

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ACTS 17-18

When you think of a European vacation you envision floating down a Venice canal, or strolling through a London museum, or sipping coffee in a Paris cafe', but when Paul arrived in Europe he had but one thought on his mind, and that was to lead the lost masses to faith in Jesus. At the time Europe was drowning in a sea of idolatry and paganism, and on its way to hell.

Acts 10 records a huge breakthrough...

Peter was in Joppa when he saw a vision. It resulted in the Gospel being preached directly to the Gentiles.

Another breakthrough occurs in Acts 16...

Paul was in Troas when he saw a vision. A man from Macedonia, an Eastern European, called for his help.

Paul sails the Aegean, and the Gospel moves from Asia to Europe. The first Christians were Africans and Asians, now Europeans join the family of God.

And over the next 1800 years Europe will be the hub of Christian activity... For a thousand years **Rome** was headquarters, until seeds of Reformation sprouted up everywhere... For a time **Wittenberg, Zurich, Geneva** were cities on a hill... By the 19th century **England** was the center of the modern missionary movement...

But it all began in 50 AD when Paul blazed the trail onto European soil to share the Gospel. In Acts 16 Paul goes to Philippi. In Acts 17 he's back on the road!

Verse 1, “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica.”

In one sentence Paul travels 100 miles, from Philippi to Thessalonica... The Greek city was founded around 300 BC. It was named after the sister of Alexander the Great. It was a busy city and a commercial center.

There was a famous Roman road, the Via Egnatia, that ran across the Balkan Peninsula, connecting Europe with Asia. The trade route ran right through the city of Thessalonica, and formed its Main Street.

Paul figured if the Gospel caught on in Thessalonica it would spread throughout Macedonia and Greece.

He came to Thessalonica “where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures...”

In Romans 11 Paul called himself, “the apostle to the Gentiles.” But he went first to the Jews. Here he visits the synagogue three weeks in a row, and reasons with them from the Scriptures.

Paul went on “explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” “Christ” is Greek for the Hebrew “Messiah.”

Jewish rabbis read in the OT that the Messiah would *suffer* and *reign*. Yet they had a perplexing time reconciling both scenarios in the same person...

Some rabbis suggested two Messiahs. "Messiah ben Joseph" (or the son of Joseph) would suffer as did his namesake in Egypt. Whereas, "Messiah ben David" (or the son of David), would reign as king over Israel.

Paul explained from Scripture that there's one Messiah. Both prophecies were fulfilled in a single person, Jesus of Nazareth. He suffered on the cross, rose to glory, and will come again to rule the nations.

Verse 4, "And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious..."

The Jews didn't oppose Paul on theological grounds.

They were *just jealous*. Today, Judaism has lost its missionary zeal. For the most part Jews have a "live and let live" attitude. But in the first century the Jews of the Diaspora - those in Gentile lands - eagerly tried to win Gentile converts to Judaism. To jealous Jews Paul's persuasiveness was unwelcomed competition.

So they "took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." The Jews hired thugs to inflame a mob and storm the house Paul occupied.

"But when they did not find them..." Paul wasn't at home! "They dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city..." Imagine, Jason, a long-time resident of Thessalonica - he's minding his own business. He's probably watching the

Braves game when a mob storms his house, breaks down his front door, and drags him through the streets to city hall.

And notice the mob was “crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.” This was one of Paul's greatest compliments.

Here his critics - his staunchest enemies - admitted, **He had turned the world upside down for Jesus!**

If you haven't noticed lately, this world is wrong-side up. It calls evil good and good evil. It mocks the Savior and worships sin. People draw their breath from God, and then deny He exists. This world is wrong-side up.

That's why it once again needs to be turned topsy-turvy. Today, we need to shake things up for Jesus. Rather than blend in, we need to live out our faith.

In verse 7 the mob makes its accusations to the authorities. “Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king - Jesus.” They accused the Christians of political treason against the Caesar.

Yet they misunderstood the Christians' claim. Jesus was King, but He was king over a spiritual - not a physical and political - kingdom. The only *coup de' that* Christianity orchestrated was a takeover of the heart!

“And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.” Jason and his friends were released on bail.

“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.” Paul got of town under the cover of darkness. He and his entourage traveled sixty miles west of Thessalonica to a town called Berea.

“When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.” Notice what’s said of these Bereans, “These were more fair-minded (or objective in their thinking) than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”

The people of Berea were into truth!

They wanted the truth even if it made them squirm - even if it challenged their preconceived notions.

Their question wasn’t: “Do I like what I’m hearing?” or “Does this sound cool?” or “How will this benefit me?” or “Is this what my former church taught?”

No, the only question the Bereans were concerned with was, “Is it biblical?” And we need to be Bereans! Check out all teaching... *is it true to the Word of God?*

Even well-meaning pastors make mistakes. You need to check out what’s taught, regardless of who it is that’s teaching. Yes, a pastor has a responsibility to be accurate, but it goes both ways... you also have a responsibility to examine if what he teaches is biblical.

If I’m in error you’re in danger.

Verse 12, “Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. But

when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.”

The Jews back up the road in Thessalonica were a militant bunch. It wasn't enough for them to kick Paul out of town, they hunted him down. These Jews were like underwear - they kept creeping up on Paul!

“Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.” Evidently, Paul was the flash point. Get Paul out of town, and Silas and Timothy could quietly continue the work of teaching and discipling the new believers.

“So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.”

It seems the plan had been for Paul to lay low a few days until his pals caught up. But there was no such thing as “lying low” for Paul. “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.”

Athens, Greece was perhaps the most famous city of the ancient world. It was spectacular - *culturally, intellectually, architecturally*. Athens was home to the Olympic Games, the Acropolis, the colossal Parthenon.

Athens was the birthplace of democracy, and Greek philosophy. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle - as well as a host of other wise guys - originated theories in Athens.

At the time of Paul's visit, Athens was starting to be eclipsed by other prominent cities. Rome had become the *military* capitol of the world. Alexandria in Egypt was the *scientific and literary* capitol. Corinth, also in Greece, was the *commercial* hub. But Athens remained the *intellectual and academic* capitol of the world.

And I'm sure Paul concluded the same thing I thought after dealing with a couple of my college professors, "How can people so smart, be so dumb?"

For as he looked around such a beautiful city - renown for its brilliance - he noticed Athens was littered with countless temples, and altars, and idols.

Greek archeologists estimate there were over 3000 shrines in Athens - dedicated to various gods of the Greek pantheon. There were more idols in Athens than in all of Greece. There was a saying in the ancient world, "In Athens, it's easier to find a god than a man."

Verse 17, "Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there." Paul wasn't content to share the Gospel in the synagogue - in a house of worship - the apostle went into the "Agora" or the local and secular marketplace.

This is what we should be doing in our world today. Let's take God's Word to the marketplace of ideas, and invade education, business, entertainment, politics.

Paul certainly didn't sit on his hands while people were dying and going to Hell... It reminds me of DL Moody... One

day he was walking the street. A man was moving in the opposite direction when Moody asked him, "Are you a Christian?" The ole grump snarled, "*Mind your own business!*" Moody answered, "*Sir, this is my business.*" **And it's our business too!**

We should never get use to hearing the sound of footsteps marching off to hell. Though Paul's plan was to take a few days R&R, he exposed to the paganism around him, and had to say something to confront it...

Verse 18, "*Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, 'What does this babbler want to say?'*" The Greek word translated "*babbler*" means "*seed picker*." It was derogatory. It referred to a bum who picked his food out of the trash. The Athenian philosophers mocked Paul. They were referring to the Gospel as garbage.

Yet, "*Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,' because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.*" Notice, Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection was the core message Paul preached.

American politics is a two-party system: Republicans and Democrats... Likewise, Judaism was a two-party religion: Pharisees were the conservatives and the Sadducees were the liberals... But Greek philosophy also had two parties: "*Epicureans and Stoics.*"

The **Epicureans** were materialists and humanists. Their leader, **Epicurus**, lived 341-270 BC. He taught that the universe was shaped by chance, and that man did not have an eternal soul. Death was our end.

To the Epicurean all that mattered was matter. His goal was to enjoy the here and now. Epicureans lived to *maximize pleasure* and *minimize pain*. They could've borrowed from Jesus' parable, when the rich man stated his philosophy, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." That's how the Epicureans lived.

The **Stoics** on the other hand were New Agers. They were pantheists. Their leader was a man named "Zeno." He lived around the same time as Epicurus.

Zeno believed God is in everything and that everything is part of God. He taught that life itself was the *spark of God* in the *spirit of man*. The Stoics felt that nature and circumstances were controlled by fate.

They believed, "what will be will be." Rather than shape life - the Stoic's goal was to live in harmony with his surroundings and accept the hand he was dealt.

The Stoics were disciplined, austere, and solemn. Emotion was their enemy. Obviously, they lived a futile, unhappy life. They were victims of circumstance. It's no surprise their first two leaders committed suicide.

Warren Wiersbe sums up Paul's task in Athens, "The Epicureans said, 'Enjoy life!' The Stoics said, 'Endure life!,' but it remained for Paul to explain how all men can enter into life through faith in God's risen Son."

Verse 19, "And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus..." The word can be translated "Ares Rock."

The Romans called the place, "Mars Hill." It was an outcropping of rock west of the Acropolis where the supreme

council of Athens - the leading philosophers - met to examine religious and philosophical matters.

And Paul was questioned. "Saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."

"For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." In Athens, GA football is king, the talk of the town - but in Athens, Greece the most popular sport was philosophy. The big men on campus were in the philosophy department and on the debate club. The Athenians tailgated before a big lecture.

"Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Athens had thousands of idols, but just in case one had been forgotten - or there was a god they'd missed - rather than offend him, they built him an altar.

It proves the paranoia produced by polytheism.

Interestingly, the *architects in Athens* built altars to a pantheon of gods, but the *philosophers in Athens* were largely agnostic. Plato wrote, "It is hard to investigate and to find the framer and the father of the universe. And, if one did find Him, it would be impossible to express Him in terms which all could understand."

Yet the intellectuals all acknowledged the necessity of a prime mover - a universal first cause - yet they viewed him as aloof and distant - impossible to know.

And this left a huge vacuum in the Greek soul. Paul draws on their hunger for the one, true God. He uses the altar to the unknown god to proclaim the true God.

Verse 23, “Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you. God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.” Right above Mar's Hill was the Parthenon - a massive temple to the goddess, Athena. It still stands today. Yet Paul says the real God needs no temple.

Heaven and earth is His temple.

“Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things...” The real God is self-existent - in need of nada! It's foolish to think the true God is dependent on human hands. He's the Creator and Giver of life.

And Here Paul makes a contemporary argument. Life doesn't evolve by chance. There is a Creator.

Philosopher GK Chesterton once said, “Evolutionists seem to know everything about the missing link except the fact that it is missing.” The theory behind evolution is that given enough time fish turn into frogs, frogs into birds, birds into monkeys, and monkeys into humans.

But if this were true you would expect to find a fossil record littered with transitional forms, like half-fish and hybrid-humans - *but the missing links are all missing!*

I once heard a lady say, "*Besides if evolution really worked - if we really adapted and evolved upwards - by now moms would have three arms.*" Don't buy into the idea that this perfectly ordered universe rose out of chance and chaos. Perfect design requires a designer.

It's obvious to an un-bias mind, that as the Apostle Paul put it, "*God made the world and everything in it.*"

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings..." God created humans with *unity and diversity*. Humans are *"one blood,"* but we've been grouped in nations and given boundaries.

The big downfall of *the global village concept - the one-world idea - a world without borders* - is that it's not biblical. Paul tells the Athenians that God created people groups, and marked out *"the boundaries of their dwellings..."* In essence, **God is in favor of walls.**

You can't point to the Bible for proof of unbridled immigration. Borders are biblical. Borders are of God. In fact, in Genesis 10 God lays out a table of nations.

Remember at the tower of Babel, all mankind came together under one ruler, and God broke up the party. He scattered us into nations... In the future, the Antichrist will rise to power on the back of a global government. Nations, and boundaries,

and people groups are God's idea, and needed in a fallen world.

The only truth that can truly bring people together is that of a common Creator. One God made us, thus we all seek that same God... "So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us..."

We're restless until we find the God who made us!

It's interesting, Epicurus taught that God is distant and unattainable. But here Paul quotes one of Athens' most famous philosophers. A man named Epimenides.

He wrote, "For in Him we live and move and have our being..." God is everywhere. God is not just *infinitely high*, but He's also *intimately nigh*. The true God wants us know Him. He's ready to reveal Himself.

Paul continues, "as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" Here he quotes the Greek philosopher, Aratus. Paul does what pastors do today. He relates to his audience. He draws on cultural references to emphasize a biblical truth.

Aratus acknowledge we all have a common Creator.

Paul explains, "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising." When Paul calls us "*the offspring of God...*" note, he's not teaching universal salvation.

He's not suggesting we're all born again. He's simply saying that as our Creator we derive our life from God.

Paul is using reverse logic... Since we're made in God's image, we can get an idea of what God is like by looking at us. I'm *living, personal, and knowable* - and so is God. I am more than a chunk of metal or stone.

I've been called "*blockhead*" on occasion, but I'm alive - and so is the God who made me. He's no idol.

Paul starts into his conclusion in verse 30, "*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent...*"

The Greeks were proud of their history. They talked longingly of "*The Golden Age of Pericles*" when Greek civilization had reached its pinnacle. Even today, we still marvel at Greek culture. Yet Paul called the hallowed history of the Greeks, "*times of ignorance.*"

The Greeks were unenlightened in God's truth.

When it came to what mattered most Greece was ignorant. Paul says the time to *debate* is over. It's time to *decide*. God is calling all men everywhere to repent.

"*Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*" The city of Athens was judging Paul, but one day God will judge Athens and all men in righteousness. In resurrecting Jesus, God was ordaining Him as Lord and Judge over all the earth.

We're told in verse 32, "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked..." It's been said, "An agnostic is a person who says that he knows nothing about God, and when you agree with him he becomes angry." People got mad at Paul because he told them truth. And when he did, they scoffed at him.

"While others said, "We will hear you again on this *matter*." The notion of Jesus' resurrection stunned the Athenians. They needed to think this through.

The Greeks considered the human body to be evil - a prison for the soul. According to Greek thought when the body died the soul was set free from its fleshly cage, to fly back into the oblivion from which it came.

The idea of a resurrection discombobulated them.

It halted Paul's message... some Athenians *taunted* Paul, some of them *tarried*, and some *took Paul up* on the offer of eternal life. We're told, "So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

This was not the response Paul experienced in other places. There were just a few converts in Athens.

Dionysius was a council member, an *Areopagite*. He was a leading philosopher who came to Christ...

Paul's other convert, *Damaris*, was female. Since proper Greek ladies seldom entered the male arena of Mars Hill, some think *Damaris* was a prostitute.

It's interesting the two named converts in Athens were a **philosopher** and a **prostitute**. It just proves God saves both the down and out and the up and out.

Chapter 18, "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth." The city of Corinth was a port with access to both the Adriatic and the Aegean Seas. This meant all north-south traffic passed through Corinth. The city was called "The Bridge of Greece."

Corinth was the first century's leading commercial center. Ancient Corinth had a population of 200,000.

But Corinth was notorious for its unbridled evil.

Every vice known to man had its home in Corinth. Whenever a Corinthian was shown in a Greek play he played the drunk. "To play the Corinthian" meant "to party hearty." "A Corinthian girl" was a prostitute.

In Romans 1 Paul describes the moral and spiritual deterioration of a civilization that had divorced itself from God. When he wrote Romans he was living in Corinth. The evil city of Corinth was his inspiration.

On top of the mountain above Corinth was a temple dedicated to the Greek fertility goddess, Aphrodite.

Each night a thousand temple priestesses flooded the streets and played the prostitute in the name of Aphrodite. Corinth was the Bourbon Street of its day.

It was a cesspool of immorality - a lewd, perverted city. Yet it turned out to be fertile ground for the Gospel.

Verse 2, “And (Paul) found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them.” The Roman historian, Suetonius, dated the Jewish expulsion from Rome as 49 AD. It was the result of riots caused by a man named, “*Chrestus*.”

It’s possible the Gospel had made it to Rome by this time. It was the preaching of Jesus as *Chrestus or Christ* that caused the upheaval Suetonius mentioned.

At this time Aquila and Priscilla moved to Corinth.

“So, because (Paul) was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.” Paul was bi-vocational. He was a pastor who supported himself with a secular job.

In their Yeshivas Jewish rabbis not only received theological training, they also learned a trade. Paul’s skill was making tents... And in Corinth he partnered with this husband and wife team, Aquila and Priscilla.

Monday through Friday Paul was in the shop, but on Saturdays he was in the synagogue. “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ*.”

Paul was “*compelled by the Spirit*” and *encouraged by friends*. That’s the one-two punch God often uses.

Paul's two pals, Silas and Timothy finally catch up to him, and their fellowship emboldens his witness. This is why Jesus sent out His disciples two-by-two. Don't underestimate the influence of Christian friends!

We also know Silas and Timothy arrived with financial support from the Philippians. It probably gave him a break from tent-making so he could devote all his energy to ministry. Paul feels fresh wind in his sails.

*“But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, “Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”* This was how Paul always handled opposition. Rather than get *shook up* he would *shake off* and moved to those who were ready to hear.

And this is an important lesson... Don't get hung up on the few folks who don't want to hear, when there're people right around the corner who are interested!

*“And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain *man* named Justus, *one* who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.”*

Paul set up shop right next to the competition!

“Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”

This was a major breakthrough. The synagogue leader was converted to Jesus. *How cool was that!*

Verse 9, “Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.”

It seems at Corinth Paul's courage waned. He'd been beaten and run out of every town he'd visited except Athens. When Crispus was converted he knew the Jews would grow desperate and resort to violence.

But God fortified Paul with two vitamins: **His presence** and **His promise**. And these are the two vitamins God uses to keep us strong and healthy.

*God is **with** us and He makes promises **to** us.* One count says there are over 7400 promises in the Scriptures. *I suggest you claim a couple for yourself!*

Notice too, God tells Paul, “**I have many people in this city.**” This is an amazing statement considering Paul is just starting his ministry in Corinth, and the city was known for its wickedness. God had many people in Corinth - at the time they just didn't know they were His people. What an incentive to share your faith.

God has many people in your neighborhood - in your office - on your team - *they just don't know it yet.*

God has them picked out. They were ordained prior to the foundation of the world. God calls them His own. He's just waiting on you to share the Gospel with them.

Verse 11, “**And (Paul) continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.**”

For 18 months Paul was faithful to teach the Bible, and the church grew. This is how churches grow today.

Later Paul will write of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty..."

Perhaps Paul was comparing his success in Corinth with his lackluster results in Athens. *Mighty Athenians* laughed off the Gospel, while it was embraced by the *lowly Corinthians*. The men of Athens were too proud to admit their need, whereas sinful Corinthians jumped at the opportunity to know God and be forgiven.

Verse 12, "When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat (or bema-seat), saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." Apparently, a new proconsul gave the Corinthian Jews hope they might persuade the Romans to outlaw Christianity. *But their plan backfires!*

"And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such *matters*."

And he drove them from the judgment seat."

“Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue (Crispus’ successor), and beat *him* before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.” In other words, Gallio pretended not to see.

Here’s a photo of the actual “judgment seat” or “bema-seat” in Corinth where Sosthenes was flogged.

Evidently, the Jews in Corinth had few friends in town, so when the locals saw the indifference of their new ruler, they decided to teach the Jews a lesson.

They roughed up Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler. He was tied to the post in front of the beam-seat.

And this makes 1 Corinthians 1:1 an intriguing verse. *"Paul called to be an apostle... and Sosthenes our brother."* Apparently, after getting beat up by the pagans in Corinth, Sosthenes put his faith in Jesus.

It took a beating to convince him to follow Christ.

Which is what it takes for a lot of stubborn people.

Maybe not a physical beating, but you have to get beat up financially, or vocationally, or relationally before you’re humbled and realize how much you need Jesus. It takes a bruise or two before you’re willing to follow.

Perhaps, Sosthenes was converted after his beating, when Paul and Crispus came to minister to him.

He had wanted them beaten - instead they’re now loving him - and forgiving, and washing, and bandaging his wounds. It’s no doubt **love** is what melted Sosthenes’ hard heart. *This was cool - the synagogue can't keep a rabbi because they're all getting saved.*

“So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria (and Antioch), and Priscilla and Aquila *were* with him. He had *his* hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.”

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, but again he was always trying to win the Jews. And here he takes a Jewish vow in hopes of creating a platform to preach.

“And he came to Ephesus, and left them there (that is, Aquila and Priscilla); but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

When they asked *him* to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them, saying, “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.”

And he sailed from Ephesus.” Ephesus was one of the most important cities Paul would visit. It was in the heart of Asia Minor (today’s Turkey). Its population was 300,000... but Paul was in a hurry. He wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. His ministry in Ephesus will have to wait for a 3rd missionary venture.

“And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.”

It had been two years since he and Silas left. I’m sure believers in Antioch were overjoyed to see them.

But no grass was going to grow under Paul’s feet. In short order he sat out again... “After he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went over the region of Galatia

and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.” This begins Paul’s third missionary journey.

Verse 24, “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria (which was in North Africa), an eloquent man *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.”

This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord (Apollos was a Christian); and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

Apollos knew the Gospel and need for repentance, but he didn’t yet possess the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

He knew how to *turn from sin* and *turn to Jesus*, but he didn’t know how to *turn on the power of the Spirit*.

Apollos was eloquent in speech, and knowledgeable of God’s Word, but he lacked spiritual power! Like many Christians today his experience with God wasn’t *inaccurate* nor was it *insincere*, it was just *incomplete*.

And I like how Aquila and Priscilla handles the situation. They don’t confront him - or call him out publicly and embarrass him - or say something that puts him on the defensive - *they just pull him aside*.

They take him to lunch to explain what he’s missing. I’m sure they prayed that he’d be filled with the Spirit.

“And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.” Achaia was the region around Corinth.

An Apostolic transfer occurred. Apollos went from Ephesus to Corinth, and Paul from Corinth to Ephesus.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6 Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." In Ephesus it was the reverse - Apollos planted, and Paul watered.

Sometimes we sow and plant the seeds of the Gospel. At other times we water the seeds someone else planted. But always the seeds sprout into faith as a result of the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. **God supplies the increase!** *To God be the glory!*