

The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
49 AD	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	Acts 15:36
49 AD	Paul in Philippi	Acts 16
49 AD	Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens	Acts 17
51 AD	Paul in Corinth	Acts 18
54 AD	Paul in Ephesus	Acts 19
57 AD	Paul in Macedonia and Greece	Acts 20
59 AD	Paul Returns to Jerusalem	Acts 21 - 23
60 AD	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea	Acts 24
62 AD	Paul Before Festus	Acts 25
62 AD	Paul Before Agrippa	Acts 26
62 AD	Paul Sails for Rome	Acts 27
62 AD	The Shipwreck	Acts 27:13
62 AD	Paul Ashore at Malta	Acts 28
62 AD	Paul Preaches at Rome	Acts 28:11

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The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 18:1 **Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.** 2 There he became acquainted with a Jew named **Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla.** They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome. 3 Paul lived and worked with them, for **they were tentmakers** just as he was. 4 **Each Sabbath found Paul at the synagogue, trying to convince the Jews and Greeks alike.** 5 And after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul spent all his time preaching the word. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. 6 But when they opposed and insulted him, **Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, "Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles."** 7 Then he left and went to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God and lived next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, and everyone in his household believed in the Lord. Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became believers, and were baptized.

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The Acts of the Apostles

• **"Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth."**

- The Corinth of Paul's day was a cesspool of depravity with sin running rampant throughout the culture.
- In Athens Paul was in an intellectual war of philosophies and he battled them to at least a draw – in Corinth he will be engaged in a different sort of battle – one where his opponent's identity (Corinthian) had become a slur.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- The church at Corinth had lots of problems as noted in two of Paul's longest epistles – perhaps because of the sordid culture its members came from.
- Ever notice how those who've been saved from a very worldly life often have to overcome the world again?
- Meaning that it might take additional time and teaching for their rough edges to be worn down? (that was the church at Corinth)


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The Acts of the Apostles

**WORSHIP IS NO LONGER
WORSHIP WHEN IT
REFLECTS THE CULTURE
AROUND US MORE THAN
THE CHRIST WITHIN US.**

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome.”**

- From a historian named Suetonius – “As the Jews were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus, Claudius banished them from Rome.”

- It is assumed that “Chrestus” is none other than Jesus.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- If the problems in Rome were really over Christ, and the Jews were rioting, it sounds like some missionaries had reached Rome long before Paul ever got there.

- Acts 2:7 They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, 8 and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! 9 Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, 10 Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from **Rome** 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!”

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The Acts of the Apostles

- “Paul lived and worked with them, for **they were tentmakers** just as he was.”
- Paul’s trade was leather working – he most likely made leather panels for tents with the goal of never being accused of being “in it for the money”.
- He was a bi-vocational pastor/missionary – 1st Thes 1:9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- But when they opposed and insulted him, **Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, “Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles.”**
- When Jews would leave Gentile land they would shake the dust from their feet so as not to be defiled. 😊
- Paul throws it right back at them as though they are now the ones out of touch with God, and they were.

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- When the Jews “shook off the dust” it was their way of insulting the Gentiles.
- Paul now insults the Jews as if to say, “you don’t want Gentile dust on your shoes, well I don’t want Jewish dust on my clothes”!
- He says he is done with the Jew and was going only to the gentiles – perhaps intended only for Corinth, because at his next stop in Ephesus he is back in the synagogue.

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The Acts of the Apostles

Regarding all of the opposition Paul faced from the Jews and sometimes Rome, would you want to be treated like Paul?

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 18:9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! 10 For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me." 11 So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the word of God. 12 But when Gallio became governor of Achaia, some Jews rose up together against Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment. 13 They accused Paul of "persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to our law." 14 But just as Paul started to make his defense, Gallio turned to Paul's accusers and said, "Listen, you Jews, if this were a case involving some wrongdoing or a serious crime, I would have a reason to accept your case. 15 But since it is merely a question of words and names and your Jewish law, take care of it yourselves. I refuse to judge such matters." 16 And he threw them out of the courtroom. 17 The crowd then grabbed Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him right there in the courtroom. But Gallio paid no attention.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- "One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! 10 For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you"
- From the above many theologians believe that Paul was going through something very human – he was discouraged.
- One reason is that he had just left Athens where he did a very intense battle with some of the brightest, but darkest minds in the world – Greek philosophers.

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- When we use up our emotional energy – for something good or something bad, our minds need time to recover.
- How do I know this? Because as a teacher I go through it at least once weekly.
- I have also observed over the years that after a great victory (real or imagined) or a stunning disappointment (real or imagined) the next day or so I've experienced what most would call the "blues".

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- After many of Paul's debates his opponents were not just disagreeable, but hostile enough to beat him, threaten him, or stone him.
- So as Paul engaged the enemies of the gospel, his life was often on the line.
- That is real stress and that is one of the reasons why so many believe the great Apostle Paul was actually depressed.

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- The second reason why so many believe Paul needed encouragement has to do with the vision he received and there is some practicality to this reason.
- Jesus appears to him in a vision (one of 4 visions Paul had in Acts) and tells him explicitly "Don't be afraid".
- It would make no sense to tell one who is not afraid to not be afraid – but rather it is very common for the fearful to hear, "Don't be afraid".

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- Hard to believe isn't it? That Paul was afraid – the very one who always seems so fearless was actually afraid.
- Remember Elijah – how he chided the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel and defeated them?
- Remember also what happened next – Queen Jezebel threatens him and he runs and hides. **“It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers”.**

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- Maybe this text in Acts 18 is there to tell us that what often happens to us has happened to the best of those who came before us.
- We should also remember that in each case, Elijah and Paul, after they recovered (and they did) they got right back in the saddle and pressed on.
- Get busy, expect opposition and setbacks, follow the examples of others, and get back up and get going.

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- **“for many people in this city belong to me.”** – this followed as a reason why Paul was to be unafraid.
- The question here is, **“were there already ‘many’ in Corinth who were saved, or was there going to be ‘many’ who would be saved through Paul’s ministry?”**
- Since there is no mention of an existing church God was no doubt encouraging Paul by speaking of things that are not as though they were. (Romans 4:17)

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- To go one step further, was God encouraging Paul to press on with his ministry because God's plan for evangelizing "many in the city" started with Paul?
- I am not saying that if Paul did not obey that God's "many" would be lost, because that puts too much responsibility on one man for the eternity of others.
- However, I would say that Paul would probably weep at the Bema if he had not obeyed.

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- Clearly there were "many" in Corinth that were elected to salvation and God will ensure the clear call of the gospel will be heard in Corinth.
- Think about yourself on a smaller scale – there are people in your life God has prepared to be saved and he has prepared you to plant, water, or harvest.
- We do not know for certain what happens if we disobey, but I am certain I don't want to personally find out!

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- **"So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the word of God. 12 But when Gallio became governor of Achaia, some Jews rose up together against Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment"**
- Paul's stay in Corinth was one of his longer stints anywhere – 18 months.
- His enemies try to take advantage of a "green" governor, Gallio, but he is only interested in Roman law.

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- Gallio understands very quickly what was going on and in his mind he sees the charges against Paul as mere semantics. (tomato – tomauto)
- If it weren't so violent, I would laugh at the response of the losers before Gallio – they grab the leader of the local synagogue, Sosthenes, and beat him.
- By the way, Sosthenes was the new leader of the synagogue because Paul led Crispus to Christ. (and later in 1st Corinthians 1:1 Sosthenes is also with Paul)

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- One of many forces at work here is God's direct promise in verse #10 to protect Paul.
- Paul doesn't even have to leave town despite the fact that those who beat Sosthenes were probably always "laying" for him.
- **Acts 18:18 Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to nearby Cenchrea.**

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 18:18 Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow. Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him. 19 They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. While he was there, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews. 20 They asked him to stay longer, but he declined. 21 As he left, however, he said, "I will come back later, God willing." Then he set sail from Ephesus. 22 The next stop was at the port of Caesarea. From there he went up and visited the church at Jerusalem and then went back to Antioch. 23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul went back through Galatia and Phrygia, visiting and strengthening all the believers.

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- “There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow.”
- What? Isn't Paul the apostle to the Gentiles and isn't he the one who rebuked Peter for cozying up to the Jews in Jerusalem while distancing from Gentile converts?
- Why is he doing this very Jewish thing of taking what was probably a Nazarite vow that ends by a shaving of the head?

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- It's just a short and seemingly insignificant sentence and we are not told why he took a vow, but Luke, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit includes it.
- **Here is a guess as to why** – 1st Cor 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

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- There is a move in the American church to adopt Jewish customs thinking that such customs make one more spiritual.
- Because after all, these customs were given to God's very own chosen people – so why wouldn't we observe them?
- Adopt what you will, but be careful that you don't begin to say "you must" when you should really say, "you may". (feast days, vows, etc....)

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. While he was there, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews. 20 They asked him to stay longer, but he declined.”**
- This is just too rich – Paul is used to being tossed out of synagogues, but here in Ephesus he is invited stay longer!
- And then the ultimate irony - he declines!!

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- **“As he left, however, he said, “I will come back later, God willing.”**
- It seems that Paul had something bigger on his mind – and that I find hard to imagine, but he must have had a good reason for leaving such a fertile opening.
- I think this says something to us about prioritizing all of the good things we could be doing so as to ensure that we do the most important things first.

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- It seems to me that most in the church need to learn one of two lessons.
- One group needs to learn that God made them for a purpose and when we begin to fulfill that purpose he is pleased.
- “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run, I feel his pleasure.” Eric Liddell

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- The other group needs to learn a more difficult lesson than “get off your duff” – they need to learn they cannot do it all.
- You may have to be a generalist around the house, doing a little bit of everything, but most of it not particularly well.
- In the church, we have all been gifted to be great at something – find your “great” and focus on it. (and think beyond the walls of the church building)

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- Your “great” may appear to be very simple, perhaps one of those things that most would overlook, but God never overlooks what he has equipped us to do.
- Matt 10:42 “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”
- When two “little” things collide (water and a child) under the direction of God, he takes notice.

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- “Begin with your own, available resources. Even though it is little, trust God to make it much. As the song says, little becomes much when it is placed in the Master’s hand. It’s amazing when you think you have nothing and you wind up feeding thousands. God can use small things; He used the tear of a baby to move the heart of Pharaoh’s daughter. He used a shepherd’s stick to work mighty miracles in Egypt. He used a sling and a stone to conquer a nation. He used the little girl to lead Naaman to Elisha. He used a widow with a little meal to sustain a prophet. He used a little child to teach His disciples the meaning of humility and salvation. He used Balaam’s donkey to preach His truth, and the jawbone of another donkey to slay 1,000 men. He can use a small thing for a great end. Jesus likes to have the weak; that way, when things happen, we know it’s His power.” Unknown

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• “22 The next stop was at the port of Caesarea. From there he went up and visited the church at Jerusalem and then went back to Antioch. 23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul went back through Galatia and Phrygia, visiting and strengthening all the believers.”

• Paul went up to Jerusalem next, but didn't stay there long before he headed down to Antioch.

• Antioch was now his “home church” and it seems he would much rather hang out with them than the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. 😊

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Questions

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