. Finally, after sitting on a bar stool for twenty-five years, I stood up one Sunday Morning to preach (I believe it was in 2000). The next Sunday, I stood for both services and I have been standing ever since. I still have to be careful with my feet, wear shoes that provide the right support, and avoid over doing it, but today I am doing things I only dreamed of twenty-five years ago. I have had a lot of good experiences with medical doctors (and some not so good), and I have been aware of the natural healing process with which the Lord blesses all of us. There were times when I recognized the Lord’s hand in providing the strength and healing needed to take that next step.

A number of years ago, my son was pushing me through a mall in a wheel chair when a young man walked up to me and announced, “You don’t have to be in that wheel chair! God is going to heal you.” He was very sincere, but I was very disappointed. During those years, I was often amazed at the people who would make statements that implied that I was too stupid to know how to help myself physically, or too weak spiritually to receive the Lord’s healing. This young man did not ask about my relationship with the Lord. He showed no interest in whether or not I was saved or lost, only in his announcement that I was going to be healed.

Right after I had gone to a “foot specialist” with what I learned later was a pinched nerve in one foot, a lady offered to contact a questionable “faith healer” and ask her to heal me. I thanked the lady, but told her that if she had faith in the Lord I would have as much faith in her prayers as in the one she

had mentioned.

I still believe in divine healing, but I have not changed my mind about faith healers. Think about this: A faith healer, through a “word of knowledge” announces that “someone out there” is having low back problems. If I ever want to take a stab in the dark, I will start with this one! I doubt that I ever preach to a congregation when at least one person has low back pain! What hit me as interesting one day was that I was watching a rerun! He may have announced that the program would be played again. His “word of knowledge” was a re-run!

Modern electronics experts have exposed fakes and charlatans numerous times, but they continue to mislead and deceive people. I believe in divine healing, but when the sensational in the physical realm can distract us from that which is more important, we must question the source, even when there is some evidence that something supernatural may have taken place. Let me stress again that I am talking about people who are misdirected to the point that they will seek out these faith healers, but avoid sound doctrine. Satan will counterfeit anything God does in order to deceive people, either to keep them from going to Him for salvation, or to prevent their sanctification. If he can convince anyone that sanctification is anything other than what the Holy Spirit reveals in the doctrinal section of Romans, he can keep them from being an effective witness from the Lord, and use them to confuse others. The highest purpose in sanctification is not to get you to send your money to some tel-evangelist, but to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

Note now that the demonstration of the extraordinary miracles in Ephesus opens the door for Satan to get involved. Were the miracles about which Luke the physician wrote real? Absolutely. As a matter of fact, there was an extraordinary display of the power of the Holy Spirit during this time in Ephesus, according to His sovereign will and purpose. Once again, extraordinary miracles became an opportunity for Satan, as we shall see.

19:12 - FACECLOTHS OR WORK APRONS. “...(*S*)o that even facecloths or work aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.”. Some church members may remember that in the heyday of the faith-healers one often heard about prayer cloths. Some who contacted these faith-healers were asked to send a handkerchief to have it blessed, and I suppose the idea was that it would be returned and then the sick person could lay it on the afflicted area. Here, the people were genuinely healed, not because of the cloth but because of their faith. Let me be quick to add that many involved in faith healing may stress that it is the individual’s faith that heals them. I believe, however, that this kind of healing, though genuine in the early church, may have ceased (along with other terminal gifts) as a general gift after the New Testament was completed (based on my interpretation of 1 Cor. 13:10). Adam Clarke identifies the cloths and aprons in this way:

“**Handkerchiefs or aprons** - *soudaria h simikinqia*, Probably the *sudaria* were a sort of handkerchiefs, which, in traveling, were always carried in the hand, for the convenience of wiping the face; and the *simikinthia* were either the sashes or girdles that went about the loins. These, borrowed from the apostle, and applied to the bodies

of the diseased, became the means, in the hand of God, of their restoration to health”
[Adam Clarke’s Commentary, the Bible Navigator - after this, CLARKE].

Clark infers that aprons belonging to the apostles were taken to the sick who wore them and were healed. Another possibility was that they were taken to Paul, he blessed them, and they were then returned to those in need of healing. Paul was the only apostle there, so if he had used only his apron or sash it would seem that very few would have been healed in this manner.

What we must remember is that this was not magic, and it was not some kind of hocus-pocus. People were really healed in this manner, so why am I skeptical of such practices today? In the first place, we will see how the devil counterfeited or faked those miracles to detract from the power of God and to control the lives of those who thought they were being blessed by the Lord. In the second place, this was a unique time in the history of the church. There were gifts that the Lord used mightily during the embryonic stage of the church that are not common today. Can God not heal miraculously today? He can and does, but what ever God does will never draw our attention away from the study of His Word, away from prayer, and away from His church.

Many years ago now, I received a call from an elderly lady, whom I will call Mrs. New (if only because she lived on New Street). She had been diagnosed with cancer and told that she must have surgery. I went to see her but could hardly get in a word. She had called Oral Roberts and Rex Hombard and asked them to pray for her. One or both ministries wanted a handkerchief which they would bless and return so she could lay it on her body. As I listened, I was thinking, Lady, if I thought handkerchief would work I would send a bed sheet! She wanted me to pray, but primarily, she was looking to those faith healers. She refused to have the surgery because she was assured she would be healed. Several months later, I was on vacation when I got the call. Mrs. New was in St. Francis Hospital in Monroe, LA. I drove back and got to the hospital at midnight. I was told that “They opened her up and just sewed her back up.” It was too late to help her. I drove the rest of the night to get back to my family, knowing I would have a funeral in a matter of days. I feel sure that if Mrs. New had contacted either of those faith healers they would have told her that her faith was not strong enough.

The healing miracles performed by Paul in Ephesus were legitimate and they were dramatic, which is exactly what was needed to draw the most people to hear the Gospel in the least amount of time. It was also exactly what Satan could counterfeit to lead many to hell. He would never miss an opportunity like that!

19:13 - ITINERANT JEWISH EXORCISTS. *“Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists attempted to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘I command you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches!’”* The KJV has “vagabond Jews, exorcists”, whereas Robertson renders it “strolling Jews”. Vincent follows the KJV. The NASB has, “But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place...” Among Jews, then and now, there are some who are religious and some who are not. Among those who are religious, some are very religious (orthodox) and those who are more liberal (Reformed), and those who are only nominally

religious. Those who are not religious run the full spectrum, from agnostics to atheists, from model citizen to moral reprobate. Dr. W. W. Stephens invited a Jewish rabbi from Temple Beth Israel in Jackson, Mississippi to speak to one of the Bible classes I had under him. After he spoke he invited us to attend one of their services. He added, "You don't have anything to worry about; you believe everything we believe, we just don't believe everything you believe." That statement is an oversimplification of the differences between Jews and Christians, but Dr. Stephens accepted the invitation and we were treated as honored guests.

My late friend, Phil Fishman, announced when I first met him, "I'm a Jew, but I'm not religious. I am a scientist." Phil's daughter was a Christian and he demanded that she not try to convert him. He once told me he had been the chairman of the building committee when they built the local Jewish temple, so there was contact with religious Jews in the area. In fact, one day Phil called me aside at the health club and said, "Johnny, our rabbi is a member of our poker group, and he has retired and he is moving to New York. Do you play poker?" Interestingly, a mutual friend, a retired professor and devout Lutheran who stated that he was saved, "by grace through faith," was a member of their group. I declined!

These were itinerant Jews, but that does not mean that they wandered aimlessly, any more than gypsies did. In Louis L'Amour's book, *The Walking Drum*, he writes about a well organized group of traders who traveled all over Europe trading with locals in their market places. They planned each trip, policed their own people, and provided their own defense against enemies. These Jews were moving from place to place, practicing their black magic in one area after another, and moving before they stirred up too much opposition.

EXORCISTS. The word, found only here in the New Testament, denotes people who traveled from place to place pretending to cast evil spirits out of people, and many probably professed to be able to heal people through chants, charms, and ceremonies. Barnes adds that the word

"is derived from orkov orkos, an oath, and from orkizw, to bind with an oath. It was applied in this sense, because those who pretended to be able to expel demons used the formula of an oath, or adjured them, to compel them to leave the possessed persons. Comp. Mat 12:27. They commonly used the name of God, or called on the demons in the name of God to leave the person. Here they used the name Jesus to command them to come out [BARNES].

Vincent points out that the "kindred verb, adjure, occurs Matthew 26:63, and means, originally, to administer an oath. These Jewish exorcists pretended to the power of casting out evil spirits by magical arts derived from Solomon" [Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources - after this, VINCENT]. Robertson agrees that the word originally meant to take an oath, but adds, "then to use an oath as a spell or charm. Only instance here in the N.T. These men regarded Paul as one of their own number just as Simon Magus treated

Simon Peter. Only here these exorcists paid Paul the compliment of imitation instead of offering money as Magus did” [ATR]. These itinerant Jews were exorcists, practitioners of an occult art.

My brother-in-law Jimmy Furr was for twelve years a regional representative for the Interfaith Witness Department, a division of the Evangelism Department of the North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention. He traveled all over the country, leading conferences on cults, the occult, and New Age movements in colleges, seminaries, state conventions, and local churches. On one occasion, when he went to his assigned conference room where, it had been announced, he would lead a conference on the occult, he discovered that there were too many people there for the room. They had to find a larger place for his conference, whereas other conferences ran far short of their expectations. The reason was that these people were seeing evidence of occult activities in their communities and wanted to know more about it. Satan is very subtle, and a lot of people who witness occult activities are not aware of the fact that this is satanic. These Jewish exorcists would have been very careful to avoid appearing the enemy of Jesus, and of Paul.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS. This is as amazing as it is shocking. These people went so far as “to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘I command you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches!’” Satan is never more vile and cunning than when he has his servants make pronouncements in the name of Jesus. Satan often uses, in boxing terminology, a one-two punch. He may have a radical fundamentalist church demonstrating near the funeral for a fallen soldier, with signs claiming that God killed the young soldier because there are homosexuals in America, but he is more likely to have someone preach or teach the Word of God, while creating questions as to just how much of the Word we can really believe. One lady, who had just received a prestigious appointment, illustrated this when, after meeting me, she stepped closer to me and spoke in a manner that implied that we know something about the Bible that the general public does not know. She very confidently stated, “I like your commentary on Philippians, and I normally don’t like Paul.” With a knowing look, she added, “Paul was strictly a product of his own time, wasn’t he?” The conclusion to which I may have jumped was that this very sincere young lady had been influenced by the modern feminists movement and rejected that which Paul wrote that contradicted certain views to which she subscribed. I responded that Paul really was a product of his times, in a way, but that the Scripture was not a product of Paul but of the Holy Spirit.

These Jewish exorcists observed Paul, saw how the crowds came to hear him, and decided to use the name of Jesus in their satanic practices. They demanded, in the name of Jesus (!), that demons come out of individuals, whom they believed, or were trying to convince others, were demon possessed. They would use Satan to cast out Satan!

19:14 - SONS OF SCEVA. “*Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.*” This is an interesting verse. We have a man named Sceva who is identified as “a Jewish chief priest”, but that does not mean he was the high priest at the time. If this means that he was a chief priest in Ephesus, it is a sad commentary on the state of Judaism in that part of the Roman world. Sceva had seven sons who were numbered among the itinerant Jewish exorcists (vs. 13). Ancient records reveal claims that the wisdom to perform these exorcisms was handed down from Solomon. Clarke

offers an interesting comment on that connection:

“Josephus, in speaking of the wisdom of Solomon, says that he had that skill by which demons are expelled; and that he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they are cast out; and that those arts were known among his countrymen down to his own time; and then gives us the following relation: "I have seen a certain man of my own country whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacs, in the presence of Vespasian, his sons, his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this: He put a ring, that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon, to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and, when the man fell down, immediately he adjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations that he had composed. And when Eleazar would persuade the spectators that he had such power, he set at a little distance a cup of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it; and, when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon were showed very manifestly." Joseph. ANTIQ. book viii. cap. 2, sect. 5. Whiston's edition.

“That there were such incantations among the Jews we know well, and that there are still such found, and that they are attributed to Solomon; but that they are his remains to be proved; and could this even be done, a point remains which can never be proved, viz. that those curious arts were a part of that wisdom which he received from God, as Josephus intimates. Indeed, the whole of the above account gives the strongest suspicion of its being a trick by the Jewish juggler, which neither Josephus nor the emperor could detect; but the ring, the root, the cup of water, the spell, etc.; all indicate imposture” [Adam Clarke's Commentary, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources - after this, CLARKE].

The seven sons of Sceva had evidently seen Paul cast out demons from people and added what they must have believed to be his special incantation to their repertoire of tricks. If Satan, after Jesus had spent forty days and forty nights in the wilderness without food, would try to hijack the Messiah and use Him, he would not hesitate to use His name for an evil purpose. Satan had offered the Creator of the world the world He had created if he would do it his way! Now, he uses his servants to try to hijack the church, to sidetrack it by corrupting it.

19:15 - EVIL SPIRIT ANSWERED. *“The evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize—but who are you?’*” The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to identify this as an “evil spirit”, thus denoting both the personality and character of satanic spirits. One would think the devil would have learned his lesson in the Garden of Eden, but if anything that experience made him even more vile and evil, if only because he had a target to watch and attack. He would focus on the Messianic Promise, which is what he did by tempting the Jewish nation, confusing and corrupting the nation throughout its history. A particular focus was the line of Seth, through whom the Messiah would come, the Seed of the woman, who would crush the head of the serpent!

JESUS I KNOW. Surely, no one present would ever forget the response of this “evil spirit”: **“Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize—but who are you?”** This must have been a shock to all present, but especially to the seven sons of Sceva. In “Jesus I know”, the verb (*ginosko*) denotes personal knowledge and experience. This evil spirit was aware of Jesus’ power (Mark1:23-24). Those evil spirits that possessed the Gadarene demoniac certainly knew Jesus, but all demons know and fear Him. The verb used when he mentions Paul (*epistamai*) is translated correctly in the HCSB: “Paul I recognize”, meaning that he could identify him. There is a “Clear distinction between ginôskô and epistamai” [ATR].

“But who are you” certainly puts these charlatans in their place. The question demand that they identify themselves. The evil spirit is asking them what power or authority they have to expel them. He is saying, by implication, “You belong neither to Jesus nor Paul; you are not of their party; and you have no right or authority to attempt to work miracles in the name of either: [BARNES].

19:16 - THE MAN. *“Then the man who had the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them all, and prevailed against them, so that they ran out of that house naked and wounded.”* Suddenly possessed with supernatural, though limited power, the evil spirit empowered the possessed man to leap on the seven sons of Sceva, badly wounding them and tearing their clothes from them so that they fled wounded and naked out of the house where they had tried to expel the demon, but were exposed as fakes. “Demons can sometimes cause those they possess to have unusual physical power (cf. Mark 5:3-4)” [BKC].

19:17 - BECAME KNOWN. *“This became known to everyone who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. Then fear fell on all of them, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.”* News of the attack by the demon possessed man on the seven sons of Sceva spread like wildfire throughout Ephesus and the surrounding area. Both Jews and Greeks heard the story, with results that should not surprise us: (1) great “fear fell on all of them”, and (2) “the Lord Jesus was magnified”. One can imagine the fear that fell on the people, especially those who were acquainted with Sceva and his sons, or the man possessed by the evil spirit. The verb translated “was magnified” is imperfect passive, showing that the name of the Lord Jesus continued to be magnified throughout the area.

19:18 - CONFESSED. *“And many who had become believers came confessing and disclosing their practices...”* The verb translated “came” (*erchonto*) is imperfect middle, meaning that they kept on coming, one after another (to Paul? To the church?), confessing their involvement in such occult practices. “Even some of the believers were secretly under the spell of these false spiritualists just as some Christians today cherish private contacts with so-called occult powers through mediums, seances, of which they are ashamed” [ATR]. Some modern readers may read this and think how foolish these people were to subscribe to such foolish superstitions, but then turn around and look up the horoscope in the morning paper, or call some para-psychologist.

Luke tells us that many of those who had “believers came confessing and disclosing their practices...” Does this mean that they had been involved in occult practices before they were saved,

or that they had continued their involvement after becoming believers? It is possible that some had become believers, and in their quest for greater spiritual power, had become involved in occult practices. Some may even have thought they were honoring the Lord, whereas others may well have become involved as immature Christians without giving any thought to the evil associated with it.

It seems that a number of Christians had also been involved in occult activities and under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit they openly confessed their evil deeds. Some sins need to be confessed openly, and this is what they were doing. The noun translated “practices” is *praxeis*, “which probably describes magical spells and formulas. Giving out these secrets would cause them to lose their power” [BKC].

The “practices” they confessed are not identified here, but here the context denotes occult practices, anything associated with the occult, black magic, or sorcery. Is this still a problem today? A number of years ago, I took a group of young people to the Acadian Baptist Camp for a week of Bible study, worship services, fellowship, and recreation. One speaker that week told the young people that she considered herself a missionary from Brazil to America. She affirmed statements made by some missionaries that Brazil is the largest Catholic country in the world, and the largest occult country in the world. This lady told out young people that new parents would take their babies to a priest to have them blessed, and then on the way home, take them by to have them blessed by someone who practiced white magic so they would be protected from black magic.

In my study on the Gospel According to Luke, I ask the question, “where have all the demons gone?” Jesus encountered them wherever He went, and they recognized Him. The evil spirit in this passage even recognized Paul. Jesus certainly did not eliminate all of them, so where are they? Is it possible that we might associate them with some of the some power play in denominations, or divisions in local churches? Is it possible that some who have been institutionalized for some psychological disorder may well be possessed by demons? The late German author and student of the occult, Kurt Koch, used to stress that if a highly troubled individual did not respond to counseling, but was healed when Christians prayed, then we have to consider the possibility that the person had been possessed by demons.

19:19 - WHILE MANY. “...(W)hile many of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in front of everyone. So they calculated their value, and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver.” Ephesus enjoyed a world-wide reputation for their occult activities, which included all the magic arts. We are told that mysterious symbols, known as “Ephesian Letters” were regarded as having supernatural power. They were worn as charms or amulets, and uttered in incantations. They lived in a pagan world, a world to which the Gospel of Jesus Christ was strange and mysterious. They came out of a background that accepted occult practices, and many of them had obviously been involved in one way or another. Many of them who had books on occult practices brought them to the church and burned them in front of everyone. Robertson observed that “It probably took a good while to do it, burned them completely (up, we say; down, the Greeks say, perfective use of kata). These Magical Papyri or slips of parchment with symbols or magical sentences written on them called Ephesia Grammata (Ephesian Letters). These Ephesian Letters

were worn as amulets or charms” [ATR].

This is the Book of History in the New Testament, and it is not surprising that Luke, a scientist, would provide the information that “they calculated their value, and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver.” The practice of the magic arts was a lucrative business in Ephesus. This was a large sum for the time, and it would represent a small fortune today.

19:20 - THE LORD’S MESSAGE. *“In this way the Lord’s message flourished and prevailed.”*

The message was the Good News, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2, HCSB). The verbs, “flourished” and “prevailed” are imperfect active, showing that the Gospel, and thus the church, was growing and gaining strength daily. The church was growing in depth as it grew in members.

That which was intended to corrupt and hurt became an occasion for the spread of the Gospel throughout the area. “The cleansed church became a powerful and growing church. (The spreading of God’s **Word** is also mentioned in 6:7; 12:24; 13:49.)” [BKC]. This is the sixth “progress report” in the Book of Acts. “Luke brought another section of his book to a conclusion (cf. 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 28:30-31)” [BKC].

Paul Plans Future Mission Trips

19:21 - PAUL RESOLVED. *“When these events were over, Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem. ‘After I’ve been there,’ he said, ‘I must see Rome as well!’”* Luke was inspired to write this Scripture and Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to visit Macedonia and Achaia again and then go on to Jerusalem. By “these events”, Luke may have in mind the victory over the occult, but it is possible that he means that when the church in Ephesus was established, he could afford to go back to Macedonia and Achaia to visit the churches he planted on The Second Missionary.

This is another of those places where one might place a bookmark in the Book of Acts, basically because this verse sets before us the rest of the rest of the Book. The Bible Knowledge Commentary agrees: “This verse sets the tone for the remainder of the book. Paul’s sights were now set on **Rome** (via **Jerusalem**) with the ultimate goal of reaching Spain (Rom. 1:15; 15:22-24). Luke made no reference to Spain because one of his purposes in writing Acts was to trace the spread of the gospel up to Paul’s being in Rome, center of the Roman world” [BKC].

JERUSALEM. Jerusalem was the first center for the spread of the Gospel, and even though the Holy Spirit inspires Luke to write about the spread of the Gospel unto the Roman world, that which was happening in Jerusalem was of utmost importance. The apostles moved out from Jerusalem in various directions. James, the half-brother of our

Lord, was the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and it was to James that Paul would go to report on his missionary work, and it was James who would advise him as to how he must conduct himself when he went to the Temple. However, it would not be long before James would be martyred, and not much longer after that before Jerusalem would be destroyed. Sadly, the Jewish world still does not understand that much of the suffering and many of the indignities to which they have been subjected can be traced back to their rejection of the Messiah for whom they had prayed for centuries. Tragically, most Jews still want nothing to do with Him. In fact, they hate His very name.

ROME. It is understandable that the Holy Spirit would place Rome on Paul's heart. Several have observed how Luke's Gospel focuses *in* on Jerusalem, whereas Acts emphasizes the message going *out* from Jerusalem to Rome. These two cities seem to be the focal points of Luke-Acts" [BKC].

I stood visiting with Jim Allen in the old Baptist Book Store in Jackson, MS (now LifeWay Christian Store) when it was located in Westland Plaza. Jim worked at the store and we visited numerous times. He once told me that he had been stationed in Tokyo at the end of the Second World War, and that he saw General Douglas MacArthur every afternoon at four o'clock. "He would go out and get in an open Jeep and his driver would take him on a thirty minute drive through the heart of Tokyo so the Japanese people could see that he was still there" Jim told me. The Japanese people had lost their god, and they believed there was hope as long as General MacArthur was there. Jim had told me that he was with Secret Services. I asked Jim if he knew Dr. Leo Eddleman, and he looked me in the eye and said, "I didn't **KNOW** Dr. Eddleman, but we knew **ABOUT** him." I didn't want to reveal too much to Jim, but Dr. Eddleman had told me that he had been recruited by "a high level, secret organization within our government" to do some highly confidential translations for them. I stressed that Dr. Eddleman would never identify that high level, secret organization. Jim Allen gave me what I interpreted to be a confidential look and added, "Yeah, and I really was not with Secret Services either." I was left to assume that they both were talking about the CIA, but then I remembered that J. Edgar Hoover had said that Dr. Eddleman "had the best working knowledge of Hebrew of any non-Jew in the United States." Jim knew enough about Dr. Eddleman's work to affirm some of the information I had, even though he did not know him personally.

Paul, it is reasonable to assume, knew a lot **ABOUT** the church at Rome, but he didn't **KNOW** the people there. Or, did he? He worked with Priscilla and Aquila, both in Corinth and in Ephesus. They had been forced to leave Rome when Nero ordered all Jews to leave that city. He may have met others from Rome, but it is obvious that he received reports from the church at Rome.

Dr. William R. Cooper, mentioned earlier in the studies on Acts by this writer, provides some very interesting information about what was happening in Rome during the time of Paul's Second and Third Missionary Journeys. When Paul wrote to the church at Rome he had never been there, but he has some knowledge of the situation and there is a

storehouse of information about some of the people in the church at Rome. Some are mentioned by name and others are connected through other references, or through Dr. Cooper's research into ancient Roman records. Here are a few examples:

One of the most interesting characters is Caradoc, a ruler from Briton who defeated the best the Roman army had to throw at that Island in thirty pitched battles before he was betrayed by a member of the royal family. When he and his family were forced to stand before the emperor, the family fell on their face (or bowed) before the throne. Caradoc alone stood with arms folded and delivered a speech that so amazed the emperor and others present that they let them all live. As a guarantee that Caradoc would not rebel, the emperor placed his father Bran, and his own family in the home of Lady Pomponia, whose husband was a senator. Dr. Cooper believes that Lady Pomponia introduced Caradoc's family to Jesus Christ. One son and one daughter play a prominent role in the early church in Rome, with Linus serving as the first bishop of the church at Rome and Claudia, who married Pudens writing many of the hymns sung during the first century.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens...and Claudia..." (2 Timothy 4:21, KJV). Claudia was the daughter of Caradoc and Pudens was the son of Lady Pomponia. They met and were married when the family of Caradoc lived in the home of Lady Pomponia. Cooper writes:

"On his return to Rome from Britain, Pudens was made a Senator,³⁸ and his senatorial chair in which he was carried through the Forum has survived. The chair remained in Pudens' house, the remains of which survive today under the church of St Pudentiana in Rome.³⁹ Then, in the mid-17th century, Pope Innocent X commissioned the architect Bernini to provide a more sumptuous housing for it.⁴⁰ The Pope's interest in the chair stems from the belief that Peter had sat in it while staying in Rome as Pudens' guest" [Old Light on the Roman Church, p. 16].

About Linus, Dr. Cooper writes:

"Known in the British records as *Llyn ap Caradawc*, Linus was taken to Rome under the care of the Lady Pomponia with his sisters and brother, and under her tutelage was converted to the Christian faith. Irenaeus, in *Adversus omnes Haereses*. III. iii. 3, and Eusebius, in his *Historia Ecclesiae*. iii. 2 & v. 6., both identify Linus as the man whom Paul mentions (2 Tim. 4:21), and they also tell us that he (not Peter!) was the first bishop (*episkopos* - then meaning steward or overseer) of the early Roman Christians. A portrait of Linus, painted from life, has survived and is preserved in the church of *S. Paulo fuori le Mura* (St Paul's-outside-the-Wall) in Rome. It is reproduced as an illustration for this paper, and it is important to note in estimating the date of the painting that he wears the robes of a Roman patrician, and neither the ecclesiastical garb nor the ridiculous halo that adorns the later 'pictures' (or icons) of even his most immediate successors. Linus survived the persecution under Nero, only to perish in ca AD 81 under Domitian, the third of the Flavian Caesars. His

sarcophagus, which lies deep beneath St Peter's in Rome (and which bears his name), was seen in the year AD 822 by the poet Maurus, and eight centuries later in 1629.⁴⁶ Clemens Romanus, who succeeded Linus as bishop of the Roman Christians, calls him, "*Sanctissimus Linus, frater Claudiae*" - the most saintly Linus, brother of Claudia." [Cooper, *Old Light one the Roman Church*, p. 19].

Now, I will let my friend Dr. Bill Cooper tell us a little about what Paul knew about the church at Rome at the time he was writing the Epistle to the Romans. He knew about Aristobulus:

"Aristobulus is a prime example of how the Bible can help us make better sense of otherwise mystifying secular records. The one appearance of his name in the Bible occurs in Romans 16:10 where Paul asks his readers to, "**salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.**" **Having directed his greetings to many others directly by name, it is intriguing that here Paul seems to be aware of the fact that Aristobulus himself is not at Rome, and would not be at Rome when his letter arrived (in AD 59/60) to be personally saluted.** As we shall see in the next section concerning the Lady Pomponia, Paul was surprisingly well informed about what was happening in Rome, for he sends similar greetings in the same epistle to the household of Narcissus who was also seemingly absent from his house. So, if Aristobulus was not at Rome when Paul wrote his letter in AD 59/60, then where was he? For the answer, we must look to the secular records (bold added by this writer).

"Writing in AD 190, Hippolytus harks back to Aristobulus as the bishop of the Britons, and **according to the Greek martyrologies, "[Aristobulus], one of the seventy disciples and a follower of St Paul the Apostle...was chosen by St Paul to be the missionary bishop to the land of Britain, inhabited by a very war-like and fierce race. By them he was often scourged and repeatedly dragged as a criminal through their towns, yet he converted many of them to Christianity.** He was martyred after he had built [churches?] and ordained deacons and priests for the island."⁷⁰ This much from later Roman and Greek sources, who would not, we may assume, have had access to local British records. So what do the British records tell us? (Bold added by this writer).

"The early Britons knew Aristobulus as *Arwystli Hen* - Old Aristobulus. A better translation, however, might be Aristobulus the Elder, this suffix denoting his office in the Church rather than his age. **According to the records, he accompanied Bran, the father of Caradoc, to Britain where they preached the Gospel.** But they did not travel alone: "These came with Bran the Blessed from Rome to Britain - Arwystli Hen, Ilid, Cyndaw, men of Israel, [and] Maw the son of Arwystli." (Bold added by this writer).

"Of interest is the fact that, according to the Greek Martyrology, Aristobolus was one of the original seventy disciples who were sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1&17),

and in the British records we see him accompanied on his later mission to Britain by other Jews (*Israelit*- men of Israel) and well as his own son. Of those who accompanied him, Ilid (whose name may be the early Welsh form of Elias) seems to have left his mark by giving his name to the small Welsh town of Llanilid - lit. the Church or 'sacred enclosure' of Ilid - which lies between Cardiff and Bridgend, evidently commemorating his work in that part of the country. He is further remembered in an ancient British proverb, "Hast thou heard the saying of Ilid, one come of the race of Israel - 'There is no mania like passion'?"⁷²

"As for Aristobulus himself, we read in other sources that he was slain in Britain during a mission to the Ordovician Welsh on the 15th March AD 59.⁷³ **This would have been about the time that Paul was writing his letter to the Romans**" (bold added by this writer) [Cooper, Old Light on the Roman Church, unpublished research paper, pp 26-28].

19:22 - SENDING TWO. *"So after sending two of those who assisted him, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, he himself stayed in the province of Asia for a while."* Timothy and Erastus were sent to Macedonia to prepare for Paul's planned visit, and "to speak to the Macedonians about Christ (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10) and to advise them of Paul's opinion on specific issues (1 Cor. 16:11). This Erastus is most likely not the one mentioned in Romans 16:23" [NCWB]. Paul would remain in Ephesus for while longer. Robertson reminds us that

"Paul had sent Timothy to Corinth (1Co 4:17) and had requested kindly treatment of this young minister in his difficult task of placating the divided church (1Co 16:10-11) that he might return to Paul as he evidently had before Paul leaves Ephesus. He then despatched Titus to Corinth to finish what Timothy had not quite succeeded in doing with instructions to meet him in Troas. Now Timothy and Erastus (cf. Rom 16:23; 2Ti 4:20) go on to Macedonia to prepare the way for Paul who will come on later" [ATR].

Paul had asked the believers in Corinth to treat the young Timothy with kindness when he arrived there, but he had a difficult time trying to unite a divided church. Paul then sent Titus to finish the work Timothy had begun (possibly with instructions for Timothy to meet Paul at Troas). He then sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia to prepare for his visit there.

Riot in Ephesus

19:23 - MAJOR DISTURBANCE. *"During that time there was a major disturbance about the Way."* There were minor disturbances, and that was to be expected in that day as the Gospel was proclaimed in pagan lands. This, however, was a major disturbance "about the Way", the name by

which early Christians were identified. It is interesting that this is the name by which Christians were identified in Jerusalem, where Jewish authorities seemingly refused to mention the name Jesus. Followers of Christ had first been called Christians in Antioch of Syria before the First Missionary Journey, so the two names may have been used interchangeably at the time, even in this Gentile city.

19:24 - A SILVERSMITH. *“For a person named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, provided a great deal of business for the craftsmen.”* The name Demetrius appears again in 3 John 12, but since that was a common name there is no reason to assume it was the same person. Demetrius was a silversmith and his primary business was that of making silver shrines of Artemis (Roman name, Diana) a very profitable business, both for himself and for other craftsmen. It is as difficult for the Western civilization to conceive of the fervency associated with this kind of religion as it is for Christians to conceive of depravity associated with it. The Holman Bible Dictionary (HBD) informs us that Artemis

“names the Greek goddess of the moon, the daughter of Zeus and Leto, whose worship was threatened by Paul’s preaching of the gospel. Artemis was the goddess who watched over nature for both humans and animals. She was the patron deity of wild animals, protecting them from ruthless treatment and at the same time regulating the rules of hunting activities for humans. She was considered the great mother image and gave fertility to humankind. In the Greek homeland she was usually portrayed by the statues as a young, attractive virgin, wearing a short tunic and having her hair pulled back on her head. In Ephesus and western Asia Minor she was portrayed as a more mature woman. Her robe is draped in such a way as to expose her bosom which is covered with multiple breasts, depicting her gift of fertility and nurture. Often standing beside her is a fawn or stag on each side representing her relation to the animal world. The official local statue was carefully housed in a temple honoring Artemis.

“The most famous statue was located in the city of Ephesus, the official “temple keeper” for Artemis. Artemis was the chief deity of Ephesus, and her temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world” [HBD].

The Bible Knowledge Commentary adds,

“In only two incidents recorded in Acts did Gentiles oppose Paul: (a) here and (b) in the case of the Philippian fortune-teller (16:16-24). In both cases the opposition was because of vested monetary interests.

“Actually two goddesses in Asia Minor were named **Artemis**. The one, a goddess worshiped in Greek culture whose counterpart in Rome was Diana, was the virgin goddess of the hunt. The other was Artemis of the Ephesians, a many-breasted goddess of fertility. Probably the original “statue” was a meteorite that resembled a woman with many breasts (cf. 19:35)” [BKC].

19:25 - ASSEMBLED THEM. *“When he had assembled them, as well as the workers engaged in this type of business, he said: ‘Men, you know that our prosperity is derived from this business.’”* When Demetrius saw that this new “Way” (vs. 23) might become a serious threat to their “business” of creating gods, or producing idols, he called together a large number of people who were involved in the trade. There may have been some kind of trade guild, made up of silversmiths “who made silver shrines of Artemis” (vs. 24), Demetrius knew how to bring them together, and he knew how to work up a crowd, especially when he could combine profit and religion. He appeals first to their business interests.

From “Our prosperity”, we may infer that this was a lucrative business, and it was being threatened by Paul. “It was a most lucrative trade; and he plainly saw that, if the apostles were permitted to go on thus preaching, the worship of Diana itself would be destroyed; and, consequently, all the gain that he and his fellows derived from it would be brought to nought” [CLARKE]. For many years, we have seen film clips of angry crowds fill the streets in various places around the world to demonstrate, protest, or even to murder, plunder, and pillage in the name of a god who does not even exist. All they have to do is watch the television or listen to the radio for some Iman to call them to action. Demetrius did not have the advantage of modern communication and transportation, but he knew how to bring the people together, possibly by announcing at the temple of Artemis (Diana) that their god was being threatened and action must be taken. Now that he has the crowd gathered together, he can appeal to the people on the basis of religion and revenue.

19:26 - YOU SEE AND HEAR. *“You both see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost the whole province of Asia, this man Paul has persuaded and misled a considerable number of people by saying that gods made by hand are not gods!”* The success of the church in reaching pagan people for Jesus Christ had not gone unnoticed by those who were making the silver shrines to Artemis. Paul, following his mission strategy, had followed a major Roman road to a major city where he first preached in a local synagogue. When he was forced out of the synagogue by Jewish leaders, he turned to the Gentiles, planting a church made up of both Jews and Greeks. Those new converts began witnessing to neighbors and to people in the market place, and new converts from the towns and villages throughout the region would then return to their homes and begin leading their neighbors to Jesus Christ, so that “in almost the whole province of Asia, this man Paul” had indeed reached a lot of people.

PERSUADED AND MISLED. Demetrius stressed that Paul was misleading those who became converts to this new “Way”. There were then, as now, people who persuade and mislead people. The Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons are masters of persuasion, and their success over the relatively brief period of time since those religions were founded can be attributed to their training and motivation to reach those who profess to be Christians. They mislead those who often profess to be Christians but cannot defend the faith. In Islamic countries, tactics are much more drastic. In many places people who become Christians may be killed and their children sold into slavery, according to some reports (from *The Voice of Martyrs*, for example).

GODS MADE BY HAND. Demetrius provides us with an unintentional progress report here: Paul was persuading “a considerable number of people by saying that gods made by hand are not gods.” The irony and sarcasm of Elijah would seem in order here. The gods they made must now be defended by their creators! What can be more ironic than that?

According to an ancient tradition, Abraham’s father made and sold idols and when Abram was twelve years old, he waited on a man who came into his father’s shop to buy an idol. Young Abram asked the customer, “How is that you, a sixty year old man, have come here to buy a god we made only yesterday?” On another occasion, the tradition continues, Abram picked up a club and began attacking the idols his father had made. His father rushed in and stopped him, demanding to know what he was doing. Young Abram said, “If they be gods, let them defend themselves!”

19:27 - RUN A RISK. *“So not only do we run a risk that our business may be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be despised and her magnificence come to the verge of ruin—the very one whom the whole province of Asia and the world adore.”* Demetrius was taking no chances now. He appealed to them on the basis of business, which may have been sufficient in itself, but now he appeals to them on the grounds that Paul was a threat to “the great goddess Artemis” (Diana). The continued success of Paul and the converts to Christianity was a threat to their goddess. All we have to do is recall the reaction of Muslims throughout the Islamic world to one cartoon that appeared in a Danish newspaper. Riots broke out immediately in various countries.

My long time friend Everett Geis invited my son John and me to attend a noon service to hear the Arab evangelist Anis Shorrosh speak. I had attended services at this church to hear other evangelists and have fellowship with them, as well as Everett and his people in the past. Everett knew that I had gone to school with Anis at Mississippi College, and that even then I had held him in very high esteem. Few Christians understand Islam like Anis Shorrosh, so I am interested in what he says, as well what he has written about Islam. That day, Anis told us that President Bush was mistaken when he called Islam “a religion of peace”, but he quickly added, “If he had not done so there might have been rioting around the world.” In other words, there is no telling how many lives were saved by what the president said. Pagans can become violent when their gods are threatened. Sadly, they can point to the very dark and ugly history of violence and murder committed by “Christians” over the centuries.

Dr. Bill Cooper and I communicate almost daily. We not only have a common love for our Lord and for His Word, we were both asked by Dr. Gene Jeffries, President of Cambridge Graduate School, to join that faculty. I have quoted some of Dr. Cooper’s amazing works elsewhere in the study of the Book of Acts, so no further endorsement of his credentials are needed here. On November 16, 2007, I read the following note from Dr. Cooper (in reference to the slaughter of so many people in the name of Christ over the centuries):

“You’re right, Johnny. The trouble is, they can no longer see the sheep for the false shepherds. The flock of Christ is not a worldwide up and running

powerful organisation run by men of talent and ability (however well intentioned). The flock is just that, a straggling flock of silly sheep who wouldn't know a predator if they saw one. But the Good Shepherd watches over them from age to age, seeing that they are never utterly destroyed. We know His Voice, and the voices of strangers we will not follow. We have no other business on this earth but to follow Him and go wherever He would lead us.”

Dr. Cooper went on to comment on how ludicrous it is to think of a “crusade” in which a flock of sheep go “on a killing spree”!

“The thought of a Catholic 'crusade' is like that of a flock of sheep on a killing spree. It's against nature for sheep to do that, and therefore impossible. That alone tells us that we're dealing with pack-hunting wolves here. Trouble is, the world fails to see the difference. The wolves claim to be sheep, of course, and the world believes them. If the sheep ever claimed to be wolves, they'd fall over laughing. Strange, isn't it?”

THE TEMPLE OF. Demetrius is working his crowd into a frenzy here, much like some charismatic Muslim leader in Iran of some other Islamic country by hammering away at their basic interests: (1) “Our business may be discredited”; (2) “the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be despised”; and (3) “her magnificence come to the verge of ruin—the very one whom the whole province of Asia and the world adore.” Asia here denotes the Roman province of Asia rather than the whole continent of Asia. That province covered a part of what is today Turkey.

19:28 - FILL WITH RAGE. “*When they had heard this, they were filled with rage and began to cry out, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’*” Is it not amazing that the mob that filled the streets of Ephesus were not shouting, “great is our trade”, or “great is our profit”? The poor people of Ephesus could not have been worked into such a fanatical frenzy over the profits of those silversmiths, but by getting them worked up over their religion, they could get them to act in their fiscal interest. We can be sure that this was neither the first nor last time cunning men or women have used religion to serve their financial, political, social, or military purpose.

FILLED WITH RAGE. When I first preached and taught from this passage, the challenge was in trying to picture such a fanatical rage. Today, that is not a problem. Almost any time now, we can expect to see yet another televised report on such rage. Even the slightest offense can set off a demonstration, or even a riot in any number of Islamic countries around the world today. Other religions may offer an illustration, but none seem to develop so quickly, and none act so violently as Islamic extremists. One may wonders how so many thousands of young, able bodied young men can be so readily available for such demonstrations and riots. I have often asked myself, “Don’t these people ever work?” Of course, it may serve the purpose of the of those radical Imans to have them available to riot. A large force of very poor, fanatical young men, “filled with rage” against Christians an Jews, fill the streets instantly, complete with anti-American posters that seem to appear out of nowhere, and shouts that their god who is no god is somehow “great”. The fact that such

things could happen, in the First Century or the Twenty First Century is a testimony to the power of Satan over those he has enslaved in a false religion. There are many false religions that are not so violent as Islam, but they are all satanic. The only supernatural power behind any of them is the limited power of Satan, and not the unlimited power of Almighty God.

19:29 - THE CITY. *“So the city was filled with confusion; and they rushed all together into the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s traveling companions.”* Even without modern communication technology, word spread by mouth all over the city of Ephesus, “the city was filled with confusion” as the people began rushing to the amphitheater. The theaters, “being very spacious and convenient places, were often used for popular assemblies and public deliberation, especially in matters which regarded the safety of the state” [CLARKE]. Those in their area took hold of Gaius and Aristarchus, who are identified as “Macedonians who were Paul’s traveling companions” and dragged them along with them. Once again, we may recall video of violent demonstrations in streets in the Middle East and in other places to understand that there is no way anyone could deal with these people.

19:30 - PAUL WANTED TO GO. *“Though Paul wanted to go in before the people, the disciples did not let him.”* Paul may well have been the small, sickly Jew he has been portrayed to be, but no one could question his courage. He “wanted to face the howling mob, whether it was the occasion pictured in 2Co 1:9 or not. ‘St. Paul was not the man to leave his comrades in the lurch’ (Knowing)” [ATR]. The disciples who were with him would not permit Paul to go out into the street to face the mob. His desire to defend his fellow workers is commendable. He would risk his life to protect fellow believers, but the other disciples would not permit him to go out into the street to face them. My wife has taught language art to sixth graders for many years and I have heard her say that there have been many times when something malfunctions in the classroom, from the pencil sharpener to the tape player, it may well be one of the students who is not strong academically who knows how to fix it, rather than the students who are strongest academically. Paul was brilliant and courageous but his companions show more common sense here. The more Paul determined to go out to meet the crowd the more they refused to agree to it and he finally listened to them.

ILLUSTRATION: I was personally attacked by a small group of church members at one time in my ministry (this was not the only time I have been criticized!). When someone accused me of favoring one faction over another, I had the greatest desire to confront them with the fact that I wanted more than anything else to see all factions dissolved and unity established in the church. A good friend and loyal supporter advised me not to answer the charges. He told me that a number of people had discussed it and concluded certain things they wanted me to know: (1) “They will run it or ruin it”; (2) “if you had ever done anything to give them an excuse they would have run you off”; (3) “If they want to meet with you, don’t meet with them alone. Call one of us and we will meet with you. They will misrepresent whatever you say”; and (4) “If they make charges against you, let us deal with them. Anything you say will be used against you.” Trusting these faithful, loyal church members to protect me was the hardest thing I had ever done. I wanted to address the issues with those who would have loved me if they could have turned me against those who had supported me from day one, simply because they believed the Lord had called me to be their pastor, and because they had

never seen me favor one side against the other. For many years, these gracious and courageous church members supported their pastor, and regardless of how hard the critics cried, those faithful friends never wavered and not one of them ever turned against me.

The Lord used these faithful saints in Ephesus to protect Paul. He may have been brilliant and courageous, but they had common sense, and they knew these people. The Lord used them to protect their friend and teacher.

19:31 - PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS. *“Even some of the provincial officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent word to him, pleading with him not to take a chance by going into the amphitheater.”* Word about the assembly in the amphitheater spread all over the city, so the provincial officials would have heard about it and they knew it would have been futile to try to reason with the mob until the people had settled down. As soon as they heard that Paul wanted to go to the amphitheater to talk with the mob, they sent word urging him not to go.

19:32 - CONFUSION. *“Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing and some another, because the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.”* The confusion was what one would expect of a mob. Some knew why they were there, but many had been caught up in the excitement on the street and had no idea what the facts were. To add to the confusion, some were “shouting one thing and some another.” In time, we come to understand that some of the mob scenes we witness on television are clearly orchestrated by religious leaders, usually some Muslim Iman. Those people are shouting the same thing and we can be sure those riots are being recorded so that their news networks can telecast them all over the Muslim world. The people on the street may be out of control for a time but the riot or demonstration is orchestrated by Islamic clerics. There was no such control factor in riot in Ephesus. It was a highly volatile, potentially explosive situation

19:33 - SOME OF THE CROWD. *“Then some of the crowd gave Alexander advice when the Jews pushed him to the front. So motioning with his hand, Alexander wanted to make his defense to the people.”* This is very interesting! These Jews rejected Christ and they were strongly opposed to Paul and his companions. However, their motivation in pushing Alexander forward here may have been a little more practical, or even political.

“Alexandria had already (seen) disgraceful scenes of Jew-baiting and there was real peril now in Ephesus with this wild mob. So Alexander was pushed forward as the champion to defend the Jews to the excited mob. He may be the same Alexander the coppersmith who did Paul much evil (2Ti 4:14), against whom Paul will warn Timothy then in Ephesus. ‘The Jews were likely to deal in the copper and silver required for the shrines, so he may have had some trade connexion with the craftsmen which would give him influence’ (Furneaux)” [ATR].

We are not told who this Alexander was. Barnes supports Robertson by quoting someone who “supposes that it was ‘Alexander the coppersmith,’ who had in some way done Paul much harm, 2Ti

4:14; and whom, with Philetas, Paul had excommunicated” [BARNES].

19:34 - HE WAS A JEW. “*But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a united cry went up from all of them for about two hours: ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’*” It seems that the Jews urgently pushed Alexander forward because he was a great orator and they thought “that he might make an oration to the multitude, in order to exculpate the Jews, who were often by the heathens confounded with the Christians; and cast the whole blame of the uproar upon Paul and his party. And he was probably chosen because he was an able speaker; and when he beckoned with his hand; to gain an audience, the Greeks, knowing that he was a Jew, and consequently as much opposed to the worship of Diana as Paul was, would not hear him” [CLARKE]. The mob began shouting to drown out anything Alexander had to say.

A UNITED CRY. For two hours the crowd shouted, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” Once again, one has only to picture a scene from any number of recent newscasts in which angry, hate-filled young Arab men who never seem to have to work shout over and over the name of a god who does not exist. While I do not like to repeat this so many times, it is imperative that we remind ourselves of what the enemy of Christ can be like. This is not fiction, nor is it simply of a riot in some primitive culture. This is the character of people living in a pagan land who hate Jesus Christ and all who follow Him.

19:35 -THE CITY CLERK. “*However, when the city clerk had calmed the crowd down, he said, ‘Men of Ephesus! What man is there who doesn’t know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple guardian of the great Artemis, and of the image that fell from heaven?’*” The town clerk was “the scribe (secretary) of the assembly and its chief executive officer. ‘He came to his position within the assembly and was not appointed by Rome. As the most important native official of the city, he was responsible for disturbances within it’ (Longenecker)” [NCWB].

The mob, now somewhat exhausted from two hours of frenzied shouting while trying to stay on their feet in an out of control crowd, recognized the city clerk as one of their own and finally calmed down so that he could speak to them. He said all the right things, identifying himself both with them as Ephesians and a worshiper of Artemis. The Bible Knowledge Commentary offers a summary:

“He first appealed to the position of **Ephesus as the guardian of Artemis’ temple** and to **her** heaven-sent **image**. The latter assertion may be a subtle rebuttal of the statement (v. 26, “man-made gods are no gods at all”). Artemis, he argued, was *not* man-made. So why should they be concerned with Paul’s preaching? Second, the town clerk asserted the innocence of Gaius and Aristarchus, thereby exonerating Paul as well (v. 37). Third, he pointed out the legal methods of obtaining a hearing—through **the courts... proconsuls, and a legal assembly** (vv. 38-39). *This assembly was not legal*” [BKC, bold in the original].

19:36 - KEEP CALM. *“Therefore, since these things are undeniable, you must keep calm and not do anything rash.”* The city clerk used both religion and reason to calm down the crowd. He is reminding the people that this is not a legal assembly and that they must “keep calm and do nothing rash” that would attract unfavorable attention from Rome. Later, Jews in Jerusalem would risk the wrath of Rome when they attempted to kill Paul (Ch. 22).

19:37 - NOT TEMPLE ROBBERS. *“For you have brought these men here who are not temple robbers or blasphemers of our goddess.”* Though we are not told that Jews had robbed temples in Ephesus, “the Jews were sometimes guilty of this crime (Rom 2:22), since the heathen temples often had vast treasures like banks” [ATR]. These Christians were neither temple robbers, a serious offence, or “blasphemers of our goddess.” Paul and his friends had preached a positive Gospel in which they proclaimed Jesus. To blaspheme is to speak evil against another, and they had not spoken evil against their goddess.

19:38 - IF DEMETRIUS. *“So if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a case against anyone, the courts are in session, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.”* The clerk reasoned that if there were legitimate charges against Gaius and Aristarchus, Demetrius, the silversmith who initiated the charges, should take them to the legal courts. The courts were open and the proconsuls were there to deal with such charges. This was practical and it was reasonable. It was also imperative that they handle a situation like this in such a way that they would not bring down the wrath of Rome on the city.

19:39 - A LEGAL ASSEMBLY. *“But if you want something else, it must be decided in a legal assembly.”* The clerk appealed to the people to handle this in a legal assembly, and this was not a legal assembly. This was good advice.

19:40 - WE RUN A RISK. *“In fact, we run a risk of being charged with rioting for what happened today, since there is no justification that we can give as a reason for this disorderly gathering.”* Demetrius had instigated this mob scene and the people had shouted for two hours, during which time they were probably jumping up and down, and fighting not only to stay on their feet, but also for position in the crowd. Now they were finally quiet enough for the clerk to reason with them. This was not a legal assembly, so they were placing themselves and the entire city at risk. We remember the extent to which Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had gone to keep from attracting unfavorable attention from Roman authorities when they observed the crowds that were following Jesus. “Seneca says that there was nothing on which the Romans looked with such jealousy as a tumultuous meeting” [ATR].

19:41 - DISMISSED. *“After saying this, he dismissed the assembly.”* This had been a very long, and illegal session. The city clerk was finally able to dismiss the people and they were finally ready to go home.

NOTE: We must remember that the Holy Spirit was in control of Paul’s missionary journeys. He inspired him to write a significant part of the New Testament. He empowered him to deal with some

very sticky issues, many of which were in the church at Corinth. For example, he assured them that if they didn't deal with certain issues themselves, he would deal with them when he arrived. He had apostolic authority to do just that.

If we recognize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in guiding, directing, and protecting Paul from all the enemies and elements to which he was often exposed, is it not reasonable to assume that the Lord used even people who did not know Him to protect His servant? After all, the Lord used kings and empires to accomplish His purpose and to assure fulfillment of the Messianic Covenant (Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome). He moved those kings and kingdoms as one moves a chess piece on a chess board. Is it not also reasonable to remind ourselves that the arm of the Lords has not been shortened in our day?

Chapter 20

Paul Moves on to Macedonia

20:1 - DEPARTED TO GO TO MACEDONIA. *“After the uproar was over, Paul sent for the disciples, encouraged them, and after saying good-bye, departed to go to Macedonia.”* The “uproar” denotes the riot instigated by Demetrius the silversmith against Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians identified as “Paul’s traveling companions” (19:29). Paul sent for the disciples, encouraged them to be faithful and to continue the work, and said “good-bye” to them. “First aorist middle participle of *aspazomai*, old verb from a intensive and *spaô*, to draw, to draw to oneself in embrace either in greeting or farewell. Here it is in farewell as in Acts 21:6” [ATR]. Luke identifies Paul’s traveling companions in verse 4.

“Departed” is a single act and “to go” shows progressive action. Luke is not using “we” to imply that he was traveling with Paul at the time of his departure, or during the process of the journey, but he would have been in touch with him. Robertson tell us that “Luke here condenses what was probably a whole year of Paul’s life and work as we gather from II Corinthians, one of Paul’s ‘weighty and powerful’ letters as his enemies called them (2Co 10:10)” [ATR]. To understand Paul’s epistles to the church at Corinth one needs to study The Book of Acts, and to appreciate Luke’s account here we need to understand Paul’s burden for the church at Corinth, and the two epistles the Holy Spirit inspired him to write. The New Commentary on the Whole Bible provides the following summary:

“This was after the Pentecost observances (1 Cor. 16:8). Paul was beginning to carry out the plan that the Holy Spirit had given him (19:21). From Paul’s letters we learn (1) that Paul stopped again in Troas (2 Cor. 2:12); (2) that he had done no missionary work the first time he was there but went this time to preach. He was

quite successful and was able to establish a church there; (3) that he would have stayed there longer, but was worried about Titus who had not met him in Troas as planned. Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to collect money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 8:6). Paul was also anxious to know the effect of his letter to the Corinthians. (4) Anxious that something might have happened to Titus, Paul left Troas and went to Macedonia. He may have stopped in Philippi, landing at the seaport Neapolis (see comments on 16:11, 12; cf. 2 Cor. 11:9 with Phil. 4:15). In Philippi, Paul found a united, growing church that gave him a very warm and generous welcome. (5) When Paul arrived in Philippi, Titus was not there and Paul was extremely concerned (2 Cor. 7:5). (6) After some time, Titus arrived, bringing news of the Corinthian church. The church was doing well (2 Cor. 7:6, 7, 13), but there were some who were trying to weaken their group by criticizing Paul's authority. (7) With mixed feelings, Paul wrote them another letter and sent Titus to deliver it. (8) While waiting for a reply to his letter, he probably made a short trip northwest to Illyricum, on the coast of the Adriatic (Rom. 15:19). Paul finally arrived in Greece and began the second part of his plan (19:21) [NCWB, bold added by this writer].

NOTE: For further study, see this writer's studies in First and Second Corinthians in THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK series, posted on the PastorLife.Com web site, an official ministry of the Georgia Baptist Convention, Dr. Mike Minnix, Editor.

20:2 - PASSED THROUGH. *“And when he had passed through those areas and exhorted them at length, he came to Greece.”* Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, encapsulates these events as to both time and geography. He does not mention his stay in Troas, Luke's hometown (2 Cor. 2:12ff), his meeting Titus in Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:13ff), nor his visit to Illyricum which Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Romans: “For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, by the power of miraculous signs and wonders, and by the power of God's Spirit. As a result, I have fully proclaimed the good news about the Messiah from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum” (Rom. 15:18-19).

HE CAME TO GREECE. Greece denotes the Roman province of Achaia. There is no indication that he went to Athens this time, but he does go to Corinth where Gaius was his host (Rom. 16:23). One of the great victories of Paul's ministry was the great victory at Corinth, with the help of an amazing co-worker named Titus. Luke mentions only the province but we know Paul's destination was Corinth. On the way there, he would have visited Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea.

20:3 - THREE MONTHS. *“(A)nd stayed three months. When he was about to set sail for Syria, a plot was devised against him by the Jews, so a decision was made to go back through Macedonia.”* That is, he stayed in Corinth three months. Thomas Walker (*The Acts of the Apostles*, Moody Press, 1965) wrote, “That is December, January, and February. During this time he wrote and dispatched his great Epistle to the Romans, sending it by Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2) [WALKER: 432]. From the Epistle to the Romans, we learn that Paul planned to visit the church in Rome and then go

on to Spain. But first, he planned to go to Jerusalem to deliver the offering to the saints there (Romans 15:22-33).

His time in Greece was productive. “Paul anticipated a difficult situation in Corinth but was generally hopeful of success (2 Cor. 10:1-8, 11; 13:1-10). There were other churches in Greece that he could visit during his three-month stay. It was during this time that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, which may have been delivered by Phoebe, a woman who traveled to Rome on business (see 18:3)” [NCWB]. Robertson adds, “During this period Paul may have written Galatians as Lightfoot argued and certainly did Romans. We do not have to say that Luke was ignorant of Paul's work during this period, only that he did not choose to enlarge upon it” [ATR].

A PLOT WAS DEVISED AGAINST HIM. Luke tells us that this plot was not one “devised” against Paul by the Judaizers with whom Paul deals in Galatians and in 2 Corinthians 10-13. Those Judaizers had caused Paul a lot of grief, as we see in both 1 and 2 Corinthians. That opposition may have been put to rest, possibly due to the work of Titus when Paul sent him to Corinth. This plot was devised by Paul's old enemies in Corinth, who would not have forgotten their earlier encounter with Paul and their defeat at the hands of Gallio (Acts 18:5-17). They hated Paul and wanted, not just to defeat him, but to kill him. They learned of his travel plans and devised their own plot, which “Paul was evidently to assassinate him on board ship and dispose of his body at sea. Somehow the insidious plan became known to Paul and **he decided** not to go directly to the eastern Mediterranean but **to go back through Macedonia**. Possibly he had wanted to be in Jerusalem for Passover; now the best he could hope for would be Pentecost (Acts 20:16)” [BKC, bold in the original].

20:4 - HE WAS ACCOMPANIED. “*He was accompanied by Sopater, son of Pyrrhus, from Beroea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia.*” Paul was blessed by the Lord with some godly traveling companions. Since Sopater is identified as the son of Pyrrhus, some have concluded that Luke was distinguishing him from the Sopater Paul mentions in Romans 16:21, but there is no real reason that this was the same person. Luke tells us he was a representative of the church in Beroea, chosen to accompany Paul to help protect the offering for the relief of the saints in Jerusalem. Paul would have wanted witnesses who could return and tell the churches that all the money was delivered to the James for the relief of the saints there.

ARISTARCHUS AND SECUNDUS. These two men represent the church at Thessalonica, sent for the same purpose as Sopater, to protect the offering and to give a report when they returned. There is no indication that any of Paul's enemies ever accused him of misusing or misappropriating money in any situation. His wisdom in selecting his traveling companions provided protection against those charges. Aristarchus, a converted Jew from Thessalonica (20:4; 27:2), was a very important traveling companion to the Apostle to the Gentiles. He traveled with Paul on part of the Third Missionary Journey, and then sailed on to Jerusalem, and finally after Paul's two years as a prisoner in Caesarea, he sailed on to Rome with him.

TIMOTHY. Paul's son in the ministry was a faithful assistant and companion, whose importance to Paul and to this ministry will continue to grow. Many of Paul's co-laborers would desert him when the going got rough, but Timothy never wavered. He just kept growing.

TYCHICUS AND TROPHIMUS. These assistants were from Ephesus and "seem to have been a great help to him (Eph. 6:21, 22; Col. 4:7, 8; Acts 21:29; 2 Tim. 4:12, 20). Most likely each of these men had been sent by their churches to collect money at Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi for the relief fund that was being sent to Jerusalem" [NCWB].

20:5 - THESE MEN. "*These men went on ahead and waited for us in Troas...*" Paul sent the men mentioned in verse 4 on to Troas where they were to wait for Paul and Luke, who is now traveling with him. By the word "us" we know that we are now in one of the "we:" sections in Acts, when Luke was with his friend. Paul may have been his patient since he was a physician. Luke was from Troas.

20:6 - WE SAILED. "*(B)ut we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread. In five days we reached them at Troas, where we spent seven days.*" Again, we note the pronoun "we". Luke is traveling with Paul. This may have been the reason **he had sent Timothy on to Troas with the other co-workers.** Paul was a Christian but he was still a Jew and he love his people. He still observed the holy days, but fought the Judaizers who tried to force Judaism (circumcision) on Gentile believers, as we see in Galatians.

PHILIPPI. One can hardly read the word without thinking of the great victory God gave Paul and Silas when they were viciously beaten and then thrown into jail in that city, only to be miraculously delivered. There was no church that supported Paul's ministry like the church at Philippi, and there is no more beautiful epistle in the New Testament than the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians (See this writer's commentary, *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*, now on the PastorLife.Com web site).

UNLEAVENED BREAD. Paul could not make it to Jerusalem for Passover, but he observed the days of Unleavened Bread in Philippi before continuing his voyage to Troas to meet Timothy and the others who would sail with him to Jerusalem. During the seven days of the Passover, the faithful Jew ate only unleavened bread (see Exodus 12).

Eutychus Revived at Troas

20:7 - THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK. "*On the first day of the week, we assembled to break bread. Paul spoke to them, and since he was about to depart the next day, he extended his message until midnight.*" This note, combined with 1 Corinthians 16:8, tell us that the church was already meeting on the first day of the week, rather than the seventh day, the Sabbath Day. Most

Christians today believe that early believers were forced to leave the synagogue, where Jews worshiped on the Sabbath, so they began meeting on the First Day in honor of the Resurrection. Others may point to a later date when some synod proclaimed the First Day as the day of worship. There is no place in the Bible where believers are commanded by the Lord to worship on the Old Testament Sabbath, and if the early we did not have this verse and the reference in 1 Corinthians 16:8, one wonders if we would still be worshipping on the Seventh Day. The simple fact is that most Christians do worship on the First Day, or at least acknowledge it as the Lord's Day. Paul, as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives us guidance in his Epistle to the Romans: "One person considers one day to be above another day. Someone else considers every day to be the same. Each one must be fully convinced in his own mind. Whoever observes the day, observes it to the Lord" (Rom. 14:5-6).

Our greatest concern under the circumstances should be both **whether** we keep the Lord's Day holy, and **how** we keep it holy. Sadly, many who profess to be Christians could not care less. Many professing Christians today combine apathy with idolatry when it comes to the Lord's Day. They bow before the idols of wealth, football, baseball, hunting, fishing, shopping, movies, concerts, picnics, and self. Some even go to church on Saturday night so they can keep Sunday free for the ball game, the trip out of town, or the family reunion. If we keep Sunday as the Lord's Day, we should place as much emphasis on the holiness of the Lord's Day as the Old Testament places on the Sabbath. For years, I have been convinced that many church members lead their children along the path to hell through the misuse of the Lord's Day. They want their children to be saved and they want to believe they will go to heaven, but many children, if they are in church at all, are more focused on the restaurant, movie, and ball game than on Jesus Christ.

TO BREAK BREAD. Some hold that this was the Agape' feast, while others believe it was an observance of the Lord Supper (Eucharist). Luke tells us that immediately after Pentecost, "...they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers" (Acts 2:42). The term was definitely used of the Lord's Supper by Paul when he wrote, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor 10:16). Robertson considers both possibilities, The Lord's Supper and the Agape' Feast:

"The language naturally bears the same meaning as in Acts 2:42, the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper which usually followed the Agapê. See 1Co 10:16. The time came, when the Agapê was no longer observed, perhaps because of the abuses noted in 1Co 11:20. Rackham argues that the absence of the article with bread here and its presence (ton arton) in verse Acts 20:11 shows that the Agapê is] referred to in verse Acts 20:7 and the Eucharist in verse Acts 20:11, but not necessarily so because ton arton may merely refer to arton in verse Acts 20:7. At any rate it should be noted that Paul, who conducted this service, was not a member of the church in Troas, but only a visitor" [ATR].

PAUL SPOKE. This is amazing! We are not told what time Paul began speaking, but Luke tells

us that “since he was about to depart the next day, he extended his message until midnight.” This does not mean that our services should extend so long. For one thing, the modern preacher may well be more sophisticated, and more articulate than Paul, but he is not the Apostle Paul! This was a momentous occasion for the saints at Troas and they wanted to hear the missionary to the Gentiles one more time.

20:8 - MANY LIGHTS. *“There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were assembled...”* Luke did not have to tell us this, but I am glad he did. This little statement is exactly what one would expect from an eye-witness (note “we”). This is, as Francis Schaeffer continually noted, “time-space history.” This is not the ranting of one who is trying to start a new religious movement, but a God-called apostle who is driven to win the lost and teach the converts. They were meeting in “the room upstairs”, which must have been a large room. “It was dark at night since the full moon (passover) was three weeks behind. These lamps were probably filled with oil and had wicks that flickered and smoked” [ATR].

20:9 - EUTYCHUS. *“(A)nd a young man named Eutychus was sitting on a window sill and sank into a deep sleep as Paul kept on speaking. When he was overcome by sleep he fell down from the third story, and was picked up dead.”* A young man named Eutychus (time-space history!) was sitting on a window sill, an opening in the wall which would have had a wooden shutter or door. It was open to allow air to circulate. One writer adds that “He was probably sitting on a bay window which projected over the street” [NCWB]. His name means “fortunate”, which seems appropriate under the circumstances.

Eutychus “was overcome by sleep” as he listened to Paul, and he fell down from the third story and when the people went down they found that he was dead. One wonders why it was a young man rather than an older person who fell asleep. The simple fact is that some older persons may well have become sleepy, or even dosed off, but they were not sitting in a window on the third floor.

My wife Becky and our son Mark drove through the campus at Oral Roberts University years ago, and then continued on our trip. We learned later that on that very evening Oral Roberts reportedly made the statement that people had die while he was preaching, and that he had raised them from the dead. My first thought was that I had seen a lot of people get sleepy, and a few to go to sleep while I was preaching, but I had never seen one die while I was preaching.

Luke tells us that he researched everything of which he wrote very carefully. However, in this case he was an eyewitness. In fact, he may have been the one who pronounced Eutychus dead! He was a physician and apparently well known to this community of believers in his home town.

20:10 - BUT PAUL. *“But Paul went down, threw himself on him, embraced him, and said, ‘Don’t be alarmed, for his life is in him!’”* Luke records this amazing event with a few strokes of his pen, without making an issue of it. No movement was formed around it. The important thing was what Paul was saying and what the Holy Spirit was doing in that service. Paul embraced Eutychus, showing both compassion and support. Paul “threw himself on” Eutychus, “embraced him”, and

said to the people, “Don’t be alarmed, for his life is in him!” He is not saying that he had not been dead. He was saying that God had return his life to him. Jesus had raised the widow’s son at Nain, and now His servant Paul is used to raise a young man in Troas. This would be a powerful affirmation of the power of Jesus Christ until Jesus returns. The power of God had not diminished with the Ascension. The Third Person of the Trinity came at Pentecost to empower believers to do His work.

20:11 - AFTER GOING UP STAIRS. *“After going upstairs, breaking the bread, and eating, he conversed a considerable time until dawn. Then he left.”* Once again, we have an eyewitness account by a highly respected physician and loyal co-worker, who often accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys. They went back up stairs, where they again broke bread, ate it, and talked until dawn. Some may interpret this as a second observance of the Lord’s Supper, or Eucharist, but it may simply mean that they went back up stairs and broke and ate some bread as one may take a refreshment break today. Interestingly, Barnes writes, “As this is spoken of Paul only, it is evidently distinguished from the celebration of the Lord’s Supper” [BARNES]. However, Paul’s eating does not preclude others from eating any more than his conversing excluded others from conversing with him. There is no reason that they could not have observed the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper twice in the same service. The Bible Knowledge Commentary carries the note: “As part of the meal they participated in the Lord’s Supper” [BKC], but Clarke is probably right when he states that they “Had taken some refreshment, in order to their journey” [CLARKE].

THEN HE LEFT. The focus is on Paul, but Luke is with him, as we see in 20:13. They had a schedule to keep.

20:12 - THE BOY. *“They brought the boy home alive and were greatly comforted.”* This, once again, is time-space history. There were too many witnesses to deny the great miracle. They took the boy home alive, and we may assume that he lived among them as a daily witness to the power and compassion of Jesus Christ.

From Troas to Miletus

20:13 - WE WENT ON. *“Then we went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, from there intending to take Paul on board. For these were his instructions, since he himself was going by land.”* Luke and their other companions (this is one of the “we” sections of Acts) went ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where they planned to pick up Paul, according to his instructions. “There were several cities of this name. One was in Lycia; one in the territory of Eolis; one in Mysia; one in Lydia; and another in Epirus. The latter is the one intended here. It was between Troas and Mitylene” [BARNES]. Some commentaries, including Barnes, see a practical reason for the plans: “The distance to it from Troas by sea was much greater than by land, and accordingly Paul chose to go to it on foot” [BARNES].

He would be traveling by land, probably to continue to give instructions to leaders as they walked.

Robertson speculates that “It is possible that Paul's party had chartered a coasting vessel from Philippi or Troas to take them to Patara in Lycia. Hence the boat stopped when and where Paul wished. That is possible, but not certain, for Paul could simply have accommodated himself to the plans of the ship’s managers” [ATR].

20:14 - MET US. “*When he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.*” Paul was apparently waiting for the ship when it arrived at Assos and they took him on board and then sailed for Mitylene, “the capital and largest city of the island of Lesbos (which) lay opposite the eastern coast of the Aegean, about 30 miles south of Assos” [NCWB]. The island was about 12 miles off the coast of Asia. They dropped anchor every night because of wind conditions in the the Aegean area [WALKER: 440].

20:15 - SAILING FROM THERE. “*Sailing from there, the next day we arrived off Chios. The following day we crossed over to Samos, and the day after, we came to Miletus.*” It has been observed that Luke knew the sea and his notes on the sea voyages are accurate, historical, and helpful, though he uses the language of land lubber. What person is there who has spent much time with veterans who has not noted the difference in military and civilian terms? I have often asked retired General Dutch Shoffner questions about military terms, ranks, and abbreviations common to those in the military, but strange to those without military experience. He has patiently explained them to me. For example, I had heard the Viet Nam debate for years before I asked him for an explanation of what went wrong. He explained the difference between strategy and tactics. Victory demands that strategy and tactics compliment and support each other (in the words of a layman). General Shoffner sent me a book that helped me understand the difference between the two, as well as the relationship between them.

Those who would deny that the Gospels are historical accounts, only moral lessons, should pay close attention to these chapters from the Book of Acts. Luke’s account was the best account of sailing on the seas of that part of the world in ancient times until modern technology began to expand our knowledge.

CHIOS. This was the birth place of Homer. The island was 32 miles long and from 8 to 18 miles wide. It was separated from the mainland by a channel which was about five miles across at the narrowest point. They sailed down this channel. Various students of the Word offer technical notes here, but what it boils down to is that the ship “probably lay off the coast (anchoring) during the night instead of putting into the harbour. The Island of Chios is about eight miles from the mainland” [ATR].

SAMOS. This was an island near the coast where they spent the night. “In passing from Chios to Samos they sailed past Ephesus to save time for Pentecost in Jerusalem (verse Acts 20:16), if in control of the ship, or because the captain allowed Paul to have his way. The island of Samos is still further down the coast below Chios. It is not stated whether a stop was made here or not” [ATR].

MILETUS. Miletus was located near the mouth of the Meander River. “It was a city and seaport,

and the ancient capital of Ionia. It was originally composed of a colony of Cretians. It became extremely powerful, and sent out colonies to a great number of cities on the Euxine Sea. It was distinguished for a magnificent temple dedicated to Apollo” [BARNES].

20:16 - PAUL HAD DECIDED. *“For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so he would not have to spend time in the province of Asia, because he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, for the day of Pentecost.”* Whether Paul had chartered the ship or simply had influence with the captain is not made clear, but his desire to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost is a deciding factor in determining the schedule and the course. He had missed Passover, but he was determined not to miss Pentecost.

Paul Bids Farewell to Ephesian Elders

20:17 - TO EPHEBUS. *“Now from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.”* From Miletus, Paul sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus, about thirty miles away, asking the elders of the church to visit him in Melitus. The messenger or messengers would have had a long walk to Ephesus, and then they would have to contact the elders of the church, and then walk the thirty miles back to Miletus. They would have come to Paul the third day of the stay in Miletus.

Since the church at Ephesus was to play such an important role in the spread of the Gospel, and indeed had already begun to play such an important role in reaching the entire province for Jesus Christ, one would think Paul would have wanted to stop there to visit the entire church. One writer states that “It would seem that Paul could have saved time by stopping at Ephesus since he was so close, but he probably did not want to risk getting stuck there due to bad sailing conditions” [NCWB]. My initial response to that suggestion was that if Paul had chartered the vessel, the decision may have been his, otherwise, the decision as to the length of the stop here would have been the captain’s. In addition, Paul had invested some three years of his life in Ephesus, and he had a vivid memory of the riot instigated by Demetrius the silversmith before he left for Macedonia. What we must remember is that the Holy Spirit was the One directing Paul, so we can safely assume that he was doing exactly what he was led to do.

The Gospel spread from Ephesus throughout the entire region, and church after church was planted, as our Lord’s letters to the seven churches of Asia in the Revelation would attest. John, the beloved disciple of the Lord, ministered in and from Ephesus for many years. Sadly, even with the influence of Paul and John, this church had soon “abandoned the love you had at first” (Rev 2:4). They had guarded sound doctrine but abandoned the love the Holy Spirit inspires! Why then, would Paul and John invest so much time in this church? For one thing, Ephesus was a hub from which the Gospel spread throughout the region, and for another, there is the very important Epistle to the Ephesians, which is still blessing saints around the world after two thousand years. Ephesians 2:8-9 is proclaimed from pulpits around the world today as preachers stress that we are saved by grace, through faith, and not by works.

20:18 - THEY CAME. *“And when they came to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time...”* These elders were compelled only by the Holy Spirit to visit Paul. He had no ecclesiastical power over them to summon them to meet him. That he had apostolic authority is not questioned here, but the God fearing men were fully aware of the fact that God’s hand was on Paul in a mighty way. They walked the thirty miles there in anticipation of a blessing. The New Testament had not been completed, so they may well have had important questions for Paul.

FROM THE FIRST. They were well aware of his love for the people of Ephesus from the first day he set foot in Asia. It is a sad thing when a church concludes that their pastor, or former pastor, had no genuine love for them. I have known of cases in which a family would declare that they would not have their pastor help with a wedding or a funeral because he had never shown an interest in them. It is also unfortunate when a pastor who has invested a lot of time, energy, and expenses for which he was never reimbursed, in a family, only to be accused of not caring for them. Many pastors have had that experience. These elders from Ephesus love and respect Paul and they know their meeting with him will benefit their church.

20:19 - SERVING THE LORD. *“(S) serving the Lord with all humility, with tears, and with the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews...”* “Serving the Lord” is a distinctly Pauline term. He opened his Epistle to the Philippians with this word: “Paul and Timothy, **slaves of Christ Jesus:** To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons” (Phil 1:1, bold added by this writer). Other translations use servant or bond-servant for the Greek word (*doulos*), but the HCSB uses the word “slave”, which would have been an expected metaphor for a follower of Jesus Christ in the first century. As mentioned in another place, I was a new member of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources, assigned to the Broadman and Holman Committee, when Dr. Ed Blum, General Editor of the Holman Christian Standard Bible met with us to discuss the new translation. Someone had recommended that we discontinue this project, but that day we voted to stay the course and publish the new translation. At lunch that day, Dr. Jimmy Draper brought Dr. Blum to my table to answer a question another trustee had. He was Hispanic, serving as a Director of Missions in the Miami area, and he was attending his last meeting. He wanted to know why the HCSB used the word “slave” rather than the more familiar “servant.” The metaphor of a slave is not the picture most believers have of themselves. In fact, one pastor stressed to me that our service is voluntary. Dr. Blum explained that the HCSB is literal and that each believer belongs to Christ, that he was purchased by His blood.

“The Greek word *doulos* means “bond-slave” - literally “one tied to another.” The Greek word speaks of one who is subject to the will of his or her master. Slavery was wide-spread in the ancient Near East, although the economy was not dependant upon it.... During the era of Roman rule, a large portion of captured foreigners were bond-slaves to the Romans (Rev. 6:15; 13:16; 19:18). Slavery was so extensive that in the early Christian Period one out of every two people was a slave. This would mean, of course, that many Christians were slaves. When the number of slaves increased

dramatically, household slaves remained the best treated. Many became servants and confidants; some even established to their own and to their masters' benefit" [*Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words*, by Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, B& H Publishing Group, LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, 2000, p. 393].

One of the authors was, as noted, Philip W. Comfort, but there is little comforting in the picture of slavery. It is a deplorable situation, with a history of violence and abuse. The metaphor of a slave, however is not intended to imply any approval of the system. Sadly, one can hardly use the term today, even in the study of the New Testament, without the inference of a racial component. The very brilliant economist and author, Dr. Thomas Sowell, stresses that all races have supplied their share of both slaves and slave owners. Incidentally, Thomas Sowell is Black.

When Paul used the term, translated "slave" in the HCSB, Dr. Ed Blum explained, the idea is that we belong to Jesus Christ; we were purchased by His blood. We may choose to trust Him for His salvation, but when He saves us, we cease to be our own; we belong to Him. As to the pastor who insisted that our service is volunteer, I would (and did) stress that our service is not, strictly speaking, voluntary. In a very real sense, when you become a Christian you belong to Him (you are His slave). Your service is not coerces by whips and chains, but **you either serve Him or you sin!** There is no intermediate position. Our acceptance of that truth should impact every area of the believer's life. If I am a Christian, I belong to Jesus Christ. My time is not my own, my money is not my own, my talent is not my own. **Therefore, in all things, I am either doing His will or I am sinning.** That realization should bring every true believer to his or her knees every day, confessing sins of commission and sins of omission (1 John 1:9). To apply this truth practically, no slave of Jesus Christ can withhold the tithe without sinning. And no believer can gamble with God's resources without sinning (and everything you have belongs to the Lord - not just the ten percent!). For those who see nothing wrong with gambling, let me stress that true Christians live by faith, not chance.

Paul had served the Lord with humility while in Ephesus, and these elders were well aware of that. Sadly, in my youth I discovered that there were preachers and teachers who accused Paul of being egotistical and arrogant because of statements he made about himself. If they had started with the conviction that the Scripture was the product of the Holy Spirit and not Paul's ego, they may not have drawn such a false conclusion.

I have a question for myself, since I have never been accused of humility as far as I know: Can we really say that we are "serving the Lord" if we do not do so with humility? **The Christian leaders for whom I have had the greatest respect are those with genuine humility.** If I were asked to state the first impression I had upon meeting the late Adrian Rogers, my first response would be his humility. In the early days of his denominational service he was accused of everything but humility by some who opposed his conservative theology. When he took my hand and then placed his other hand on my arm and looked me in the eye, I sensed a humility that was genuine, and very rare, even among the Lord's servants. I met Dr. Stephen Olford when we attended a colloquy before receiving our degrees from Luther Rice Seminary in 1978. I saw him and heard him, but it was when I shook

hands with him and spoke with him that I had a profound impression that I was looking into the eyes of a man of amazing spiritual power, and at the same time a man of genuine humility.

TEARS. Paul had gone through things with those saints in Ephesus that would bring tears to the eyes of any genuine servant of the Lord. In the Pauline Epistles we find the missionary to the Gentiles shedding tears over (1) an unconverted world, 20:19; 31; (2) inconsistent Christians, 2 Cor. 2:4; and (3) Unsanctified ministers, Phil. 3:8.

To some, tears come easily. To me they do not. Tears come to my eyes usually when I am alone, meditating on the love the Lord has for me. I am grateful for those times. I have never been one to shed tears over small things, and I have seldom shed tears in public, even in worship services. Tears come to my eyes when a child is abused, a family is hungry, or one of the Lord's servants is mistreated. Genuine tears touch hearts, but tears can lead some people to believe the one shedding the tears cares more for them than others. The key is sincerity, humility, and a genuine love for the Lord and His people.

THE JEWS. Paul wrote, that his tears came as a result of "the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews." This is not Jew baiting (anti-Semitism). He is not playing some political game with these elders by accusing the Jews of persecuting him. They were behind much of the persecution to which he had been subjected, but he was deeply burdened for his people. In other words, he is simply telling the truth. The Jews plotted against Paul in Galatia, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Asia. These disciples from Ephesus were well aware of the trouble they had caused Paul, and the threat they continued to pose.

Today, Jews often remind us of atrocities committed by Christians against Jews throughout history. Discrimination, hatred, and persecution based on one's race is sinful and shameful, whether one is a Jew or a Gentile. At this time, Jews were often the ones behind the persecution of Christians. Today, there are people who profess to be Christians who do not love Jews, but many Christians across America are committed to the security of Israel. I suppose it is possible that some Christians love Israel because of the eschatological position to which they subscribe, even though they do not love Jews personally, if only because they have never made an effort to get acquainted with any Jewish neighbors.

20:20 - DID NOT SHRINK. *"(A)nd that I did not shrink back from proclaiming to you anything that was profitable, or from teaching it to you in public and from house to house."* This is a continuation of the statement he has made (vs. 19): "You know, from the first day I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time." They knew that he did not shrink before the enemy. The KJV has "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you", whereas the NASB and HCSB render it "I did not shrink." The word means to draw back through policy, timidity, or fear. It has a military application (retreat). Paul was a faithful Christian soldier who did not shrink or pull back in the face of the enemy.

ILLUSTRATION: I once read a book about General Nathan Bedford Forrest, who was called the

single greatest soldier in the Civil War by a British military historian. In one campaign Forrest permitted his calvary to retreat in the face of a much larger Union force. Day after day, mile after mile, he retreated. He retreated until he had them where he wanted them. He then turned and began moving back toward the Union troops. At one point, he found himself far out in front of his troops when he discovered that he was facing the Union line, alone and without any support. He looked off to one side and saw a small group of confederate troops and rode over to them. He asked the officer where the Union troops were in his area. The officer pointed to woods across a meadow and declared, "They are right there, Sir, and they are about to charge! What do we do?" Nathan Bedford Forest said, "We charge?" He rode back a few yards and turning, he stood in the stirrups with his sword in the air and yelled, "Charge!" He led the small body of calvary against an overwhelming Union calvary, and they fled before him. Nathan Bedford Forrest had either 26 or 29 horses shot out from under him during the war, but he never shrank before the enemy. Sherman is reported to have said that if they were to win the war they had to find and kill Nathan Bedford Forest, if it cost 10,000 lives."

The elders from Ephesus knew (vs 19) that Paul did not shrink before the enemy. He did not cower before the enemy. "Demosthenes so used it to shrink from declaring out of fear for others. This open candor of Paul is supported by his Epistles (1Th 2:4, 11; 2Co 4:2; Gal 1:10)" [ATR].

PROCLAIMING. Not only did Paul did not shrink before the enemy, he did not shrink from preaching the Gospel, or from teaching them, both in public services and in private homes. He preached publically on the Lord's day and he taught from house to house, probably at during the evenings. This may denote personal visits to homes, or, as some believe, to "house churches. If so, each elder was possibly the overseer of a house church. Paul both preached and **taught**" [BKC]. If we would learn from Paul, and from the New Testament in general, we must learn the importance placed on the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

There is an application here for us today. I have often told people that the Lord did not call me to traumatize the sheep, He did not call me to entertain the sheep, and He did not call me to psychoanalyze His sheep. He called me to feed His sheep. How do I do that? By preaching and teaching the Word of God. When it comes to preaching, we feed His sheep when we preach expository sermons. We must preach the Gospel as we are moved by the Holy Spirit, not as we are cheered on by the crowds.

20:21 - I TESTIFIED. *"I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus."* Paul tells us that he did not shrink from proclaimed the Gospel in public and from house to house (vs. 20), and now he reminds us that "testified to both Jews and Greeks." What was his message? It was the same as that preached by John the Baptist. "Repent!" It was the message Simon Peter emphasized at Pentecost (Acts 2:38). Here, Paul says that he testified about "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus." Repentance is a change of mind that is reflected in a change one's direction (the way one lives). Faith here is placing one's trust in the Lord Jesus. Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. The one who believes is the one who repents, and the one who repents is the one who believes in the Lord Jesus. All who "walk down the aisle" have not repented. Some possibly come forward professing a faith they do not experience.

They come forward under conviction of sin but if they do not believe in the Lord Jesus and repent they go back out into the world with the same load of sin. They may feel better for a while because they have found relief from their guilt feelings.

20:22 - AND NOW. *“And now I am on my way to Jerusalem, bound in my spirit, not knowing what I will encounter there...”* Paul announces to his Ephesian friends that he is now on his way to Jerusalem, not through some whim, or personal choice, but through the leadership of the Holy Spirit (vs. 23).

BOUND IN MY SPIRIT. He was not yet a prisoner of Rome at this time, but in one sense, he is already a prisoner to the will of the Holy Spirit. This denotes a high sense of duty to the Lord Jesus. He does not know what he will encounter when he gets to Jerusalem, but regardless of what awaits him, he is committed to the Lord.

20:23 - THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFIES TO ME. *“(E)xcept that in town after town the Holy Spirit testifies to me that chains and afflictions are waiting for me.”* Paul does not know for sure what awaits him in Jerusalem, but the Holy Spirit was testifying in every town they visited that chains and afflictions were waiting for him if he went to Jerusalem. By “town after town”, he may mean Beroea, Thessalonica, Philippi, and Troas, places he visited after leaving Corinth.

20:24 - BUT I COUNT MY LIFE. *“But I count my life of no value to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God’s grace.”* How unfortunate it was that Paul could not have read some of those brilliant books on self-love, self-worth; or self-esteem! **His life was important to him only in so much as it brought glory to the Lord Jesus.** The Lord had set him aside for a special ministry and that demanded that he (1) not throw away his life foolishly, but (2) that he totally invest it for this Lord. Paul had received a commission from the Lord after meeting Him on the road to Damascus, and he had made every effort to be faithful to his calling “to testify to the gospel of God’s grace” every where he went. Regardless of what awaits him in Jerusalem, he is ready to face it for the glory of the Lord Jesus who had saved and commissioned him.

20:25 - AND NOW I KNOW. *“And now I know that none of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will ever see my face again.”* Paul has touched on his past experience with these elders and their fellow believers in Ephesus, and now he looks to an uncertain future. He announces that they will never see his face again. This would explain the urgency of this meeting. “This was not necessarily a prediction, but it was what Paul expected” [NCWB]. He is simply stating what he believes to be a fact; he is not whining, crying, or seeking sympathy.

20:26 - I TESTIFY. *“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of everyone’s blood...”* Paul had been the victim of schemes and violence, but he was totally innocent of anyone else’s blood. He is not dropping a causal comment here. The verb he used for “I testify” (*marturomai*), means, ‘I call to witness’ while *martureô* means ‘I bear witness.’ This day (*en têtî sêmeron hêmêrâi*). The today day, the last day with you, our parting day” [ATR]. On the surface it may seem that he is

saying that, even though he has often been the victim of plots, schemes, and even physical attacks, he had never attacked others. However, Barnes rightly explains what Paul is saying:

“I call you to witness; I appeal to you to testify. If any of you are lost, if you prove unfaithful to God, I appeal to yourselves that the fault is not mine. It is well when a minister can make this appeal, and call his hearers to bear testimony to his own faithfulness. Ministers who preach the gospel with fidelity, may thus appeal to their hearers; and in the day of judgment may call on them to witness that the fault of the ruin of the soul is not to be charged to them” [BARNES].

20:27 - I DID NOT SHRINK. “...*(F)or I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole plan of God.*” He did not hold back, even under threat of physical violence, and even death, from proclaiming “the whole plan of God”, either for fear of violence or because he sought popularity. The preacher today, may take a bold stand on certain issues but avoid others for fear that his position may be unpopular, or that his stand might turn his congregation against him. There was a time in America when the most popular preachers took a strong stand against beverage alcohol, warned of the temptation associated with social dancing, and dealt courageously with issues like divorce and remarriage. Pastors must not shrink back from God’s “whole plan” for His people. Some of the most “popular” preachers in America will even state that they do not preach on sin, repentance, or judgment because they “just want people to feel good about themselves.”

Someone may introduce a new term, write a book on the subject, and then get invited to conferences to teach others how to “engage the culture”. It is amazing how people will respond to something like that. Sadly, in many cases pastors are among the first to jump on board. The Bible is very clear when it states that we are engaged in a spiritual war on this earth. The culture is ever at war against the Gospel, but it will reward the one who compromises. We must confront a culture that serves as a tool of Satan to silence the preacher, compromise the pulpit, and conform the pew to the point that the person in the pew is hardly distinguishable from the culture.

On November 23, 2007, there was an interview with Mrs. Lynn Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney. Greta Van Susteren had asked he about those who had trouble supporting Mitt Romne’s candidacy for President because of his Mormon religion. Mrs. Cheney stated that she cannot understand why people would criticize someone else’s religion. She stressed over and over that “religion is something you feel” or “something you experience”, not something you analyze, study, or critique. Religion is something you feel? You cannot study it? You cannot evaluate it? Mrs. Chaney may know something about religion if her statement fully expresses her understanding, she knows nothing about the Word of God. The Bible is very clear when it states that Jesus Christ is the Way (John 14:6); and that He is the only name by which anyone can be saved (Acts 4:12). It also clear when it teaches that this means that only the Jesus of the Bible saves. I was disappointed in Mrs. Cheney’s obvious ignorance of the Word of God, but concerned for her personally, because anyone who really knows Jesus Christ and obeys Him will know that Mormonism is a cult, that the Jesus of Mormonism is not the Jesus of the Bible, and that the theology of Mormonism is not Scriptural, no matter how many King James Version Bibles they give away - so they can expand

their list of prospects.

20:28 - BE ON GUARD. *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.”* A similar charge was given to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:16). The Christian minister must first give attention to his own character and conduct, and then to that of “the flock”. The shepherd must walk in “the paths of righteousness” (Ps. 23) because the sheep follow him.

Paul warns these elders to be on guard, both for themselves “and for all the flock.” God does not commission pastors, deacons, and teachers to go on a witch hunt to ferret out fellow members whose understanding of the Word of God is limited and expose them to the whole church. Mrs. Mickey Steward grew up in the Catholic church, so she was horrified when her daughter Carol “became a protestant”. She took her to Alps to try to de-program her, but one morning she walked into Carol’s hotel room and watched her daughter standing before a window, looking out at the scenery. She watched her for a brief time before asking her if something was wrong. Carol said, “Oh, no, I am just standing here looking out at God’s wonderful creation.” The mother sensed something special in her daughter’s words and in her spirit and decided then and there to back off and leave her alone. Some time after they returned to America, Carol was killed in an automobile accident. Later, Miss Mickey came to know the Jesus personally. The One who had saved Carol became her Savior, too. She had been a member of another church for some time before attending a service in our church. Before long, she came forward in one of our services and told me she wanted to be a member of our church. I baptized her and she immediately joined a senior adult ladies’ Sunday School class.

One Sunday, her teacher, Mrs. Ela Mae Taylor made some statement about “the One who sits at the right hand of God” and Miss Mickey said, “I know who that is.” Mrs. Taylor asked, “Who is that?” She was obviously surprised when her new class member said, “It’s the blessed Mother!” Mrs. Taylor did not correct her in front of the class, but as soon as she had an opportunity to talk with her in private, she pointed out that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. Miss Mickey is still appreciative of Mrs. Taylor for pointing her, and for not embarrassing her in front of the class.

One day, when I was visiting with her and some of her patients I told her about a book I picked ordered and read only a few pages before setting it aside. I said, “The characters kept talking about ‘the Mother of God’, when God has no mother. God cannot have a mother or a father.” Miss Mickey looked at me and exclaimed, “That’s right! God cannot have a mother. And you just took away another of my prayers!” We cannot ignore false doctrine, but we must be careful that we do not correct in a way that hurts another unnecessarily. Speak the truth in love.

THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS APPOINTED. Ministers are called elders in vs. 17, and in this verse, they are called “overseers”, who “shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.” Every pastor should remember that the church he serves belongs to God, not to himself. Many are content to “shepherd the church of God”, but the denominational magazines and newspapers are more inclined to recognize the pastor who “builds a great church”. Guess who is invited to speak at the evangelism conferences, conventions, colleges, and seminaries? Thankfully,

there are exceptions. Of course, there is no reason one cannot build a great church and effectively and faithfully “shepherd the church of God.” Many have, and do.

Paul stated that “The Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.” It is disturbing to hear someone proclaim, “God told me to tell you...” - and they proceed to say something that is clearly unscriptural. Paul’s ministry was directed by the Holy Spirit, and he was there when these elders were elected to serve the Lord in the church at Ephesus. The Holy Spirit had led the church to set these men aside as “overseers, to shepherd the church of God.” Election of deacons should never be a matter of popularity or politics.

On Sunday, December, 9, 2007, when I came into my house, my son Mark was talking on the phone with his older brother John, who had called to talk with me. When I took the phone, John said, “I just wanted to tell you that I was elected to serve as a deacon this morning.” I had not known they were electing deacons, even though John and I talk several times a week, and we had met for lunch and gone to SAM’s to look at shelves for his shop only a few days before. Eight years ago, our church had elected John as a deacon, but when he had an opportunity to become the chief prosecutor for the City of Monroe, LA, he told me that he would have move into town if he took that job, so he asked me to tell the church that he was declining the ordination because he would not have the local church ordain him to this ministry, knowing that he was moving out of the community. I was very happy that my son will be ordained as a deacon, but I am much more happy with his attitude toward the office and his commitment to the Lord and to the support of his pastor.

20:29 - I KNOW. *“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”* Does Paul know intuitively that “savage wolves” will come in and attack members after his departure, or is this something that the Holy Spirit was revealing to him? We must see that the Holy Spirit was directing Paul’s ministry, but he had also seen how Satan works in a church. He had every reason to believe know that “Some teachers would attack the church from without and others would arise from within the church to pervert the truth (see Paul’s epistles to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and to Timothy). Church leaders in every age must guard the unity of the believers” [NCWB].

For the fulfillment of this prophetic word, see the letter Jesus inspired John to write to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2. As a matter of fact, a study of the Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2 and 3 will reveal just how viciously savages wolves come in and attack the flock.

20:30 - FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. *“And men from among yourselves will rise up with deviant doctrines to lure the disciples into following them.”* Some of those savage wolves (vs. 29) will attack from outside the church, such as those who may promote “hate crime” laws that would prohibit pastors from preaching against homosexuality. Others will rise up within the fellowship and teach false doctrines, or seek political advantages within the church or denomination. When the charismatic movement in America was creating a lot of attention, and splitting churches in the seventies, a deacon stopped by my office and told me that two ladies who taught young people were going to a charismatic church in Beaumont every Saturday night, and then coming to their classes and sharing their experiences and opinions with young girls on Sunday morning. We had a lot of

young people and those two ladies had a lot of influence. The deacon was also Director of the Youth Department and he told me he was concerned what they were teaching, but did not know what we could do about it. The next Sunday, I preached a sermon I had carefully, and prayerfully prepared on the subject. After the service, one lady said to me, “I appreciate what you said. I don’t agree with it, but I appreciate what you said.”

During the latter half of 2007, both Republican and Democrat candidates for the office of president held debates, campaigned in the states with early elections, and debated before the cameras as they dealt with questions from a variety of people. The one unpredictable factor was the rise of former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, an ordained Baptist minister. No one gave him a chance, but he kept rising in the polls as a result of the debates. He had practically no money, but he continued to rise in the ranks of candidates, against all the predictions from so-called experts. His personal testimony resonated with conservative Christians.

Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, a Mormon, had to answer a lot of questions about his faith (the word that covers anything and everything the speaker wants to cover at the moment). Romney made a major speech on his religion, without revealing much about his Mormon faith, but a lot about his views on religion in politics. As Huckabee rose in the polls, his Christian faith became a new focus. It seemed that the media likes to see a person keep his faith to himself, not share it with others. The word evangelical seemed to be going through a change as well. Some use the term today is used to distinguish moderate to liberal “Christians” from “right-wing fundamentalists. They may include everyone from Franklin Graham to Tony Campolo, who leans strongly to the left. One well known “talking head” asked, “What will an evangelical do in the White House? Will he evangelize from the White House?” That is a question that would never have been asked before America entered the post-Christian era in her history.

At one point, Huckabee made a reference to the Mormon teaching that in eternity past Jesus and Lucifer were brothers. Romney denied that the Mormon church teaches that, insisting that he had checked with his church and they cleared him on the subject. The media supported him and began portraying Mike Huckabee in a negative light for attacking someone else’s “faith”, Huckabee’s apology notwithstanding. The media refuses to look at Mormon theology. One expert on Mormonism told me that when he pinned a Mormon down on this subject he might well lie about it. Romney not only denied it, lecturing Huckabee for attacking another person’s faith. Here is an excerpt from an article written by Jess L. Christensen, Institute of Religion director at Utah State University, Logan, Utah (bold added by this writer):

“On first hearing, the doctrine that Lucifer and our Lord, Jesus Christ, are brothers may seem surprising to some—especially to those unacquainted with latter-day revelations. **But both the scriptures and the prophets affirm that Jesus Christ and Lucifer are indeed offspring of our Heavenly Father and, therefore, spirit brothers.** Jesus Christ was with the Father from the beginning. Lucifer, too, was an angel “who was in authority in the presence of God,” a “son of the morning.” (See Isa. 14:12; D&C 76:25–27.) Both Jesus and Lucifer were strong leaders with great knowledge and

influence. But as the Firstborn of the Father, Jesus was Lucifer's older brother. (See Col. 1:15; D&C 93:21.)

“How could two such great spirits become so totally opposite? The answer lies in the principle of agency, which has existed from all eternity. (See D&C 93:30–31.) **Of Lucifer, the scripture says that because of rebellion “he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies.” (Moses 4:4.)** Note that he was not created evil, but *became* Satan by his own choice.

“When our Father in Heaven presented his plan of salvation, Jesus sustained the plan and his part in it, giving the glory to God, to whom it properly belonged. **Lucifer, on the other hand, sought power, honor, and glory only for himself. (See Isa. 14:13–14; Moses 4:1–2.)** When his modification of the Father's plan was rejected, he rebelled against God and was subsequently cast out of heaven with those who had sided with him. (See Rev. 12:7–9; D&C 29:36–37.)

“That brothers would make dramatically different choices is not unusual. It has happened time and again, as the scriptures attest: **Cain chose to serve Satan; Abel chose to serve God. (See Moses 5:16–18.)** Esau “despised his birthright”; Jacob wanted to honor it. (Gen. 25:29–34.) Joseph's brothers sought to kill him; he sought to preserve them. (Gen. 37:12–24; Gen. 45:3–11.)

“It is ironic that the agency with which Lucifer rebelled is the very gift he tried to take from man. His proposal was that all be forced back into God's presence. (See Moses 4:1, 3.) But the principle of agency is fundamental to the existence and progression of intelligent beings: as we make wise choices, we grow in light and truth. On the other hand, wrong choices—such as the one Satan made—stop progress and can even deny us blessings that we already have. (See D&C 93:30–36.)” [Jess L. Christensen, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, June 1986, 25–26]

Please note that Christensen's scripture, including the book of Moses, and the D & C - Doctrines and Covenant. When I asked Jimmy Furr about this issue, he e-mailed me (12-12-07): “Has Romney denied what Huckabee has brought up or has he deflected the subject? He has not denied it simply stated that his religion should not be a test of whether he would be a good leader or not.” The point is, if anyone with a computer and access to the Internet can find this information, why can the media not find it? Rather than research the issue and appear to be attacking Romney, some have become savage wolves, attacking Mike Huckabee.

DEVIANT DOCTRINES. The letters to the seven churches in Revelation are very revealing. Jesus had John to write to this very church:

“I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil. **You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars.** You also possess endurance and have tolerated [many things] because of My name, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you: **you have abandoned the love [you had] at first.** Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first” (Rev 2:2-5, bold added).

Within a few short decades from Paul’s visit with the Ephesian elders, Jesus would be sending a message to a neighboring church (Smyrna). “I know your tribulation and poverty, yet you are rich. **[I know] the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan**” (Rev 2:9). If Jesus sent them that letter today, Satan would be whispering (or shouting - he does both!) that Jesus was anti-Semitic!

One more example will illustrate the importance of Paul’s warning against those savage wolves who would seek to destroy the flock. In the letter to Pergamum, Jesus directed John to write:

“But I have a few things against you. **You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam,** who taught Balak to place a stumbling block in front of the sons of Israel: to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. In the same way, **you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.** Therefore repent! Otherwise, I will come to you quickly and fight against them with the sword of My mouth” (Rev 2:14-16), bold added by this writer).

ILLUSTRATION. At one time, the church I served as pastor co-sponsored three different mission churches in south Louisiana. I took a group of young people to conduct a Vacation Bible School in one of those churches (Stephensville, near Morgan City, LA). The bi-vocational pastor, Wendell Douglas, was principal of a local school and knew the area well. One Sunday, he observed a visitor in the morning worship service, and he soon learned that the man was a part of a charismatic fellowship which had met and decided that each one would go to a local church and introduce that church to what they had experienced. In other words, they were going to these churches to try to introduce a movement that had been divisive in many churches.

Wendell Douglas told me that the man had attended several Sundays, but had not created any kind of problem for them. After the worship service one Sunday morning, the man came by Wendell and said, “The Holy Spirit gave you that message.” Brother Douglas said, “Do you mean you believe the Holy Spirit told me what to say?” He hesitated before saying, “I believe He told you what to say this morning.” Brother Douglas said, “Then, if I tell you the Holy Spirit is telling me to say something to you right now, would you believe me?” The visitor very thoughtfully, answered, “If you say so, I do.” To which Brother Douglas said, “The Lord is telling me to tell you that you should go back where you came from, and not create any problems for us here in this church. Now, do you believe the Lord told me to tell you that?” The man said, “If you say He told you to say it, I believe it.” He never returned.

It took courage to deal with this issue as Wendell Douglas did. It also required the wisdom of Barney Fife (Deputy Barney Fife of *The Andy Griffith Show*), who believe there are times when you must “nip it in the bud!” If Brother Douglas had waited until the man cultivated a following, the problem would not have been so easily handled.

20:31 - THEREFORE. *“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears.”* Never overlook the “therefore” in the Bible. Based on what Paul has just said, he will now make an application. Because of the wolves with whom they would have to deal, he reminds them of his great burden for them during the three years he had spent with them. Day and night, he had never stopped warning them. Why then are we being judgmental or intolerant when we warn people of dangerous doctrines or moral compromise today?

I was a young man when I became pastor of a church that has gone through a difficult time. They had lost a lot of members to another church, leaving a great financial burden on those who remained. In addition, there had been rumors about former pastors that a simple denial would not make go away. I was convinced that we must preach and teach the Word, reach out to lost people, and encourage the saints, and wait for the Lord to produce results. He did just that, but our “overnight success” followed five years of trials and serious work. We had to do something about our public image. An older pastor came by one day and said, “If you will go down town and drink coffee with people at the Eat-A-Bite every morning, and then go on over to city hall and hang out with the people over there, it won’t be too long before everybody in town will be talking about Johnny Sanders.” The thought of marketing Johnny Sanders was very disturbing. We proclaimed Jesus Christ, and He did some amazing things in that church. We just had to wait on Him, but while waiting we taught the Word of God.

TEARS. Paul reminds these Ephesian elders that for three years he had not ceased “warning each one of you with tears.” Paul warned them individually (“each one of you”), and he warned them from the depth of his heart (“with tears”). There is no doubt that he warned the congregation, but he did not stop there. He warned individuals during his three years with them.

20:32 - I COMMIT YOU. *“And now I commit you to God and to the message of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified.”* Paul would be leaving now, and would no longer be able to look after them personally, but he commits these elders to God and to the “message of Grace”, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who preach the Word and teach it must remember that it is the “message of Grace” which redeems and transforms, and builds up churches and individuals. Churches and denominations continually look for “programs” that will build churches (or revive them), and there have been many effective programs. However, that which builds up pastors and churches is the Gospel, the Word of God, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I was serving on the Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources about the time Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, was

being marketed. I talked with leaders on the state level and on the national level. I heard Rick Warren at one of our meetings in Nashville state that what they were doing at Saddleback might not work in every church. Without any intended criticism of either the book or the author here, let me stress that I still cannot believe that the Holy Spirit was leading every pastor to get his church involved in one program all at the same time. Some churches reported phenomenal results from the program, while others experienced problems, and some churches reportedly split over their implementation of the program.

I have concluded that evangelical Christians have a tendency to look around and find someone who is experiencing phenomenal growth and conclude that the person behind this movement has his eyes on God, and then they focus their eyes on the man who, in their mind, has his eye on the Lord. I have been meetings when programs were introduced, and I have seen some implemented effectively when a church seemed to be ready for that program. I have also seen negative results, and concluded that the Lord may not have been leading every church to adopt the same program at the same time.

The one thing I am convinced of is that the church that is saturated with “the message of His grace” will be blessed. That message is the Word of God. One elderly lady told me she had been in church all her life, but she had never had a pastor who really taught her. Since she read her Bible, I wondered if she meant that she had heard topical sermons rather than expository sermons. When Paul wrote to the Roman church, “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ” (Rom. 10:17), the subject was the preaching of the Word of God.

TO BUILD YOU UP. Paul committed these elders to God “to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified.” One pastor announced to the deacons that his ministry and commitment was the edification of the church. There was every evidence of administration and the education of the membership, but the church was surrounded by lost people, but there was no evidence of outreach to the community. The Gospel, faithfully proclaimed and faithfully followed, will build up the church as it builds up individual members, in part because those who obey the Gospel will reach out to the lost people around them.

SANCTIFIED. “The very words ‘build’ and ‘inheritance among the sanctified’ will occur in Eph. 1:11; Eph 2:20; Eph 3:18” [ATR]. Sanctification is a progressive process which begins at the point of one’s Justification and continues until Glorification. It is God will and purpose that everyone who is justified be sanctified (Rom. 8:29).

ILLUSTRATION. I was showing Scotty around the sanctuary, after a tour of the educational building. We needed a new custodian and Scotty was interested. I will never forget where we were in the sanctuary when Scotty suddenly stopped me and asked, “Reverend Sanders, I want to ask you something. Is this a sanctified church, or is it a Baptist church?” I could think of a lot of a lot of responses to that question! However, I simply explained that Baptists must be sanctified, and that the two, sanctification and Baptist, are not mutually exclusive. I didn’t use those words, but I did stress the importance we placed on sanctification, or I might have said, the importance we should place on sanctification.

20:33 - I HAVE NOT COVETED. *“I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing.”*

It seems that one of the charges made by Paul’s critics at Corinth was that the collection he was asking the churches to raise for the suffering saints in Jerusalem was really for himself (2Cor. 12:17). He includes “clothing” because “oriental wealth consisted largely in fine apparel (not old worn out clothes). See Gen 24:53; 2Ki 5:5; Ps 45:13; Mat 6:19” [ATR]. Paul did not preach for money. In fact, he often supported himself and his fellow missionaries by working as a tentmaker.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14). While the church should pay the salary and expenses for the pastor, Paul preferred to work to provide for himself in Corinth: “What then is my reward? To preach the gospel and offer it free of charge, and not make full use of my authority in the gospel” (1 Cor 9:18). Corinth was a unique situation, and in no way justifies that church, or church member, who adopts a begrudging, stingy attitude toward the pastor. When I was in seminary, I heard someone joke about the church that prayed for their pastor. “Lord, if you will keep him humble we will keep him poor.” Church members will be held accountable for the attitude they have toward the pastor, and for his support. At the same time, the pastor must be very careful not to covet the material things of this world.

20:34 - YOU YOURSELVES KNOW. *“You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my needs, and for those who were with me.”* Not only had he worked as a tent maker in Corinth for many months, he had supported himself in Ephesus by working with his hands, even though he was entitled to their support. Paul worked, not only for his own support, but also for the support of his co-workers. Again, the Christian missionary working in a pagan city like Ephesus, could not afford the charge that he was “in it for the money”.

One would think that Paul’s time would have been too valuable to do manual labor in order to pay his bills. Could he not have put Silas, Timothy, Luke, and his other companions to work and kept his time free to preach, teach, and minister to others? Once again, we are reminded that our ways are not God’s ways, and our thoughts are not God’s thoughts. He was doing what the Holy Spirit led him to do. What servant of the Lord has ever been more successful than Paul?

20:35 - I’VE SHOWN. *“In every way I’ve shown you that by laboring like this, it is necessary to help the weak and to keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, for He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”* Paul had shown here and in other places that he might “help the weak”. Who were the weak to whom he refers? He was the pioneer missionary, working among pagan people. New converts were certainly weak in doctrine, babes in Christ who must grow in His grace and knowledge. Among those converts, there would be some who would grow to maturity in the faith, and others who would remain weak for the same reason many today never grow in the Lord. Either they are incapable of learning as fast as others, or they walk in the flesh rather than the Spirit.

MORE BLESSED. Jesus had certainly taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive, but who would have thought of Paul’s application here? Surely, this applies to the philanthropist, or even to those of us who contribute to disaster relief, drop a dollar into a Salvation Army kettle, or

contribute at a benefit for someone who has experienced some disaster. Paul makes an application that helps us to understand the importance of serving others under various circumstances.

The bi-vocational pastor may have some advantages that “full-time” pastors lack in working with some people. There are “working men” who are impressed with a pastor who “works with his hands”, far more than the one who wears dress clothes all week, sits in a comfortable office, and requires appointments of those who would see him.

My brother James told me a number of years ago that he stopped by the church office to invite the new pastor to a Sunday School fellowship at his home the following Saturday. This was a large class and it included one or two members of the Pastor Search Committee that had recommended the pastor to the church. He said his pastor “kept me cooling my heels” for a very long time, probably to teach him that he needed an appointment to see him. James had for many years been a regional manager for a nation wide company, and it didn’t take him long to realize what the pastor was doing. He invited another new pastor to join this class for their monthly fellowship meal, either in a restaurant or in a member’s home, but this new pastor told him that he reserved that time for his wife. They may want to go out to eat by themselves. This was a new pastor and the class wanted to help him get to know his members. The class included some of the leaders, both in the local church, the community, and a local university.

When I was a young pastor, I heard about the pastor of a medium sized church who had a room set up away from the office for study. He called it the Monroe Room, and if anyone called him during the morning his secretary was instructed to say, “He is in Monroe.”

Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many pastors in south Louisiana found themselves serving in new roles during the recovery. Other pastors led groups to New Orleans, the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, or to South West Louisiana and helped clean up or rebuild homes. New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has always required mission experience as a part of the requirements for any degree program. I preached in a rescue mission and visited for an inner city church when I was a student there. After Katrina, that requirement took on a whole new concept as student became involved in cleaning up houses that were salvageable, or building new homes, as well as many other ministries. Those who minister under such circumstances today understand that it is more blessed to give than to receive. They also show residents in the area that they care.

20:36 - PRAYED. *“After he said this, he knelt down and prayed with all of them.”* He was deeply concerned for the church at Ephesus, so before he departed, “he knelt down and prayed” with them. The posture is not the most important thing here, but he knelt in humility before the Lord with these people. We are not told to assume a certain posture in prayer. In some churches, people stand for prayer, but in prayer groups they kneel, or they “kneel at the altar”. We are not commanded to kneel, stand with hands uplifted, or to make the sign of the cross. We are taught to pray, believing. These church leaders would not forget this prayer time.

20:37 - WEEPING. *“There was a great deal of weeping by everyone. And embracing Paul, they kissed him...”* The imperfect active shows that one after the other, they kept on embracing him and

kissing him: “kissed repeatedly, probably one after the other falling on his neck” [ATR], as Joseph wept and kissed his aging father, Jacob. Kissing one in this manner was not uncommon for the time and place. How different this was from the kiss with which Judas betrayed Jesus, but that infamous act did not keep the early saints from greeting one another with a holy kiss. Paul wrote to the church at Rome, “Greet one another with a holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16).

20:38 - GRIEVING MOST OF ALL. “(G)rieving most of all over his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship.” The Holy Spirit, who inspired Luke to record this, would not have been mistaken as to the reason these people were grieving. They knew they would not be seeing Paul again (certainly not in the near future), for he had revealed some of his plans to them. They were also aware of the fact that there were those in Jerusalem who posed a serious threat to him. He might have saved himself a lot of grief if he had skipped Jerusalem, but the Holy Spirit is leading to go back for a fifth visit after his conversion, and the suffering saints in Jerusalem needed the offering the churches of Asia, Macedonia, Greece had collected.

One might wonder why the Holy Spirit would lead Paul into danger. When Saul of Tarsus was saved on the road to Damascus, the risen Lord spoke to him. He was left blind as a result of this experience, and taken to a home in Damascus where he continued in prayer for three days. When Ananias was sent to lay his hands on Saul so that his sight might be restored, he was instructed to tell Saul that he would be His witness to the Jews, to the Gentiles, and that he would be His witness before kings and rulers. Paul is about to expose himself to dangers that would demand intervention by authorities and imprisonment, but there would be numerous hearings before kings and governors. The Holy Spirit was leading Paul into danger that He might use him to bear a witness where few would have an opportunity. The Holy Spirit gave him an opportunity to witness to those who came to see him while he was in prison, and he witnessed to soldiers and guards, to governors and others who would hear him in court. It was also while he was in prison that the Holy Spirit would inspire him to write “the prison epistles”. There is great truth in the saying, “The providence of God will not lead you where the grace of God cannot sustain you.” One of the ladies in my son’s office has a quotation on the wall in her office that says, “If He leads you to it, He will lead you through it.” The Holy Spirit was leading Paul to it, and Luke reveals that, in Paul’s case, He was leading him ultimately to martyrdom, but not before He used this one man to “turn the world upside down” for Him.

Chapter 21

Warnings against Going to Jerusalem

21:1 - SET SAIL. “After we tore ourselves away from them and set sail, we came by a direct route to Cos, the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara.” Paul and his companions were traveling by ship on their way to Jerusalem for Pentecost. They had dropped anchor at Melitus and sent for the elders at Ephesus to come to see him there. Only after a tearful farewell were they able

to set sail “by a direct route to Cos”, and from there to Rhodes and on to Patara. Typically, Luke covers a lot of ground in a sentence. One thing he reveals is that he is with Paul. This is one of the “we” sections in Acts, when we know Luke was with him. Interestingly, Luke may skip weeks or month in reporting on the mission trips, but at time he pays particular attention to such details as those presented in this chapter.

COS...RHODES..PATARA. Cos was a fertile island located about 40 miles south of Miletus. Rhodes located a day’s journey south of Cos, was an island city was founded in 408 B. C. It was about 43 miles long, with a maximum width of about 20 miles. It is about 12 miles off the mainland, at the entrance to the Aegean Sea. There was a great university there, known for rhetoric and oratory.

Patara was a city on the “mainland of Lycia, directly east of Rhodes. The famous oracle of Apollo was located here” [NCWB]. “Each of these stops—from **Cos** to **Rhodes** to **Patara**—evidently represented one day’s **sea** journey (cf. 20:13-15)” [BKC, bold in the original].

21:2 - TO PHOENICIA. “*Finding a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we boarded and set sail.*” One writer speculates that “Rather than remain on board a boat which put into port each evening Paul boarded **a ship** which evidently was larger and would make the journey **to Phoenicia** with no stops” [BKC]. That may well be true, but if so, it brings into question the suggestion that Paul may have chartered the vessel. He seems to have had a lot to say about where they anchored and how long they stayed in certain places, but that may have been a matter of persuasion or influence with the captain. It may also have been a matter of his adjustments to the off-loading and loading of the ship at various ports.

Paul and his companions are still about 400 miles from Jerusalem at this point. Walker comments on the prevailing winds and suggests that Paul would have known that from the coast of Lycia a ship could run a direct course to Syria at that time of the year [WALKER: 455]. It seems that they had been on a small coasting vessel that anchored each night, but now they find a larger vessel that can sail across the open sea.

21:3 - SIGHTED CYPRUS. “*After we sighted Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we sailed on to Syria and arrived at Tyre, because the ship was to unload its cargo there.*” Before changing ships, they dropped anchor at various ports, possibly sailing only during daytime hours, but now they sail by Cyprus. This sighting must have brought back a lot of memories for Paul, who had begun the First Missionary Journey by sailing to Cyprus with Barnabas, a native of that island, and with John Mark. John Mark had turned back once they sailed across to the mainland, so when he wanted to go with them again Barnabas, his kinsman was willing to give him another opportunity, but Paul adamantly refused. Was Paul remembering the controversy, or was he remembering the friend who stood by him when no one else in Jerusalem trusted him. Was he remembering the friend who sent to Tarsus to search for him and invited him to go back to Antioch of Syria to help him?

They sighted Cyprus on the left, or port-side, as they sailed in a southeasterly direction. We “sailed” (imperfect) means, we kept on sailing, as in 27:2, 6, 24. Both Paul and Luke were landlubbers but

they had experienced a lot of time at sea. Little could they have imagined what lay ahead of them, nor how long it would be before their next voyage, because a two-years imprisonment in Caesarea separated them from their planned journey to Rome.

TYRE. Tyre was the destination of the ship, the place where the ship's cargo would be unloaded. Tyre was a free city, thanks to its former greatness, having stood off a long siege by Alexander the Great. This Phoenician city was "one of the most celebrated maritime towns in the world" [CLARKE]. Luke uses a nautical term for offloading the vessel, which we have come to expect from him. As some have observed, he knew the language of the sea, but spoke as a landlubber.

ILLUSTRATION. I had not been pastor of Forest Baptist Church, Forest, LA long before I visited Joseph Womack, a farmer and manager of a government program that taught young farmers. It was in the Fall, so I asked, Joe, "Have you cut your beans?" He smiled at the term which was as natural to me as it was to him. I had grown up on a cotton and soybean farm seven miles west of Sledge, Mississippi. Joe went on to tell me that I had reminded him of the difference between his two sons-in-law. "The one who farms here would have said just what you did: "cut the beans", but the one from Houston, Texas would have asked me, "Have you finished harvesting your soybeans?" They would meant the same thing, but one would have revealed his farm background, and the other would have revealed that he did not know the language of the farm. Even though he had invested in a loal farm. He spoke like a city boy!

I grew up in the Mississippi Delta when farmer still used middle busters to "break" their land; to "lay off" the rows for cotton or soybeans. I was a child when I came in from school after being exposed to a lesson in grammar and listened to my father and a neighbor talking about breaking their land. Louis asked my father, "Have you busted your lower place?" I wanted to say, "The term is burst!" However, I knew that all my neighbors used the term "bust" or "busted" and if I had asked someone if he had burst his land I would have been laughed out of the country. I realized that if the farmer used middle busters he would not use them to "burst" the land; and then I would learn that "bust" is a legitimate term. I confessed that I cheated by looking at the Thesaurus!

Why would I belabor this point? Only because ancient seafaring men would have known that Luke was using the terminology of a landlubber, even if he had his facts right. I had a very good friend, Mel Neuschwanger, a retired naval officer, who once mentioned to me that Luke didn't know anything about the sea. He mentioned Luke's reference to dropping anchors. Later, Luke will describe how sailors in a violent storm, lowered anchors into a boat and the positioned the anchors where they wanted them before lowering them. Mel said, "An anchor would sink the small boat." My friend had personally hand-delivered messages for Admiral Bull Halsey during World War II. He went on to spend 30 years in the U. S. Navy. He was picturing a modern anchor being dropped from a battle ship!

Again, why belabor the point? Because Luke is writing history, and I refused to let anyone tell me that Luke was not an historian. I was watching the news one evening when Bill O'Reilly, a professed Catholic, quoted a minister who was quoting Matthew. O'Reilly said, "Matthew didn't talk that way", no doubt finding the King James Version strange. He went on to announce that the

Gospels are not history, but “gospel lessons”. Luke was inspired to write both the Gospel According to Luke and the Book of Acts, and his credentials as an historian have been irrefutably established. Modern research affirms that, and future studies, using computerized models may amaze future students of the Bible.

21:4 - WE FOUND SOME DISCIPLES. *“So we found some disciples and stayed there seven days. They said to Paul through the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem.”* The wording seems to imply that they sought out and found some disciples in Tyre and stayed with them seven days. However, the definite article is used and from that we may infer that they knew, or knew about some disciples in Tyre. They may have passed through Tyre on the way from Jerusalem to Antioch, possibly after the Second Missionary Journey. This must have been a large vessel for it to have taken seven days to off load the cargo and take on new cargo. They, of course, did not have modern equipment, nor was the cargo packed in modern containers, awaiting gigantic cranes that would load them onto the deck of a ship.

THEY SAID TO PAUL. “They said to Paul through the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem.” This is very interesting. These disciples knew Paul, or certainly knew about him and they were also concerned for his welfare. Was the Spirit trying to prevent Paul from going on to Jerusalem? Or was the Holy Spirit giving Paul one message and these disciples another message? The Bible Knowledge Commentary explains:

“In view of the phrase, “through the Spirit,” was Paul wrong in pursuing his course to Jerusalem? Probably he was not violating God’s will for several reasons: **(1)** Acts 20:22 and 21:14 imply it was God’s will for Paul to continue on to Jerusalem (cf. 19:21). **(2)** The comfort given by God (23:11) implies Paul had not stubbornly refused the Lord’s will. **(3)** In 23:1 Paul declared he had lived in all good conscience to that day (bold added by this writer).

“Probably, then, the words “through the Spirit” (21:4) mean they knew through the Spirit that Paul would suffer in Jerusalem (cf. 20:23); therefore, concerned for his safety, they tried to dissuade him” [NKC].

21:5 - WE CONTINUED OUR JOURNEY. *“When our days there were over, we left to continue our journey, while all of them, with their wives and children, escorted us out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach to pray...”* “Our days” denotes the seven days in which they visited the saints in Tyre while the ship was being off loaded and loaded again with a new cargo. This is a moving scene as those godly men, with their wives and children escorted Paul and his companions out of the city, to the ship. There, they knelt down on the beach and prayed together, just as they had recently prayed with the saints from Ephesus.

21:6 - GOOD-BYE. *“(W)e said good-bye to one another. Then we boarded the ship, and they returned home.”* After the prayer, Paul, Luke, and their companions boarded the ship and the believers at Tyre returned to their homes. Luke may well have carried a memory of these saints with

him for a long time.

21:7 - PTOLEMAIS. *“When we completed our voyage from Tyre, we reached Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them one day.”* They sailed some 20 miles south from Tyre to Ptolemais, modern Acre, called Accho in Judges 1:31. Ptolemais boasted the best harbor on the coast of Palestine and it is surrounded by mountains.

“It is about thirty miles south of Tyre. It was never taken by Israel and was considered a Philistine town and the Greeks counted it a Phoenician city. It was the key to the road down the coast between Syria and Egypt and had successively the rule of the Ptolemies, Syrians, Romans. Saluted (aspasamenoi). Here greeting as in Acts 21:19 rather than farewell as in Acts 20:1. The stay was short, one day (hêmeran mian, accusative), but "the brethren" Paul and his party found easily. Possibly the scattered brethren (Acts 11:19) founded the church here or Philip may have done it” [ATR].

21:8 - TO CAESAREA. *“The next day we left and came to Caesarea, where we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, and stayed with him.”* Little could Paul and Luke have realized what place Caesarea would hold for them in their future. It would be here that Paul would be help prisoner, and I believe it was during this time that Luke conducted some, if not most of the research of which he writes in the introduction the Gospel According to Luke, as well as the introduction to Acts.

PHILIP THE EVANGELIST. While in Caesarea, they stayed with one of the great saints of the New Testament, Philip, one of the seven men of good report, filled with the Holy Spirit, who were set aside to minister to the Greek widows and orphans in Jerusalem (Ch. 6). Though is not called a deacon, the church recognizes him as one of the seven who were set aside for this special service. He is called the evangelist, in part because he proclaimed the Gospel in Samaria, and to the Ethiopian eunuch. He then went on to Caesarea, where he continued to witness for the Lord for many years.

21:9 - DAUGHTERS WHO PROPHESED. *“This man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.”* I am glad this note is included, because it helps to answer those who call the Bible a sexist book. In the ancient world, Judaism gave dignity to women not seen in paganism. Christianity opened the door even wider, so as to include and encourage women. We may recall Lydia at Philippi, or Priscilla at Corinth and Ephesus. Though Paul specifically limits the offices of pastor and deacons to men, there are many opportunities for women to serve in Christianity that were not open to them in Judaism. Women are still targets for discrimination in Islam and certain other religions.

It should be stressed that we are not to read either too much or too little into the fact that these four daughters prophesied, any more than we would read too much into the fact that they were all unmarried (or living at home). Luke simply states the facts. God blessed these young women with

the gift of prophecy. This is prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:28; see also, Acts 2:18). Robertson points out that this is

“Not necessarily an "order" of virgins, but Philip had the honour of having in his home four virgin daughters with the gift of prophecy which was not necessarily predicting events, though that was done as by Agabus here. It was more than ordinary preaching (cf. Acts 19:6) and was put by Paul above the other gifts like tongues (1Co 14:1-33). The prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28) about their sons and daughters prophesying is quoted by Peter and applied to the events on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17). Paul in 1Co 11:5 gives directions about praying and prophesying by the women (apparently in public worship) with the head uncovered and sharply requires the head covering, though not forbidding the praying and prophesying. With this must be compared his demand for silence by the women in 1Co 14:34-40; 1Ti 2:8-15 which it is not easy to reconcile. One wonders if there was not something known to Paul about special conditions in Corinth and Ephesus that he has not told [ATR].

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to believers without regard to sex (gender). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14, placed restrictions on women in public worship services, but never discouraged prayer or prophesying - not even at Corinth.

21:10 - MANY DAYS. *“While we were staying there many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.”* Once again, Paul and his companions have an opportunity to visit with Christians upon landing at some new port. This time there was no ship’s schedule they had to keep. The only time element was Pentecost, one of the three annual festivals (also called Feast of Weeks because it came it seven full weeks after Passover. It fell on the fiftieth day after Passover, thus the name Pentecost.

AGABUS. This may well have been the prophet from Jerusalem, of whom we read in chapter 11:

“In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. This took place during the time of Claudius” (Acts 11:27-28).

Here, Luke tells us he was from Judea. Though it is possible that he was returning from a visit to Judea, it is more likely that he was from either Jerusalem or from Judea.

21:11 - PAUL’S BELT. *“He came to us, took Paul’s belt, tied his own feet and hands, and said, “This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into Gentile hands.”* Luke uses the pronoun “us”, referring to Paul, himself, and the others who were traveling with them. Agabus took Paul’s belt (girdle, or sash) and bound his own feet and hands (not Paul’s). In this way he dramatically illustrated how Paul would be bound in Jerusalem by the Jews there. Jesus had been betrayed, tried, and condemned by the

Jews before they demanded a reluctant Pilate to crucify Him. “Prophets often symbolized their predictions (cf. 1 Kings 11:29-31; Isa. 20:2-4; Jer. 13:1-7; Ezek. 4). The fact that Paul would be imprisoned was known by several including Paul himself (Acts 20:23)” [BKC]. This was indeed a dramatic illustration, but Paul apparently submitted to it without offering any resistance, probably because he knew Agabus to be a prophet. If he was the same prophet from Jerusalem we meet in chapter 11, Paul knew him to be a prophet.

THE JEWS IN JERUSALEM. It was only a matter of days before Paul would be in chains. How did Agabus know this? For one thing, he had just come down from Judea, where he may have learned of a plot, but that is a stretch of the imagination. Since he was a prophet the Lord may well have revealed this to him apart from any conclusions he may have drawn on his own. Agabus does not warn of Roman politicians, or military authorities, but of Jews. Was that because he had heard of a plot? How would they have known Paul was planning to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost? It may simply have been that Agabus knew the atmosphere in Jerusalem, as well as the intense hatred non-believing Jews had for believers. However, the most compelling conclusion is that the Lord had revealed this to him.

DELIVERED INTO GENTILES HANDS. Jesus had been delivered into the hands of Gentiles, and now Paul faces the same action. “Like the words of Jesus about himself (Mat 20:19). He was “delivered” into the hands of the Gentiles and it took five years to get out of those hands” [ATR].

21:12 - WHEN WE HEARD. “*When we heard this, both we and the local people begged him not to go up to Jerusalem.*” Upon hearing the prophecy from Agabus, Luke and his companions, along with local believers, begged him not to go to Jerusalem. Paul, the warning notwithstanding, was determined to be there for Pentecost, and to deliver the offering to James and the church. He might have sent it, but if so he would have to send it by those Gentiles who were traveling with him. It was the recognition of these Gentiles by Jews from Ephesus that incited the riot that led to Paul’s imprisonment. Paul was not the only one to ever have to make a decision like that, as Robertson notes:

“Vincent cites the case of Regulus who insisted on returning from Rome to Carthage to certain death and that of Luther on the way to the Diet of Worms. Spalatin begged Luther not to go on. Luther said: “Though devils be as many in Worms as tiles upon the roofs, yet thither will I go.” This dramatic warning of Agabus came on top of that in Tyre (Acts 21:4) and Paul’s own confession in Miletus (Acts 20:23). It is small wonder that Luke and the other messengers together with Philip and his daughters (prophetesses versus prophet?) joined in a chorus of dissuasion to Paul [ATR].

Here is a question: was Agabus trying to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem, or was he simply sharing a prophecy the Lord had given him? It seems that he was well aware of Paul’s determination to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost. In which case, his dramatic revelation was not to dissuade Paul, but to affirm that he was following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of that, Paul was going

with his eyes wide open. He knew what awaited him, but little could he have realized the opportunities he would have to bear a witness to people in authority who may never have heard the Gospel otherwise. Not only did Paul fulfill the Lord's prophecy by proclaiming the Good News to authorities, but Luke's inspired writings have provided the text for countless thousands of sermons. Until Jesus returns, preachers and teachers will be using Luke's account to proclaim the message of salvation.

21:13 - PAUL REPLIED. *“Then Paul replied, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’”* Paul's response is not what one might expect. Rather than fear for his own life, he is concerned for His companions and for the local believers. He said they were breaking his heart. Such was his love for them. And such is the maturity of a man who is not afraid to admit that they were breaking his heart. If he was not afraid of prisons, whips, shipwrecks, and mobs, he is not afraid to let these friends see him weep.

Paul now reveals the character of his commitment and the depth of his love for other believers: “For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” He is following the example of Jesus when He told His disciples what awaited him in Jerusalem. Knowing what He was to face when he arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus was still “determined to journey to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). It was an occasion to teach His disciples when Jesus set his face on going to Jerusalem: “Then after that, He said to the disciples, ‘Let's go to Judea again.’ ‘Rabbi,’ the disciples told Him, ‘just now the Jews tried to stone You, and You're going there again?’” (John 11:7-8). Jesus used that opportunity to teach His disciples, and now Paul has an opportunity to teach these saints. He said, “For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” We see a picture of the depth of Paul's commitment to the Lord here.

21:14 - HE WOULD NOT BE PERSUADED. *“Since he would not be persuaded, we stopped talking and simply said, ‘The Lord's will be done!’”* This is real history Luke is living, and real history he would be inspired to write. This is not a moral lesson but, in the words of Francis Schaeffer, time-space history. When Luke and the others realized they would not be able to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem, they stopped trying to dissuade him and said, “the Lord's will be done.” Robertson notes that this statement (“The will of the Lord be done (*tou kuriou to thelêma ginesthō*)). Present middle imperative of *ginomai*. There is a quaint naivete in this confession by the friends of Paul. Since Paul would not let them have their way, they were willing for the Lord to have his way, acquiescence after failure to have theirs” [ATR].

Conflict over the Gentile Mission

21:15 - TO JERUSALEM. *“After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem.”* This would be Paul's fifth visit to Jerusalem following his conversion, and with this visit he concludes his Third Missionary Journey. “We got ready”, according to Ramsey and others, suggests that they packed their clothes, bedding, and personal effects and loaded them onto horses for the journey.

However, they may have walked, ridden donkeys or horses, or walked and lead packhorses which carried their baggage.

21:16 - DISCIPLES FROM CAESAREA. *“Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us and brought us to Mnason, a Cypriot and an early disciple, with whom we were to stay.”* A significant contingent of disciples from Caesarea accompanied Paul, Luke, and the others “to Mnason.” Such a gesture might have been common in that day.

ILLUSTRATION. I well remember when my father returned from World War II. Our family, like so many others, had been uprooted and separated by the war. I lived with my family and with two different aunts and attended four different schools in three years. When renters moved out of our home on the farm near Sledge, Mississippi I had another move to make, and more adjustments. I had to adjust to another school as I started the fourth grade, but first, I had to learn to live with my mother and brother again. I longed for the day when my father would return from Germany, and one day I looked up and about a quarter of a mile away I saw two men walking toward our house, taking a short cut along a turn-row. I recognized the man in uniform and began running to meet my father. He had taken a bus to a rural bus stop (Craig Oaks) between Clarksdale and Tunica, MS, and since there were no telephones available he began walking the seven or eight miles home. About two and a half miles from home a neighbor saw him, greeted him, and fell in beside him and walked all the way home with him. It was something a good neighbor would do. That neighbor had to walk all the way back home by himself.

By accompanying Paul they could encourage him, as well as learn from him. I doubt that those fellow travelers would ever forget this experience.

BROUGHT US TO MNASON. It was about 65 miles from Caesarea to Jerusalem, a good two day ride by horse. Some think the home of Mnason was at or near the halfway point between Caesarea and Jerusalem and that Paul and his party may have spent the night there. Others believe “Mnason was a resident of Jerusalem. Interestingly Mnason was **from Cyprus**, the island where Barnabas was born” [BKC, bold in the original]. Still others try to reconcile all the points in this statement:

“It is not very likely that they would bring a man with them with whom they were to lodge in Jerusalem; therefore, the text should perhaps be read as Bp. Patrick proposes: There went with us certain of the disciples of Caesarea, bringing us to one Mnason, with whom we were to lodge. This is most likely, as the text will bear this translation. But it is possible that Mnason, formerly of Cyprus, now an inhabitant of Jerusalem, might have been down at Caesarea, met the disciples, and invited them to lodge with him while they were at Jerusalem; and, having transacted his business at Caesarea, might now accompany them to Jerusalem. His being an old disciple may either refer to his having been a very early convert, probably one of those on the day of Pentecost, or to his being now an old man” [CLARKE].

Luke's note that Mnason was "an early disciple" has prompted some to wonder if this man was among the 3000 who were saved on the day of Pentecost. Or, had he been a believer before the crucifixion? He simply does not provide that information.

21:17 - THE BROTHERS WELCOMED US. *"When we reached Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us gladly."* When Paul and his companions arrived in Jerusalem they probably went directly to James, the half-brother of our Lord. News spread by word of mouth very quickly and "the brothers" came to meet them. Their welcome was warm and enthusiastic, quite unlike the official meeting with the elders in Jerusalem. They had been away a long time, during which they had faced many dangers in many places. Faithful believers welcomed them gladly.

Paul was a communicator. In each of his epistles to the church at Corinth he refers to a non-canonical letter that preceded it. It is highly unlikely that he would not have sent letters to these saints in Jerusalem. It is also inconceivable that he would have known of the desperate plight of some of the members if there had been no communication with the church. They probably knew about the offering taken up in Asia, Macedonia, and Greece for the relief of the suffering saints in Jerusalem. They would have received him gladly if only because of the offering, but the reader senses that these friends are true brothers who place spiritual blessings above material blessings, even under these circumstances.

21:18 - THE NEXT DAY. *"The following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present."* There was an informal meeting when Paul and Luke and representatives from churches in Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia met with "the brothers" who were members of the local church (vs. 17). The following day there was a more formal reception.

JAMES. This was James the half-brother of the Lord. James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee, was martyred in A. D. 44. James, the Lord's half-brother, did not believe in Jesus during his earthly ministry. It was only after a visit from the risen Lord that he became a believer. Then, as the apostles moved out in different directions as led by the Holy Spirit, James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. The discovery of an ossuary, a stone burial box, which some claimed dated back to the First Century, bore the inscription: James, son of Joseph, and in another line, "Brother of Jesus." At first, it seemed to be authentic, but in time certain archaeologists announced that it was a forgery, and that the words, brother of Jesus had been added later. Some reminded us that both James and Joseph were common names, and even if they had both been engraved on the box at the same time, that was not proof that the ossuary contained the body of James, the brother of our Lord.

The announcement must have come as a relief to certain groups. The Jews did not have to answer more questions about Jesus. Catholics breathed a collective sigh of relief because they did not have to explain how this would have effected their belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary. Atheists were no doubt relieved, which goes without saying. I saw an interview with Norman Geisler on some TV program after the initial announcement of the discovery of this ossuary and he felt that it was possible that it was genuine. When it comes to apologetics, Geisler ranks with the greatest in the world. It is not surprising that he held our hope for this discovery. However, Geisler's theology was

not adversely effected when it was not authenticated. But think of the Catholics who would have to explain how Jesus could have had half-brothers if the perpetual virginity of Mary was disproved. They claim that Jesus and his brothers and sisters were step-brothers and sisters, or foster brothers and sisters to Jesus.

This rather limited student of the Word is convinced that James was the half-brother of our Lord. We must not forget that Luke, though he was inspired to write everything he wrote, both in the Gospel and in Acts, researched everything he wrote very carefully (1:1ff). James was the “go to” person in Jerusalem and the surrounding area, whether he enjoyed the title pastor or not. He was highly respected, deeply committed to the truth, and devoted to prayer. It has been said that he was known as “Old Camel Knees” because of the calluses on his knees from kneeling on a hard floor to pray.

AND ALL THE ELDERS WERE PRESENT. James is unquestionably the leader here, but the other elders and were there either as his guests, his assistants in this more formal reception. “It is noticeable that the apostles are not mentioned, though both elders and apostles are named at the Conference in chapter 15. It would seem that the apostles are away on preaching tours. The whole church was not called together probably because of the known prejudice against Paul created by the Judaizers: [ATR].

21:19 - HE RELATED. *“After greeting them, he related one by one what God did among the Gentiles through his ministry.”* After the initial greeting, Paul related in detail what God had been doing among the Gentiles through his ministry. These Jewish believers knew him and knew about his work because of previous reports and because of the Jerusalem Conference several years earlier (A. D. 50 or 51. See Acts 15; Galatians 2). In fact, some of them must have been participants in that conference. Also, they may well have had limited knowledge of his work of the missionary journey he had just completed, one that included visits to churches founded on the first trip in Galatia, as well as visits to churches in Macedonia and Greece, which had been established on The Second Missionary Journey. He had spent three years in Ephesus.

21:20 - THEY GLORIFIED GOD. *“When they heard it, they glorified God and said, “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.”* This is refreshing, especially after all we have read about the attacks by Jews who rejected Christ and the Judaizers who hated Paul and persecuted him whenever they had an opportunity. These faithful Jewish Christians glorified God because of what he was doing among the Gentiles.

THOUSANDS OF JEWS. “You see” probably denotes the conclusion Paul would have drawn from his meeting with Jewish believers he had met the previous day. At first this seems like an awesome response. Thousands of Jew now believed in Jesus as the Messiah in Jerusalem and in the surrounding area. However, those believers were still “zealous for the law.” This may well have included many Judaizers who would have turned Christianity into another sect of Judaism. There were “many thousands of Jews” who followed Jesus at the time. Some see this as a reference to the phenomenal growth of the church in Jerusalem, but others believe he is including Jewish converts

throughout the world. If that is the case they may have had in mind Jewish believers who were in Jerusalem for Pentecost at this time.

21:21 - THEY HAD BEEN TOLD. *“But they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, by telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk in our customs.”* Sadly, then as now, many followers of Jesus are influenced by what they have been told, rather than what they have learned for themselves. A number of years ago, I attended a meeting in New Orleans that had been called to try to answer charges made by some against those of us who were a part of the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. I was amazed at some of the charges that were being made by some people. In that meeting they focused on something that had happened in Nashville. After some period of time, a man stood up and stated that he had heard all sorts of reports about what transpired at that meeting, but, he added, “I am the only one here who was there and I am the only one here who knows what happened.” His testimony about what was said at that meeting was very convincing to me. My confidence in that man has only grown through the years and a few years ago it was my privilege to vote to elect that man to a key position of leadership.

THAT YOU TEACH. The elders inform Paul that followers of in Jerusalem had been told that “you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, by telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk in our customs.” These Jewish believers that day in Jerusalem were rejoicing over Paul’s report, but “there was also apprehension about Paul’s reputation among believing **Jews** who were **zealous for the Law**. A patently false report had gone out concerning Paul. It was true **Paul** taught **Gentiles** that it was religiously inconsequential whether they circumcised their sons or not and he did not teach them Jewish customs. However, he never taught **Jews... not to circumcise their** sons or to disregard Jewish **customs**” [BKC, bold included in the original).

I have heard people make charges about the motives of people who were on the opposite side from them in some debate when I had personal knowledge of the individual, and of some of the meetings they discussed. In fact, I have been attacked, thankfully only on a few occasions, in a vitriolic manner over certain issues and motives attributed to me that totally surprised me. No doubt, I have formed opinions about others, based in part on rumor. The Lord’s followers need to be very careful about the issue “they stand for” as well as the people they stand against.

I had read that Dr. Jimmy Draper, after he was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention, had invited key leaders from both the conservative and moderate/liberal side of issues that were openly divisive to a meeting at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. Later, I was attending a convention when the president of one entity made what seemed like an arrogant statement about the meeting. I did not say anything about it, but I continued to have doubts in my mind, so I called Andy and Jan Mercer, who were members of Dr. Draper’s church (Andy is a deacon in that church), and asked them if they would ask him about the meeting. Within a few days, I received what would be the first of many letters and notes from the man I would come to respect very highly. A little later, he and I discussed that meeting and what was said. A number of years later, when he was president of LifeWay Christian Resources and I a member of the board of trustees, we talked about that

misrepresentation a number of times.

The speaker at that convention evidently sought to influence people by taking something said jokingly by someone who had been invited to that meeting and stating it as though it had been an honest evaluation. The statement someone had made went something like this: “If we could harness all the ego at this meeting we could light the whole D/FW airport for a year.” Dr. Draper assured me someone had made the statement, but it was a joke, not someone’s evaluation of Dr. Draper or the purpose of the meeting.

The Judaizers who had hounded Paul’s steps to Syria, and on to the region of Galatia, if not beyond, had probably returned with the reports that disturbed these Christians in Jerusalem. One might cynically wonder if they were so disturbed that they would turn down the money collected for their relief by those Gentiles. That would be most unfair, based on the limited knowledge we have. In the first place, there no reason to assume that these people were not sincere. In the second place, there is no reason to assume that they were less committed than we. In the third place, the ones who believed the report may not have been the intended recipients of the offering. The money was collected for those who needed food, shelter, and clothing. Some of the leaders may not have received any of the money. Some of them may have helped distributed the aid to those who were in need of help.

21:22 - WHAT IS TO BE DONE? *“So what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you’ve come.”* James and the elders clearly do not believe the false rumors, but they knew that Paul’s presence in Jerusalem would soon be known, both by the Judaizers and by sincere, but misled believers. They also knew that you cannot dismiss “many thousands of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.” Either the leaders of the circumcision party wanted to call an assembly to confront Paul, or James and the elders anticipated such a meeting. These people would hear that Paul had come and would want to confront him with the rumors they had been taught. This would have been a tumultuous meeting because

“their minds were exceedingly agitated that one of their own countrymen had, as they understood, been advising apostasy from the religion of their fathers; because it had been extensively done in many parts of the world, and with great success; and because Paul, having, as they believed, himself apostatized from the national religion, had become very conspicuous, and his very presence in Jerusalem, as in other places, would be likely to excite a tumult. It was, therefore, the part of friendship to him, and to the cause, to devise some proper place to prevent, if possible, the anticipated excitement” [BARNES].

Most of those who were concerned were sincere, even if they were sincerely wrong. Those who taught them this lie, however, are serving Satan’s purpose rather than the Lord’s. Any pastor who has been in the ministry very long can testify to the fact that the devil is not afraid to go to church, and he loves business meetings.

ILLUSTRATION. When I was a young pastor, a recent seminary graduate, I encountered a divisive element, and almost became a victim of one who thought he was serving the Lord by attacking me.

When I enrolled at Mississippi College I began to hear terminology I had not heard growing up in in the Green River Baptist Mission seven miles west of Sledge, Mississippi. Some students were debating Eschatological, defending various millennial positions. Until that time, I had not known people who would draw battle lines over those positions and make them a test of fellowship. As I look back, I cannot recall one professor in college or seminary who held the pre-millennial position. I might add that I attended one of the most highly acclaimed Baptist Colleges in the country, as well as one of the strongest seminaries in the world. In other words, these schools were highly respected.

I listened to the debates but was not satisfied with my understanding of the subject. I remembered the answer Academic Dean and Bible Professor Dr. Howard Spell gave a student who asked him what his position was. Yes, we had a Bible Department, not a “religion department”! The student asked, “Dr. Spell, are you a pre-millennialist, a post-millennialist, or an a-millennialist? Dr. Spell said, “I am a pro-millennialist. Any way the Lord works it out I am for it.” I liked that statement, but never gave up my search for the right answer. I was often disappointed in the attitude of some toward those who did not agree with them. I could not understand why someone would create a **rupture** in the church over the **rapture** of the church!

Dr. Leo Eddleman told me that when he was president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, if anyone had used the word “pre-millennial”, “they” (faculty members) would have made you feel like you needed to go out behind the chapel and wash your mouth out with soap. I read, prayed, and talked with people I respected for a long time before I became convinced that I needed to go beyond Dr. Spell’s “pro-millennial” position. I was not satisfied with my position, but I was determined that my position would come from the Lord, that I would not subscribe to a position simply because pastors I respected held that position. I listened to men like Dr. Eddleman, R. G. Lee, and W. A. Criswell. I spent some time talking with men like Dr. Wayne Ward of Southern Seminary, but I was determined to be sure my position was scriptural.

This may seem strange to a pastor today who has sat under pre-millennialists all the through college and seminary, as well as growing up under a pastor who held that position. A number of years ago, I read in the Mississippi Baptist Record that Dr. E. R. Pinson, who had taught me several courses in Bible at Mississippi College, has celebrated his ninety-second birthday. I called him to wish him a happy birthday and to visit. Dr. Pinson, before we finished our conversation, said, “Johnny, I am teaching the Book of Revelation to a Sunday School class, and last Sunday, for the first time in my life, I stood before a class and said, ‘I am a pre-millennialist.’” I was impressed that a 92 year old man would change his mind about anything! I agreed with Dr. Pinson and thank the Lord it didn’t take me that long for the Lord to lead me to that position.

The more I studied the New Testament, the more I became convinced that the pre-millennial position is scriptural, even though at the time the a-millennial position was far more popular. I accepted a new church and did what a lot of pastors at the time did. I preached in the first revival after my call to that church. I preached from the Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia, announcing that I was going to present a brief background study, do an overview of each letter, and then focus on the commendations, condemnations, and corrections announced by Jesus in each letter, and then apply that message to the local church. A deacon called a friend who was a pastor in Texas and asked him

to come hear me. The deacon's friend gave me a loud AMEN every time I opened my mouth. I could clear my throat and he would shout, "AMEN!" Then he went to the deacon's home and, according to the deacon's wife, "cut me to pieces" to them. She didn't understand what was going on, or why he was so passionate. He was a strict dispensationalist and condemned anyone who did not agree with him.

The deacon began attacking me to other members, obviously wanting to see them get rid of me. A man and his wife went to see the deacon and talked with him. Then a young lady in her mid-twenties went to see him, and like her more mature friends, said, "I believe the Lord led Brother Sanders to be our pastor and I am going to support him." The man left, only to return two years later and announce that he had been forced to change his mind about the Middle East because, "some of those countries didn't do what I expected him to do." In time he would leave again and this join some charismatic church.

A number of years later, I would see this man in another town and visit with him. I told him my mother had recently had surgery for a brain tumor, and his response was, "If you have faith you don't have to be sick." My mother had more faith than almost anyone I had ever known. He might as well have said, "If Paul had had faith he wouldn't have been persecuted." A few years later, I learned that this deacon had cancer and it was terminal.

There was one thing that really disturbed me when that debate was raging, and would continue to rage until that debate gave way to the Battle for the Bible. In either battle there were those who would viciously attack those who did not agree with them. I was often disappointed when someone would break the Second Great Commandment in defense of a theological position. I saw the same attitude expressed in the Battle for the Bible. There were people who seemed ready to destroy anyone who disagreed with them. Imagine the folly of violating the Bible in defense of the Bible!

21:23 - THEREFORE. *"Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have obligated themselves with a vow."* James knew these people, and he and the elders had a possible solution. Luke does not tell us what the vow was, and it may well have seemed strange to him. The construction shows that these four men had taken the vow voluntarily. It would be interesting to know if James and these elders had advance notice that Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, or if they had come up with a solution since he arrive there. In either case, we can see the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the proposal.

21:24 - PURIFY YOURSELF. *"Take these men, purify yourself along with them, and pay for them to get their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that what they were told about you amounts to nothing, but that you yourself are also careful about observing the law."* This was "Apparently a temporary Nazarite vow like that in Num 6:1-21 and its completion was marked by several offerings in the temple, the shaving of the head (Num 6:13-15). Either Paul or Aquila had such a vow on leaving Cenchreae (Acts 18:18). 'It was considered a work of piety to relieve needy Jews from the expenses connected with this vow, as Paul does here' (Page)" [ATR].

The four men who had taken the vow may have been too poor pay the fees associated

with them. “Paul was asked to underwrite the expense of their sacrifices and thereby display his sympathy with the zealots of the Law” [BKC]. Such vows are strange to modern believers, and in deed to the Western mind. The comments in The Bible Knowledge Commentary may help us to understand this a little better: “The details of this vow are unknown; it can only be surmised exactly what Paul was to do” [BKC]. It is commonly believed that these four men had made a Nazarite vow and at “the conclusion of their vow some costly sacrifices were required of each man (cf. Num. 6:13-17). These men evidently were too poor to pay for them. Paul was asked to underwrite the expense of their sacrifices and thereby display his sympathy with the zealots of the Law” [BKC]. That writer goes on to ask if Paul was wrong in entering into this arrangement, which would identify him with the Law. He answers his own question:

“For several reasons it may be said he was not: (1) Paul himself had previously taken a Nazirite vow (Acts 18:18). (2) Later he unashamedly referred to this incident before Felix (24:17-18). (3) This action on Paul’s part only confirmed one of the principles of his ministry which was to become like a Jew to win the Jews, and to become like one under the Law to win those under it (1 Cor. 9:20). (4) One of Paul’s goals for the Jerusalem trip, along with relief of the poor, was the unifying of Jews and Gentiles. (5) Paul was not denying the finished work of Christ by offering animal sacrifices. The epistles Paul had already written by this time (Gal., 1 and 2 Thes., 1 and 2 Cor., Rom.) make it clear that such a denial was incomprehensible. He must have looked on these sacrifices as memorials. After all, this will be the significance of millennial sacrifices (Ezek. 43:18-46:24; Mal. 1:11; 3:3-4). (6) Paul later asserted he did not violate his own conscience (Acts 23:1) [BKC].

21:25 - THE GENTILES WHO BELIEVED. “*With regard to the Gentiles who have believed, we have written a letter containing our decision that they should keep themselves from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled, and from sexual immorality.*” Paul was not guilty of any heresy, regardless of the claims by the Judaizers. He had preached the same Gospel to them that he preached to Jews. The only difference was that he did not try to convert Gentiles to Judaism.

WE HAVE WRITTEN A LETTER. The letter to which James refers is the epistle he wrote at the conclusion of the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15. See also, Gal. 2). In fact, James uses the same word for that letter. It was not a ruling, not a mandate, and not an order. Imposition of a hierarchy came later and it came from man, not from God. The letter James had written at the conclusion of the Jerusalem Conference was what I would call an anointed opinion, or simply an anointed correspondence, not an order handed down by one in authority. What we have is

“an explanation by James that he does not refer to the Gentile Christians whose freedom from the Mosaic ceremonial law was guaranteed at the Jerusalem Conference. James himself presided at that Conference and offered the resolution that was unanimously adopted. James stands by that agreement and repeats the main items (four: anything sacrificed to idols, blood, anything strangled, fornication, for discussion see Acts 15:1ff.) from which they are to keep themselves (direct middle

phulassesthai of phulassô, indirect command after krinantes with accusative, autous, of general reference). James has thus again cleared the air about the Gentiles who have believed (pepisteukotôn, perfect active participle genitive plural of pisteuô). He asks that Paul will stand by the right of Jewish Christians to keep on observing the Mosaic law. He has put the case squarely and fairly" [ATR].

Riot in the Temple Complex

21:26 - PAUL TOOK THE MEN. *"Then the next day, Paul took the men, having purified himself along with them, and entered the temple, announcing the completion of the purification days when the offering for each of them would be made."* Paul, recognizing the wisdom in James' advice, took immediate action. The next day he took these men, and having purified himself, entered the temple complex to announce that he was there to complete the requirements of the vow. The offering consisted of two pigeons and one lamb for each man (Num. 6:9-12). This was a public declaration that he observed the Law. I suppose it is natural that someone would ask if Paul should have participated in this ceremony, or more to the point, should he have continued to worship according to the Law when he preached everywhere that we are saved by grace through faith. If grace frees us from the demands of the Law, should we continue to observe the ceremonies associated with the Law? One writer considers this question:

"Those who defend Paul's actions say that he did all this to conciliate the Jerusalem church and thereby promote unity. Furthermore, Paul had earlier performed a Nazarite vow (18:18) but had no qualms about being a Jew for the sake of the Jews (1 Cor. 9:20, 21); he had Timothy circumcised (16:3) when it was expedient to do so for the sake of the ministry to the Jews. Perhaps Paul was above it all, living in his freedom to perform the law or not perform it (see Gal. 6:14, 15). Or perhaps Paul succumbed to the pressure of the Jerusalem elders and thereby compromised his stand. Whatever the case, the disruption that soon followed prevented Paul from carrying out the purification rite to the end. The offerings were never made. We cannot overlook God's hand in this intervention" [NCWB].

My response is that I am not sure this was God's intervention. Paul had wanted to be in Jerusalem for Passover, but since he missed that, it was important to him to be there for Pentecost. He was much closer to the situation than we are today, and surely he was led by the Holy Spirit as much as we are today. As to the intervention, the one who instigated the attack on Paul was the devil. The One who delivered him and used him so powerfully over the next few years was the Lord. Perhaps instead of arguing about whether Paul should have participated in this ceremony, we should recognize the truth of the saying, the providence of God will not lead you where the grace of God will not sustain you, or as the motto says, "If He leads you to it, He will lead you through it."

There is one other point we might remember: This ceremony, and the outcome of the visit to the

Temple settled Paul's controversy with the Judaizers. They would have no influence over what happened next.

21:27 - AS THE SEVEN DAYS. *“As the seven days were about to end, the Jews from the province of Asia saw him in the temple complex, stirred up the whole crowd, and seized him...”* Seven days seem to have been associated with the fulfillment of the vow. It is possible that the priests at the temple had determined the number of days required for this vow. However, “There may be an allusion to the Pentecostal week for which Paul had desired to be present (Acts 20:16). There is no necessary connection with the vow in Acts 18:15. In Acts 24:17 Paul makes a general reference to his purpose in coming to Jerusalem to bring alms and offerings (prosphoras, sacrifices)” [ATR]. The number seven is often associated with Paul, but I would not read too much into that. For example, he had spent seven days in Troas (Acts 20:6), and again in Tyre (Acts 21:4). He may well have planned to spend only seven days in Jerusalem for Pentecost, but there is no way we can know that. It was on the last of the seven days when Paul was completing his offerings associated with the vow for himself and his four friends when trouble came that would make him a prisoner for the next five years.

THE JEWS FROM THE PROVINCE OF ASIA. Paul was having no trouble from the Jews in Jerusalem but when Jews from “the province of Asia saw him in the temple complex,” they stirred up the whole crowd against him. These Jews were probably from Ephesus (see 21:29). He was known to the Jews there, where he had begun by speaking in their synagogue before being forced out by them (see 19:9; 20:19). They recognized Paul in the temple complex and immediately began shouting that he had defiled the temple.

SEIZED HIM. Some seem to think Paul was arrested in Jerusalem by the Roman officials there. In reality, he was rescued from the mob and then placed in custody.

21:28 - MEN OF ISRAEL. *“...(s)houting, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place. What’s more, he also brought Greeks into the temple and has profaned this holy place.”* They knew exactly what it would take to instigate a riot. When they saw Paul they began shouting, the favorite approach of radical religious fanatics everywhere. A Christian teacher in Africa opened a student's backpack and a copy of the Quran fell to the floor. The student began shouting that she had violated the Quran, and according to reports, they beat the teacher to death. In November, 2007, a British lady who was teaching in the Sudan, permitted seven year old children to adopt a class teddy bear. The children took turns taking the teddy bear home with them. They wanted to name it, and one child suggested his own name, Mohammed. When word got out that the teacher had named a teddy bear Mohammed, the teacher was arrested, tried, and sentenced to forty lashes and fifteen days in jail. Muslims outside the jail shouted demands for her death. Then on Dec. 3, 2007, the president of Sudan pardoned her at the request of Muslim leaders from England. She returned to England with them.

Am I comparing Judaism to Islam? No. Definitely not, but a mob is a crowd of people out of control, even though it seems obvious that many Islamic riots in recent years have been orchestrated

by certain clerics.

THIS IS THE MAN. These Jews from Asia had hated him when they heard him speak in Ephesus; they hated him even more when many of the Jews became followers of Jesus the Messiah. Their hatred must have grown as fellow Jews worshiped with Gentiles. So, they accuse him of teaching “everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place” (the temple).

GREEKS. “What’s more,” they added, “he also brought Greeks into the temple and has profaned this holy place.” This is the final straw with these people. These Asian Jews now accomplish what they were unable to pull off in Ephesus when they accused him of bringing Greeks into the temple.

PROFANED THIS HOLY PLACE. By accusing Paul of profaning “this holy place”, they instigated a mob action which profaned the holy temple. To them, what he had taught (*didaskon*) was bad enough, but his deed was worse. They claim that he had brought Gentiles into the temple. He had every right to bring Gentiles into the court of the Gentiles, but these Jews accuse him of taking Greeks beyond this court into the court of Israel. You talk about staying in your place! According to reports, there was an inscription on the wall dividing the court of Israel from the court of the Gentiles which announced that any Gentile who crossed over into the court of Israel would be stoned to death. Robertson explains that the claim that he had “profaned this holy place”. The Greek (*kekoinôken ton hagion topon touton*) is

“Present perfect active of *koinoô*, to make common (see on Acts 10:14). Note vivid change of tense, the defilement lasts (state of completion). All this is the substance of the call of these shrewd conspirators from Ephesus, Jews (not Jewish Christians, not even Judaizers) who hated him for his work there and who probably “spoke evil of the Way before the multitude” there so that Paul had to separate the disciples from the synagogue and go to the School of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). These enemies of Paul had now raised the cry of ‘fire’ and vanish from the scene completely (Acts 24:19). This charge was absolutely false as we shall see, made out of inferences of hate and suspicion” [ATR].

The more we read of the persecution by Christians by Jews in the First Century the more one wonders at the constant charge of anti-Semitism by Jews against Christians. Anti-Semitism is wrong, but so is hatred of any other race, and that includes the attitude of many Jews toward Christians.

21:29 - THEY HAD SEEN. “*For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple complex.*” These Asian Jews had seen Paul with “Trophimus the Ephesian”, whom they apparently recognized as a Greek citizen of their hometown. They did not see Paul take him into the temple complex, but they assumed that he had done so. Mob thinking is not rational and it often does not need any more than a supposition.

21:30 - THE WHOLE CITY. “*The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together.*”

They seized Paul, dragged him out of the temple complex, and at once the gates were shut.” News fo these charges spread like wildfire throughout the city and the people rushed together with righteous indignation, risking the same wrath of Rome, which the Sanhedrin had sought to prevent when they condemned Jesus.

THEY SEIZED PAUL. Where is their fear of Rome now? Is it possible that this was the one time, and the one place where their hatred overrode fear of Roman authorities? Their religious zeal overpowered their fear of the consequences.

DRAGGED HIM OUT OF THE TEMPLE COMPLEX. In spite of their zeal for the temple, their hatred for anyone who would bring a Gentile into the temple complex did not completely override their respect for the temple.

THE GATES WERE SHUT. As soon as they dragged Paul outside the gates of the temple complex the Levitical guard closed the gates to the inner court to prevent further desecration. They wanted to kill Paul, but not in the temple complex. This seems to distinguish this Jewish mob from modern Islamic riots, or controlled acts in which someone commits murder in a mosque (just so long as it is someone else’s mosque?).

21:31 - TRYING TO KILL HIM. *“As they were trying to kill him, word went up to the commander of the regiment that all Jerusalem was in chaos.”* There is no question as to their intended action. They were not bluffing.

WORD WENT UP. Rome was a vast empire, but its army was not so diluted that they did not keep their finger on the pulse of every gathering. As soon as the riot broke out, a report was taken immediately to the Roman commander. “Adjoining the temple area to the northwest was the Fortress of Antonia with two flights of steps leading into the outer court of the temple” [BKC]. According to the report, “all Jerusalem was in chaos”. Such a riot could have serious consequences for the commander, who at the time was Claudius Lysias. A commander” (*chiliarchos*), was an officer over a thousand soldiers (25:23).

REGIMENT. Troops were always stationed there and they were reinforced during Jewish feast days. “They were part of the Roman Tenth Legion” [BKC]. These troops were there to defend Rome and they were trained in riot control. They would not be using pepper spray, water guns, or rubber bullets. If the crowd did not yield to them they would slaughter them as soon as they reached them.

21:32 - SOLDIERS AND CENTURIONS. *“Taking along soldiers and centurions, he immediately ran down to them. Seeing the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.”* Immediately, upon receiving the report, Claudius Lysias, took his soldiers and their officers and rushed down the stairs to confront the mob. “The ‘officers’ (*hekatontarchas*, lit., ‘rulers of hundreds’ or centurions) indicates at least 200 soldiers were involved since the noun is plural” [BKC].

21:32 - SEEING THE COMMANDER. *“Taking along soldiers and centurions, he immediately ran down to them. Seeing the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.”*

Roman soldiers in their military dress, carrying swords, shields, and spears were a common sight in Jerusalem at the time. They were used to seeing a few soldiers on duty, but to see a large number rushing toward them must have been disconcerting. Since “centurions” is plural there had to have been two hundred, but there may well have been several hundred troops rushing toward this crowd.

They were being charged by a Roman army! “Some ten years before in a riot at the passover the Roman guard marched down and in the panic several hundred were trampled to death” [ATR]. These people could not have forgotten that, so when they saw the troops “they stopped beating Paul”. This affirms their intention, because they would have beaten him to death if given just a little more time.

21:33 - TOOK HIM INTO CUSTODY. *“Then the commander came up, took him into custody, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He asked who he was and what he had done.”* I have often said that Claudius Lysias rescued Paul from the mob, which of course is true, but from the HCSB clearly states that he was taken “into custody”. This was no rescue mission, but it saved Paul’s life. They rescued him and then placed him under arrest. He “ordered him bound with two chains” from which we may infer that he was chained between two soldiers.

ASKED WHAT HE HAD DONE. Claudius Lysias must have assumed that Paul was a notorious criminal. On the other hand, he had to settle the crowd down before he could get any solid information about him.

21:34 - SOME IN THE MOB. *“Some in the mob were shouting one thing and some another. Since he was not able to get reliable information because of the uproar, he ordered him to be taken into the barracks.”* The barracks were located in the Fortress of Antonia, which had been “built by Herod on a high rock at the northwest corner of the temple area and named after Mark Antony” [NCWB].

This was still a mob, even though they are being held back by the Roman troops. In response to the question by the commander, some began shouting one charge and some another. There was no way to get good information under those circumstances, so he ordered the troops to take Paul into the barracks where he might question him under more controlled circumstances.

21:35 - TO THE STEPS. *“When Paul got to the steps, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the mob’s violence...”* Some commentaries omit any reference to these steps, because they obviously led to the barracks. Barnes, however, shares some information for his readers:

“The stairs which led from the temple to the tower of Antonia. Josephus says, (Jewish Wars, b. v. chap. 5, 8,) that the tower of Antonia ‘was situated at the corner of two cloisters of the court of the temple--of that on the west, and of that on the

north; it was erected on a rock of fifty cubits [seventy-five feet] in height, and was on a great precipice. On the corner where it joined to the two cloisters of the temple, it had passages down to them both, through which the guards went several ways among the cloisters with their arms on the Jewish festivals,' etc. It was on these stairs, as the soldiers were returning, that the tumult was so great, or the crowd so dense, that they were obliged to bear him along to rescue him from their violence" [BARNES].

The beating he had taken had left Paul weak, and when they reached these steep steps, the soldiers had to carry him up the steps.

21:36 - THE MASSES. "...(*F*)or the mass of people were following and yelling, 'Kill him!'" The Pharisees and Sadducees did not want Jesus punished, they wanted him dead, but their actions were organized and orchestrated. This mob wants Paul dead. They are not concerned for justice or a fair hearing, or even the appearance of legality. They want him dead. This crowd was as determined to see Paul put to death as a modern Muslim shouting against an American or a Jew. However, since I have drawn some parallels, let me stress that there is a vast difference between the Jew and the Muslims in the Middle East today. The Jews just want to survive, they do not want to kill all Muslims. The more radical Muslims have stated their purpose very clearly: they want to see every Jew killed and driven into the sea! They want Israel destroyed because the existence of an Israeli state makes a lie of Islam. One report illustrates the difference between the Israelis and the radical Palestinians today. Muslims often desecrate Jewish cemeteries, but Jews do not desecrate Muslim cemeteries. In addition, there are many reports of Muslims firing rockets at Israel from a hospital or school, thus forcing Israel to "kill innocent women and children". There are no such reports of Israelis doing anything like that.

Paul's Speaks to the Mob

21:37 - ALLOW ME TO SAY SOMETHING. "*As he was about to be brought into the barracks, Paul said to the commander, "Am I allowed to say something to you?" He replied, "Do you know Greek?"*" Is this not reminiscent of the mob scene in Ephesus when Paul wanted to speak to the people (19:30). He was not only a man of great faith and a man of great courage, he was also a slave of Jesus Christ, commissioned to proclaim the Gospel to Jews, Gentiles, and to authorities. He sees this as an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

DO YOU SPEAK GREEK? Was he ever in for a surprise, and the surprise would not end here. This was neither a social question or an interrogation. The commander apparently thought he had taken some ignorant Jewish fanatic into custody, only to be addressed fluently in the language of his own culture.

AM I ALLOWED? Paul asked to say something to the commander, but we will see that his real desire is to address the Jews who had tried to kill him (vs. 40).

21:38 - THE EGYPTIAN. *“Aren’t you the Egyptian who raised a rebellion some time ago and led 4,000 Assassins into the desert?”* Use of the definite article assumes that Paul was indeed the notorious Egyptian who had led in a revolt. Why the commander would have assumed such a thing Luke does not say, but he may not have understood some of the things the mob was shouting against Paul. Bible students know that Josephus wrote about this Egyptian who, “Posing as a prophet, got together 30,000 men and led them to the Mount of Olives, with intent to overpower the Roman garrison and seize Jerusalem, but that Felix forestalled him by attacking him, when the Egyptian ran away and the greater part of his followers were destroyed or taken prisoners” [WALKER: 472]. It might be added here that Josephus may have exaggerated the number involved in this “rebellion”.

ASSASSINS. In other words, the commander calls them “cutthroats”. Eddleman adds that “Josephus numbered the mob at 30,000 but Lysias here could be referring only to those who were armed, according to strong tradition, (with some) kind of short swords. Apparently, the official knew the Egyptian well enough to make him think the latter was unable to speak Greek” [HLE: 311]. Lysias saw immediately that Paul was not the infamous Egyptian. Other accounts tell us that 400 were killed and 200 captured. Walker noted that “The ‘Sicarii’ were a set of fanatics who arose in Judea during the procuratorship of Felix. They were so called because they carried under their garments a short sword or dagger (sicca), with which they stabbed their political opponents as they mingled with the crowds at the festivals” [WALKER: 472].

21:39 - PAUL SAID. *“Paul said, “I am a Jewish man from Tarsus of Cilicia, a citizen of an important city. Now I ask you, let me speak to the people.”* The missionary to the Gentiles had been through trials before and he was not intimidated by this powerful Roman official. He informs the commander that he is “a Jew from Tarsus of Cilicia, a citizen of an important city.” In other words, as a Hellenistic Jew, he had a right to be in the temple complex.

LET ME SPEAK. Apparently his answer, spoken in flawless Greek, was sufficient to convince the commander, so he asks permission to speak to the people. The question I have is what did Paul hope to accomplish by speaking to this mob? Did he think he could vindicate himself, or did he think he could influence the crowd to change their mind about him? Or, had he not listen closely to James and the elders who tried to warn him about what to expect from the non-believing Jews in Jerusalem? The answer to that question is simple. He had listened, and he was following their advice when he was assaulted by the mob. Paul may well have believed he could persuade some of these people to look to Jesus of Nazareth as the long awaited Messiah. He may also have thought he could defuse the situation.

21:40 - PERMISSION. *“After he had given permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand to the people. When there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language...”* Claudius Lysias may also have thought Paul could say something that would calm down this crowd. Paul stood on the very steps up which soldiers had helped carry him when he was too weak to climb them, and motioned with his hands until “there was a great hush, and then he began to speak to them in the Hebrew language. “The people were amazed that the commander had given Paul permission to talk and that he himself was willing to listen to

Paul's defense" [NCWB]. It is possible that many of those people in that crowd were surprised to hear him speak fluently in Hebrew.

THE HEBREW LANGUAGE. Actually Paul spoke in "the Aramaic, the vernacular of the Jews in Palestine since the captivity" [NCWB].

CHAPTER 22

22:1 - BROTHERS AND FATHERS. *"Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense before you."* This is the way a Jewish man addressed a Jewish audience in that day. Women might listen, but did not participate in such matters. It is highly unlikely that any women were a part of the mob that was trying to kill Paul. One writer states that "The vocatives **Brothers and fathers** with which Paul began his speech are those Stephen used (7:2). Stephen's speech and martyrdom had a lasting impression on Paul! (cf. 8:1)" [BKC, bold in the original]. While I agree that Paul would never forget Stephen's speech, I am convinced that he would have begun his address to this Jewish crowds with those words if he had not heard Stephen. With these words he identifies with the Jewish people and shows respects for their elders.

DEFENSE. Even as a very young boy, I was addicted to boxing. I would sit up every Friday night by myself and listen to the Friday Night Fights, waiting anxiously for the voice of the announcer, Don Dunphy! I read everything I could find on boxing, and I loved putting the gloves on with my younger brothers or friends. Boxing is the manly art of self defense. I liked that part, and I even learned a little about defense; it was getting hit that I didn't like! One of the early lessons I learned was that the best offense is a good defense. Paul, under these circumstances, sought to proclaim the Gospel in a positive light: that is apologetics, not apologizing. In a recent publication from Luther Rice University, there was an announcement that Norman Geisler, one of the leading Christian apologists in the world, would be teaching something at the school. Faculty and students have something to look forward to with reasonable expectations of a blessing. Without a doubt, Paul was the greatest Christian apologist in history. Little did these people realize what an opportunity the Lord God of their father Abraham was giving them. They heard the truth. How would them respond?

22:2 - WHEN THEY HEARD. *"When they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even quieter."* This angry mob was silenced when Paul addressed them in the Hebrew language. They were not convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, but they were amazed that Paul addressed them in their own language. Since he had been linked with Gentiles by Jews of Asia, these people were amazed to hear him speak in the Hebrew, or Aramaic (the vernacular). These Jews would have been impressed that a Jew of the Dispora spoke both Greek and Aramaic. Robertson adds:

"Knowing notes the fondness of Luke for words of silence (*sigê, sigâô, hêsuchazô*)

as in Luke 14:4; Luke 15:26; Acts 11:18; Acts 12:17; Acts 15:12; Acts 21:14, 40. It is a vivid picture of the sudden hush that swept over the vast mob under the spell of the Aramaic. They would have understood Paul's Koin, Greek, but they much preferred the Aramaic. It was a masterstroke" [ATR]

There are many Christians in America, and certainly in Europe, who have a genuine burden for Israel, many of whom take the Abrahamic Covenant more seriously than a secular Jew. When I completed my notes on Chapter 21 in this study I E-mailed it to a number of friends. One, whose judgment and evaluation I respect, is Dr. William R. Cooper, Middlesex, England. Dr. Cooper sent the following response, which speaks volumes about how the Jews in Israel today feel about Jesus:

"This is amazing stuff, Johnny. Thank you. It was only recently that I realised something of the full force of Jewish hatred for Christians, and hence for our Lord. **On Israel National Radio - which I listen to avidly every evening just to watch how things are unfolding over there - they refer to our Lord as the "'J' guy" on the pretense that they are forbidden by Torah from mentioning the names of foreign gods.** And on one programme called The Struggle, the speakers were saying how **they'd rather see the sodomites parading in Jerusalem than see Christians there.** Boy, I tell you, when they look upon Him whom they have pierced..... But again, when these speakers justify such hatred by recalling how badly 'Christians' have treated them over the centuries, they refer always to the Catholic pogroms and Inquisitions, and confuse these with genuine Bible-believing Christians. That makes me mad - on both counts! They are, however, careful to accept financial and political support from the powerful Christian Zionist movement. Amazing. And yet Paul (erstwhile Saul) was the very worst of the bunch when it came to hating Christians, so to read of his astounding conversion - and the power of our Lord to bring about that conversion - really does blow your socks off. We have a great and wonderful Redeemer!!! Thank you for this scholarly study, my friend. It is now a most valuable addition to my Johnny Sanders Library! (Bold added by this writer)

Bill.

Dr. Cooper, blessed with a practical gift for learning and using many of the world's languages, is the man the Lord has singled out to give us a modern "translation" of the 1388 Wycliffite New Testament and the 1526 Tyndale New Testament (he is working on the 1520 Scot (Nisbitt) New Testament at this time.

22:3 - I AM A JEWISH MAN. *"He continued, "I am a Jewish man, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and educated according to the strict view of our patriarchal law. Being zealous for God, just as all of you are today..."* His first statement is emphatic: I myself am a Jewish man! This was the natural follow up to the address, "Brothers and fathers" (22:1). Clarke though dated, but he is still relevant: "He had probably been traduced by the

Jews of Asia as a mere Gentile, distinguished only by his virulence against the Jewish religion; which virulence proceeded from his malice and ignorance” [CLARKE]. He is saying, “I am no alien; I have every right to be in the temple complex!” This statement seems to have had a sobering effect on some of the people there. In a blind rage they had attacked him, but now they are listening.

BORN IN TARSUS. He was a Hellenistic Jew, but he will tell them that his Jewish upbringing was as strict as that of any Grecian Jew anywhere.

AT THE FEET OF GAMALIEL. Young Saul of Tarsus had been trained in the synagogue in his hometown, but he had gone to Jerusalem, possibly as young as 13 or 14, to continue his education. He was “brought up in this city”, meaning that he had been educated there (7:20-21). We will learn a little later that he has a sister in Jerusalem, so he may have lived with family members. He had moved to Jerusalem as a youth in order to study at the feet of Gamaliel.

“The rabbis usually sat on a raised seat with the pupils in a circle around either on lower seats or on the ground. Paul was thus nourished in Pharisaic Judaism as interpreted by Gamaliel, one of the lights of Judaism. For remarks on Gamaliel see chapter Acts 5:34. He was one of the seven Rabbis to whom the Jews gave the highest title Rabban (our Rabbi). Rabbi (my teacher) was next, the lowest being Rab (teacher). ‘As Aquinas among the schoolmen was called Doctor Angelicus, and Bonaventura Doctor Seraphicus, so Gamaliel was called the Beauty of the Law’ (Conybeare and Howson)” [ATR].

OUR PATRIARCHAL LAW. Paul is saying all the right things in addressing this particular crowd: he had been “educated according to the strict view of our patriarchal law,” denoting the minute details of the law. He identifies with them, and subscribes to the theology of the most strict among them by announcing that he had been “educated according to the strict view of our patriarchal law. Being zealous for God, just as all of you are today.” “Paul’s previous zeal against the early Christians is mirrored in this angry crowd” [NCWB]. It is clear where Paul is going with this: “He had been thoroughly committed to **the Law** and to stamping out Christianity. On the **Way**, see comments on 9:2 (cf. 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14). His determination was so deep that only a radically supernatural transformation could change his viewpoint” [BKC]. For more on his conversion experience, see 22:6-9 (and 9:1-6). The point he was making was that he had been nourished in pharisaic Judaism at the feet of the famed Gamaliel. He had written to the church at Corinth that he had surpassed all his peers in his studies.

22:4 - I PERSECUTED THIS WAY. “*I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women in jail...*” Some of those present would have been aware of the zeal (shall we say, fanaticism) with which young Saul of Tarsus had persecuted “this Way”, which was how non-believing Jews in Jerusalem referred to the followers of Christ. Again, he is identifying with this very quiet crowd, which had only moments before been a raging mob intent on murdering him. He also avoids the name Christ (and the word Christian) and uses the word by which believers were known to strict Jews in Jerusalem.

BOTH MEN AND WOMEN. Some of the people there would have remembered the fanaticism with which Paul persecuted the church. He would never forget the zeal with which he had tried to destroy movement known as “the Way”. He had not stopped with men, but had bound and imprisoned both men and women, a fact that he could never seem to get completely out of his mind. Paul felt ashamed of this fact and it was undoubtedly in his mind when he pictured his former state as “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious (1Ti 1:13), the first of sinners” (1Ti 1:15). But it showed the lengths to which Paul went in his zeal for Judaism” [ATR].

22:5 - THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE WHOLE COUNCIL. “(A)s both the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. Having received letters from them to the brothers, I was traveling to Damascus to bring those who were prisoners there to be punished in Jerusalem.” Paul speaks (using the present active indicative) as if those who knew his work were still living, even though it had been more than twenty years since he had persecuted followers of Jesus. Ananias, rather than Caiphas, is now the high priest (Acts 23:2), but Caiphas may have still been alive. Not only could the high priest have testified about Paul’s zeal for the Law, “the whole council of elders , the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5), knew about the persecution led by a young Pharisee named Saul.

Robertson suggests that “Paul was probably then a member (Acts 26:10)” [ATR], but I would question that. Since Paul was unmarried he would not have been qualified, and since he was very young at the time he would not likely have been considered.

LETTERS. Paul had asked for and received letters from the Sanhedrin and the high priest authorizing him to go to Damascus and arrest believers and take them bound back to Jerusalem to be punished. Older members of the Sanhedrin may have remembered letters written to the brothers at Damascus, authorizing him to take the persecution of believers to that city, as permitted by Roman law. Paul still refers to those Jews as his “brothers” (as in Rom 9:3). For one thing, this is good psychologically, and for another, there is no bitterness in his heart toward those who reject the Gospel which he preaches.

Paul Gives His Testimony

22:6 - AS I WAS TRAVELING. “As I was traveling and near Damascus, about noon an intense light from heaven suddenly flashed around me.” Luke records this as history in chapter 9, but Paul here is simply giving his testimony, as he will again in chapter 26. Almost anything he might have said that would have identified him with “the Way” would have set these people off again. Anything he might have said that would have favored one Jewish sect over another one would have met with a similar, though less violent response. What do you do under these circumstances? You give your personal testimony.

Paul and his companions were expanding the persecution of “the Way” to Damascus, Roman having

granted the high priest and the Sanhedrin authority to deal with religious matters in other countries. As he was nearing Damascus, “about noon an intense light from heaven suddenly flashed around me.” Though it had been over twenty years, that light that had blinded Paul as he neared Damascus was still very clear to him.

ABOUT NOON. See Acts 26:13. “This circumstance is omitted by Luke in account in Acts 9. Paul mentions it, as being the more remarkable since it occurred at mid-day, to show that he was not deluded by any meteoric or natural appearances, which usually occur at night” [BARNES].

22:7 - I FELL TO THE GROUND. *“I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’”* He does not say he was knocked to the ground by the experience, but that he fell to the ground, possibly as a result of the blinding light, but we must consider the possibility that he fell to the ground in response to this special encounter with his Creator.

SAUL, SAUL. The focus of the light was Saul of Tarsus, and if there has been any doubt, that doubt was clear up when the Lord called his name twice. It was during Desert Storm that America and the World discovered that America had laser-guided missiles that could be guided to a pinpointed target. Our media was warning that the American soldiers were no match for the seasoned Iraqi troops who were used to the intense heat of the desert, but they did not take into account the heat-seeking missiles the American troops used against the Russian made tanks. If the engine started in one of those tanks, a heat-seeking missile found it and penetrated it with such force and velocity that the tank imploded. No longer would we speak of a hundred years war, but of a war that could be measured in hours.

Paul was the target of the light, and if there had been any doubt, Jesus called his name. Two times. Jesus asked, “Why are you persecuting me?” Jesus is not afraid to confront the sinner with his sin, nor was He One to minimize his guilt. Saul was leading in a persecution and Jesus was the target of that persecution. You cannot persecute the church and claim that you are not persecuting the Head of the church.

22:8 - WHO ARE YOU, LORD. *“I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ ‘He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting!’”* Luke had given us this account already (ch. 9), but Paul recounts his experience here to this great crowd of people.

JESUS THE NAZARENE. There is a natural addition one often provides when telling of a personal experience. In 9:5 and 26:15, we are not told that He identified Himself as the Nazarene. That bit of information would have meant more to this Jewish audience than to a Gentile crowd. Paul may call Him Jesus the Nazarene because this is the first time he mentions him to these people.

22:9 - THOSE WHO WERE WITH ME. *“Now those who were with me saw the light, but they did not hear the voice of the One who was speaking to me.”* It would be interesting to know the identity of those who traveled with Paul that day. It would also be interesting to know if anyone

from that group of men were standing there listening to him as he offered his defense. Robertson explains an apparent difference between Luke's account at what Paul is saying here:

“The accusative here may be used rather than the genitive as in verse Acts 22:7 to indicate that those with Paul did not understand what they heard (Acts 9:7) just as they beheld the light (Acts 22:9), but did not see Jesus (Acts 9:7). The difference in cases allows this distinction, though it is not always observed as just noticed about Acts 22:14; Acts 26:14. The verb *akouô* is used in the sense of understand (Mark 4:33; 1Co 14:2). It is one of the evidences of the genuineness of this report of Paul's speech that Luke did not try to smooth out apparent discrepancies in details between the words of Paul and his own record already in ch 9” [ATR].

Often, when listening to someone tell us something we have heard them tell before, we realize that they had either added a point or left out a point. What we must always remember is that the divine Author of all Scripture is the Holy Spirit, and in Luke's earlier account he is recording history, whereas here he is telling us what Paul said. There is the natural variation one would expect.

22:10 - WHAT SHOULD I DO. *“Then I said, ‘What should I do, Lord?’ ‘And the Lord told me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about everything that is assigned for you to do.’”* He is simply telling his story at this point. He had asked the logical question, “What shall I do, Lord.” At this point, he does repeat the name Jesus (he had already used it. vs. 8). The Lord instructed him to go into Damascus where everything would be told him about the ministry to which he was being called, the ministry to which he had committed his life.

There are many questions Paul might have answered for us at this point, but he is standing before a suddenly silenced crowd that had only moments before given him a beating with the intention of killing him. He is not going to compromise the Gospel, but neither is he going to incite another riot by saying the wrong thing.

22:11 - I COULDN'T SEE. *“Since I couldn't see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.”* The cause of the blindness is not stated in 9:8, but added here. His companions had to lead Paul into Damascus, where they found him a place to stay. We are not told that any of his partners in the persecution of believers ever became believers themselves.

This is a good time to make a disturbing application. When I was growing up in the Mississippi Delta in the fifties, many lost people knew more about the Bible than some church members today. Some lost people knew more than some church members even then. They had grown up in a Christian home, attended Vacation Bible School, Sunday School, worship services, and many of the Baptist young people had attended Training Union, as others attended special programs offered by their denomination. Some of those people grew up with Bible studies, and when I began my ministry I often heard people say they wish they could have a Damascus Road experience. I haven't heard that statement in years. Why? For one thing, we are moving deeper and deeper into the post-Christian era in our history, which means there is much less exposure To the Scripture in the home

today. Francis Schaeffer used to talk about those to whom the Bible was only a memory. Today, for many people, there is no memory of the Word of God.

Early in December, 2007, I was watching Brit Hume on the Fox News Channel when he asked his panel about the possibility of an Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister and former governor of Arkansas who was one of a host of candidates for the office of president. Huckabee was climbing in the polls and there was no enthusiasm for an evangelical. I might add that even the term evangelical seems to be evolving, as former liberals and moderates have begun using that term to distinguish themselves both from the term liberal, and from those to their right whom the view as right-wing fundamentalists. One panelist, Mort Kondrake, said (and I may be only paraphrasing him), “I don’t think America is ready for an evangelical in the White House. What will an evangelical do, I mean will he evangelize from the White House?!” That was a question from a very intelligent man. The absurdity of that question is highlighted by the fact that the current president, George W. Bush, is an evangelical Christian. Only one generation ago, America would have been shocked by Kondrake’s statement. Two generations ago, Christians were praying that they would see a Bible believing Christian in the White House.

A generation ago, when some lost people longed for a Damascus Road experience, they were looking for something very dramatic that would accompany their salvation so they would know they were saved. Christians who experienced doubt wished for such an experience as proof of their salvation. One young, just a few years ago, responded to my inquiry by saying, “I won’t ever forget when I received Jesus Christ as my Savior.” Before too long that man proved by his life that he had never known Jesus. In fact, he was clearly serving Satan.

This brings us to the question: why would God save Paul in such a dramatic way and not save others in a similar way? Is it fair that the Lord got Paul’s attention as he did, and yet let others “find their own way”? To answer that question we must remember that God is always fair, and we are all sinners, deserving eternal death. We deserve to go to hell because of our sin, primarily the sin of not believing in the revealed Savior. In the second place, God is sovereign and we had better get that straight! He is God, I am not. Please don’t say to me, “Let me tell you what I think....” What you think is not what counts! What God says is what counts.

In the third place, he has revealed far more clearly his provision for our salvation than He had to anyone in Paul’s day, with the except a small group of disciples. Paul, at the time of his Damascus Road experience, had never read the Roman Road to Salvation! He had not yet been inspired to write the Book of Romans! In the fourth place, what happens at the point of salvation is far more dramatic and miraculous than a blinding light or verbal question. The new birth is indeed miraculous, regardless of the circumstances.

22:12 - ANANIAS. *“Someone named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good reputation with all the Jews residing there...”* Ananias was a “devout man”, which this crowd would understand to mean a pious Hebrew, who was devoted to the Law. Paul had been introduced to “this Way” (to Christ), not by some heretic, but by a devout Jew. Jesus saved Paul, but he used Ananias to affirm both his salvation and his call to a special ministry.

22:13 - CAME TO ME. “(C)ame to me, stood by me, and said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ And in that very hour I looked up and saw him.” This is an abbreviated version of Luke’s account in chapter 9. When Ananias said, “Brother Saul, regain your sight”, Paul “looked up and saw him”. Ananias would never have considered himself a miracle worker. He simply obeyed he Lord. “Brother reflects the same outlook seen in 22:5 where Jews in Damascus were called the “brothers” of the Jews in Jerusalem” [BKC].

22:14 - THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS. “Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of His voice.’” The term Ananias used for the Creator of all and Redeemer of those who believe, was a title employed to show these Jews that Christianity (“this Way”) is the true fulfillment of Judaism and involves no break with the continuity of the past. The very God whom they were so zealously defending was the One who had appointed Paul as a missionary of the “Way”.

APPOINTED YOU. Paul had been appointed by God to (1) “know His will”, (2) “to see the Righteous One” (Jesus), and (3) “to hear the sound of His voice.” Paul’s appointment is clearly on par with that of the earlier apostles.

THE RIGHTEOUS ONE. “The Lord Jesus, called the Just One, in opposition to the Jews, who crucified him as a malefactor” [CLARKE]. In Romans, Paul was inspired to “There is none righteous, not even one” (Rom. 3:10). There is only One who is righteous and that is Jesus.

“For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness. Now to the one who works, pay is not considered as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who declares righteous the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3-5).

22:15 - A WITNESS. “For you will be a witness for Him to all people of what you have seen and heard.” Paul was called to be a “witness for Him”, meaning Jesus the Nazarene (vs. 8), the Lord (vs. 10). The Geek word for “witness (*martus*) is the word from which we get our word martyr. Those who became witnesses for Jesus Christ at the time were often risking their lives for the Lord. Sadly, as *The Voice of Martyrs* ministry points out, there are many people who are being martyred for the faith in Jesus Christ around the world today, and very few people ever hear of them. Neither the White House, the Senate, nor the House will speak out against the persecution of Christians in various parts of the world for fear of antagonizing Islamic nations. Those brave talking heads who had the courage to go Iraq to be imbedded with the troops, willingly blind themselves to the persecution and murder of Christians by Muslims.

Paul’s call to be a missionary, proclaiming the Gospel to Jews, Gentiles, and kings was as vivid and powerful as the appointment of Jeremiah to the office of prophet had been over six hundred years earlier. He had already been inspired to write to the church at Corinth and to the churches in Galatia to defend his apostleship.

22:16 - WHY DELAY? “*And now, why delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name.*” Paul had been called, so there was no reason to delay. He was called to “Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name.” Some people believe this verse, along with Acts 2:38, teaches baptismal regeneration. However, Robertson says, “to do so is in my opinion a complete subversion of Paul’s vivid and picturesque language. As in Rom 6:4-6 where baptism is the picture of death, burial and resurrection, so here baptism pictures the change that had already taken place when Paul surrendered to Jesus on the way (verse Acts 22:10). Baptism here pictures the washing away of sins by the blood of Christ” [ATR].

Since this is a divisive issue for some, I would like to include a more lengthy comment from the Bible Knowledge Commentary:

“Two questions revolve about this verse. First, when was Paul saved—on the Damascus Road or at Judas’ house? Several factors suggest he was saved on the Damascus Road: (1) The gospel was presented to him directly by Christ (Gal. 1:11-12), not later by Ananias. (2) Already (Acts 22:10) Paul said he had submitted in faith to Christ. (3) Paul was filled with the Spirit *before* his baptism with water (9:17-18). (4) The Greek aorist participle, *epikalesamenos*, translated **calling on His name** refers either to action which is simultaneous with or before that of the main verb. Here Paul’s calling on Christ’s name (for salvation) preceded his water baptism. The participle may be translated, ‘having called on His name.’

“Second, what then do the words **wash your sins away** mean? Do they teach that salvation comes by water baptism? Because Paul was already cleansed spiritually (see comments in preceding par.), these words must refer to the symbolism of baptism. Baptism is a picture of God’s inner work of washing away sin (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Peter 3:21) [BKC].

One note should be added here: The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself, whenever it addresses a subject. Consistent with the rest of the New Testament is the position that we are saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8). In Acts 16:31, the Philippian jailer is told to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and he would be saved. For a fuller discussion on this subject, see this writer’s comments on Acts 2:28, in volume I of *The Bible Notebook* series on Acts.

22:17 - AFTER THIS. “*After I came back to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple complex, I went into a visionary state...*” See Acts 9:26-29 and Galatians 1:18-19. Paul returned to Jerusalem, but only after he had spent three years praying and studying in Arabia and witnessing in Damascus. As soon as he returned to Jerusalem, he went to the temple complex to pray. This is not mentioned in 9:29. This took place right were these people had begun their attack on Paul. Even though he was a follower of Jesus the Nazarene, he still honored the temple, feasts, and ceremonies of Judaism.

A VISIONARY STATE. We often find accounts in the Bible of people who encounter the Lord, either in a dream, a trance, or a special visit by an angel, or by the Lord in a human form, as in the experience of Abraham. Barnes has some interesting comments on this verse:

“Perhaps he here refers to what he elsewhere mentions, 2Co 12:1-5, which he calls ‘visions and revelations of the Lord.’ In that place he mentions his being ‘caught up to the third heaven,’ 2Co 12:2, and ‘into paradise,’ where he heard words which it was ‘not possible for a man to utter,’ 2Co 12:4. It is not certain, however, that he refers in this place to that remarkable occurrence. The narrative would rather imply that the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the temple in a remarkable manner, in a vision, and gave him a direct command to go to the Gentiles. Paul had now stated the evidence of his conversion, which appears to have been satisfactory to them: at least they made no objection to his statement; he had shown by his being in the temple his respect for their institutions; and he now proceeds to show that in his other conduct he had been directed by the same high authority by which he had been called into the ministry, and that the command had been given to him in their own temple and in their own city” [BARNES]

22:18 - SAW HIM. *“(A)nd saw Him telling me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me!’”* This was the first time for Paul to go back to Jerusalem after his conversion, and he stayed there only fifteen days (Gal. 1:18). Here we find that the Lord appeared to him and told him to “Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly”. The reason Jesus tells him to leave Jerusalem quickly was that “they will not accept your testimony about Me!” They had religion, they were not interested in reason or revelation. They had rituals and ceremonies. They didn’t want to hear a message about the grace of God, or that Jesus was the Son of God. Interestingly, Paul’s departure from Jerusalem (see 9:29-30) was “because of the advice of Christian brothers. Actually a combination of divine revelation (22:17-18) and human direction led Paul to go to Tarsus” [BKC]. Barnabas befriended Paul and persuaded leaders in Jerusalem that his faith in Jesus was genuine. Seeing the opposition he was generating, the disciples took him down to Caesarea and put him on a ship bound for Tarsus, his hometown.

Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, not Jerusalem. Human reason would demand that the Messiah be born in Jerusalem where the high priest, chief priests, and all the other priests continually served in the temple, awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Human reason would assume that the ideal place for Paul to preach the Gospel was Jerusalem, but Jesus knew otherwise. Jerusalem was in fact a very dangerous place to preach Jesus Christ.

22:19 - BUT I SAID. *“But I said, ‘Lord, they know that in synagogue after synagogue I had those who believed in You imprisoned and beaten.’”* Paul tried to debate this issue with Jesus. He assumed that he would be the ideal person to preach the Good News in Jerusalem because he could go to one synagogue after another and find Jews who had known of his persecution of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. He had been a zealous leader in the persecution of the followers of Jesus, so he

assumed he would be the ideal person to go to those synagogues and preach the truth to them. Even Paul needed to be reminded of the words of the Lord in 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” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

22:20 - YOUR WITNESS STEPHEN. “*And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving, and I guarded the clothes of those who killed him.*” He was not only there when Stephen’s blood was being shed, he approved of it. Paul uses the very word (*suneudokôn*) used by Luke in Acts 8:1 about Paul. This word means that Paul, though a witness and not one of the men casting the stones, was being pleased, from the beginning to the end, by their action. Paul adds here the item of ‘guarding the clothes of those who were slaying (*anairountôn* as in Luke 23:32; Acts 12:2) him’ (Stephen). Paul recalls the testimony of Stephen and “He did not like the idea of running away to save his own life right where he had helped slay Stephen. He is getting on dangerous ground” [ATR].

22:21 - GO. “*Then He said to me, ‘Go, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’*” Jesus commands Paul to “Go”, and then gives him the reason for commanding him to leave Jerusalem immediately. He was sending him “far away to the Gentiles.” Paul would have delayed until he shared his testimony in the synagogues of Jerusalem, but Jesus commanded him to leave. “I will send” emphasizes supernatural direction.

Paul’s thinking was not God’s thinking, and his ways were not God’s ways. I must confess that I once wondered why Jesus would command Paul to leave Jerusalem quickly because He was sending him “far away to the Gentiles” - only to leave let him waste his time making tents in Tarsus for the next few years rather than sending him on a great missionary journey then. Further study proves two things for me: (1) Paul’s time in Tarsus was not wasted, and (2) Jesus knew exactly where he was and when He was ready to send him out He sent Barnabas to find him and persuade him to go with him to Antioch of Syria. Apparently, three years in Arabia and Damascus might have prepared him to preach to the Jews, but he needed more experience before he was ready to launch a major missionary journey far away in Gentile lands. Have you ever wondered why, when Barnabas needed an assistant, he did not recruit someone from Syria, or even someone from Jerusalem? Is it possible that news had reached Antioch of Paul’s ministry in and around Tarsus?

His Roman Citizenship Protects Paul

22:22 - THE LISTENED. “*They listened to him up to this word. Then they raised their voices, shouting, ‘Wipe this person off the earth—it’s a disgrace for him to live!’*” They were listening to him until he used that word: Gentiles! (Vs. 21). He had delayed using that word before this hostile crowd as long as possible, and now we understand why. He is trying to show this angry throng, that had only moments ago been trying to beat him to death, that his work among the Gentiles was under

the direct command of Jesus of Nazareth, who had revealed Himself as the Righteous One, the Messiah. He had gone to the Gentiles under a Divine Imperative (the title for an old book on evangelism by Roland Q. Leavell when he was president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary).

SHOUTING. The presence of the Roman commander and his troops notwithstanding, they began shouting, “Wipe this person off the earth—it’s a disgrace for him to live.” Such a response is incomprehensible to the Western mind, especially to Christians. It is not, however without illustration in the Middle East where word of a Danish cartoon that mentions Mohammed set off riots and demonstrations throughout the region and in Europe. Righteous indignation hardly describes the mob mentality. These people are not just shouting, they are ready to wipe Paul off the face of the earth. In fact, that is exactly what they had been trying to do before Claudius Lysias had rescued him and taken him into custody. They were in the process of committing murder in the name of God.

IT’S A DISGRACE FOR HIM TO LIVE! “The imperfect is a neat Greek idiom for impatience about an obligation: It was not fitting, he ought to have been put to death long ago” [ATR]. They seem to be saying that he should not have been saved by the commander. If he had not intervened they would have settled this problem once and for all! We may compare their attitude to that of the persecutors of the prophets of old: “They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground” (Heb 11:37-38). Paul had suffered greatly (see 2 Cor. 11:23-28), and now, fellow Jews gathered for a sacred occasion, would kill him as a service to God!

22:23 - AS THEY WERE YELLING. “*As they were yelling and flinging aside their robes and throwing dust into the air...*” As they continued yelling, they began flinging off their outer robe in anger and frustration, evidently because they had not been permitted to accomplish their purpose. They had been prevented from demonstrating their zeal for God by murdering Paul. Is it possible that they would to stone Paul in the presence of the Roman troops, or are they venting their frustration because they had been prevented from killing him? “Throwing dust into the air” underscores the degree of frustration they were experiencing because they were unsuccessful in their effort to kill Paul.

22:24 - THE COMMANDER. “*(T)he commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, directing that he be examined with the scourge, so he could discover the reason they were shouting against him like this.*” Both the commander’s career and his life was on the line when a situation like this arose. He was accountable to his superiors, who expected him to deal with a situation like this. He apparently assumed that there must have been something Paul was not telling him that had aroused such an intense response from these Jews, who normally were careful not to attract unfavorable attention from the Roman commander.

Bill O’Reilly had a guest on *The O’Reilly Factor*, Fox News Network, who was strongly opposed to

the use of force by the military in examining terrorists, or suspected terrorists, even if they could offer information that would save a lot of American lives. This, I believe, was on December 7, 2007.

O'Reilly asked the professor how he would question a person who had information that could save many American lives. The man said, "I would ask questions." When asked what he would do if the man did not answer, the professor said, "I would walk out of the room so I would not become what he was." Claudius Lysias had no such qualms. He ordered Paul scourged.

"This flogging is different from Paul's beating with rods at Philippi and on two other occasions (2 Cor. 11:25; Acts 16:22-23). Nor was it the same as the Jewish 39 lashes administered with the long whips, a punishment Paul had received five times (2 Cor. 11:24). The Roman scourge was inflicted with shorter whips embedded with pieces of metal or bones and attached to a strong wooden handle. It could kill a man or leave him permanently crippled. This was the punishment Christ received (Matt. 27:26), leaving Him unable to carry His cross" [BKC].

22:25 - STRETCHED HIM OUT. *"As they stretched him out for the lash, Paul said to the centurion standing by, "Is it legal for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen and is uncondemned?"* The Roman method of scourging was to strip the condemned man and tie him to a post or pillar, or tie him in a bending position over a bench or a frame built for that purpose. The prisoner was then lashed with leather thongs tipped with pieces of metal or even bones. The horrendous nature of this scourging was depicted in the movie, *The Passion of Christ*.

PAUL SAID. Paul spoke to the centurion in charge of the scourging. The centurion was a commander of one hundred men. He had addressed the mob in Hebrew, so it never occurred to the commander to ask if he was a Roman citizen. His Roman citizenship had saved him from this merciless scourging in Philippi, so he does not hesitate to use it now. Note that Paul did not ask, is it right, or is it fair. He asked, "Is it legal to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen" who has not been officially tried and sentenced. It was definitely against Roman law, which means that, had the order been carried out, Claudius Lysias, not Paul would have been the one in violation of Roman law. The penalty would have been severe.

22:26 - HE WENT TO THE COMMANDER. *"When the centurion heard this, he went and reported to the commander, saying, 'What are you going to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.'"* There must have been some anxious moments for the commander when he heard that Paul was a Roman citizen, but it was probably more anxious for Claudius Lysias because he was the one in command. Now, rather than scourge Paul they must protect him. Things had changed dramatically.

The law prevented the binding of a Roman citizen for the purpose of scourging him. When the centurion asked the commander, "What are you going to do" he was not asking an academic question, not was he trying to ascertain what his next step would be. This was a warning that might be expressed in the vernacular today, "What are you doing? This man is a Roman citizen!" It was a strong warning.

22:27 - ARE YOU A ROMAN CITIZEN. *“The commander came and said to him, ‘Tell me— are you a Roman citizen?’ ‘Yes,’ he said.”* From the response we may rightly infer that scourging a Roman citizen was a grave offense. The commander did not say, “Go back and ask for his papers.” He went immediately, and we may assume with a sense of urgency, to Paul and asked him “Tell me - are you a Roman citizen?” Paul answered, “Yes.” The commander could not afford to make a mistake. It might take time to get proof of his citizenship, so he did not release him. He also had an explosive situation in the temple complex with which he must deal.

22:28 - THE COMMANDER REPLIED. *“The commander replied, ‘I bought this citizenship for a large amount of money.’ ‘But I myself was born a citizen,’ Paul said.”* One might be born with Roman citizenship, he might earn it in battle, or he might buy it. After Paul was transferred to Caesarea, Governor Felix would assume that Paul had money, and therefore he sent for him often to give him an opportunity to offer a him a bribe (Ch. 24). He was a Jew, but he had Roman citizenship. The commander may well have looked at Paul and assumed that he could never have won his citizenship on the battle field. Paul is usually assumed to have been a small man. Of course appearances can be deceiving, as Audie Murphy proved. Several years after he became the most decorated man in the history of the United States Army he still looked too small, too young, and too innocent to have been a war hero.

Claudius Lysias, apparently a Greek, had bought his Roman citizenship “for a large amount of money.” Roman citizenship was “sold for a high price during the reign of Claudius” [NCWB]. Claudius and his wife Messalina reportedly sold citizenship either for personal gain, or to help finance state business. This commander must have come from a family with great wealth. He had achieved a lot of success as a soldier, or he would not have been in his present position as commander of the troops in Jerusalem.

BORN A CITIZEN. Paul was born a Roman citizen. His father may well have bought his citizenship. It had its advantages for Paul and it may well have had advantages for his father, a devout Jew conduction business in Tarsus of Cilicia.

22:29 - THEREFORE. *“Therefore, those who were about to examine him withdrew from him at once. The commander too was alarmed when he realized Paul was a Roman citizen and he had bound him.”* “Therefore”, those were about to examine him by scourging him “withdrew at once.” This was a serious matter.

Luke adds the note that the Commander had also been alarmed when he learned that Paul was a Roman citizen. The commander was afraid that Rome would find out that he had violated Roman law. “The chains probably were those that would hold him for flogging. Paul as a citizen was in chains at a later time (26:29). Could not anyone avoid flogging by simply claiming to be a Roman citizen? Perhaps; but if a person falsely claimed to be a citizen, he was liable to the death penalty” [BKC].

The commander was faced with a dilemma. If he released Paul he could anticipate serious rioting in

the streets of Jerusalem, which would not have been good for his career. But if he had scourged him he would have faced serious charges for that. So what could he do? He had him bound with chains and held for later action.

Paul Goes before the Sanhedrin

22:30 - HE WANTED TO FIND OUT EXACTLY. *“The next day, since he wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and instructed the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to convene. Then he brought Paul down and placed him before them.”* Claudius Lysias wasted no time. He had to determine exactly what the charges were, so he sent word to the chief priests that he wanted the entire Sanhedrin to convene. Barnes explains that the commander

“Summoned a meeting of the sanhedrin, or great council of the nation. He did this, as he was prevented from scourging Paul, in order to know what he had done, and that he might learn from the Jews themselves the nature of the charge against him. This was necessary for the safety of Paul, and for the ends of justice. This should have been done without any attempt to torture him in order to extort a confession” [BARNES].

BROUGHT PAUL DOWN. The commander had Paul released from his chains and personally brought him down from the tower of Antonia: down those same steps he had needed help to climb the day before. The council probably assembled in the house of the high priest. There was one high priest, but there were a number of chief priests, possibly some who had served as high priest, or were in line to serve in that position. These chief priests were leaders of the Sanhedrin.

An ideal break for this chapter would have been at the end of verse 29, with the new chapter beginning with verse 30. We have to remind ourselves that Luke did not break this work down into chapters and verses. Verse 30 fits more naturally with chapter 23. When we go into the next chapter we will need to begin by looking back to this verse.