

WHITE MEMORIAL

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Men's Bible Study

Acts

Lesson 9

Read Acts 18-20

3 Questions:

Q1: Acts 18: Acts 18 is in two parts. Part I - Corinth where Paul stays for a year and a half. And Part II - the end of the 2nd missionary journey and the journey to Ephesus with the introduction of Apollos.

- Who are Aquilla and Priscilla? Why does Paul stay with them?
- Why are verses 9 and 10 surprising? Has Paul "had a hand" laid upon him up until this point? Is God making a different promise here?
- Gallio - who was he? Is his indifference any surprise to us?
- Why does Paul cut his hair?
- What is the Way? Is it capitalized in your translation? (see 18:25 and 9:23)
- Who is Apollos? What does it mean that he "only knew the baptism of John?" Are there different types of baptism?
- Where is Ephesus, and why is it important?

Q2: Acts 19: Paul stays in Ephesus for two years at the beginning of his third missionary journey.

- What does it mean to "receive the Holy Spirit"?
- What do you make of verses 11 - 12? Why is God doing Peter-like things through Paul? Do you expect this after reading about Paul thus far - is Paul more a preacher or a healer? Do you think these different manifestations of spiritual gifts inform his writings in 1 Corinthians 12?
- What do you make of the odd circumstances of the seven sons of Sceva? What is the point? Is verse 20 the key to understanding the previous 6 verses?
- Verse 21: Huge verse - where does Paul point his gaze? Why?
- Artemis - who was she? Why is she important in Ephesus?

Q3: Acts 20: Paul's farewell to Asia.

- Look at all the movement of verses 1 - 16. What is happening? Why is Paul speeding up?
- What do you make of the young man who falls asleep and falls to his death? Was the sermon too long? Have you ever fallen asleep during a sermon? Or does it play some larger purpose?
- What is the structure of 18 - 35? How important is it?
- Verse 35 - where does Jesus say this in the gospels? Have you ever heard it in church before?

3 Insights:

I1: Willie Jennings on Acts 18 and Aquila and Priscilla:

"The couple returns [Acts 18: 12 -28]. Priscilla and Aquila, a refugee couple, having left Rome under threatening conditions, now join Paul on his journey. We learned at the beginning of this chapter that they shared with Paul a common artisanship, tent-making, and equally crucial, they shared in the

ministry of Jesus and the itinerary of following where the Spirit leads [18:2-3]. We see the couple now within the reality of service and ministry. This is not Ananias and Sapphira, though many of the same elements are present. Like Ananias and Sapphira, Priscilla and Aquila's lives are shaped in the quotidian realities of survival, and like the earlier couple they have been enfolded in the demands of discipleship. Yet unlike the idolatrous couple, they have joined Paul and the work of the Spirit as a couple."

(Jennings, Acts, 2017, WKJP page 181)

12: William Willimon on Acts 19:

"For now, there is a sense of growing peril, beginning at 19:21 when 'Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia, saying 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'" Paul's determination to take Christianity to the capital of the Empire reminds us of Jesus setting his face towards the Holy City (Luke 9:51). Like Jesus (Luke 9:52), Paul sends helpers ahead of him (Acts 19:22). In fact we now see a number of close parallels between the career of Paul and that of Jesus. In his ministry and journey toward Rome, Paul demonstrates that he follows Jesus not only in *power* but also in suffering, for this is the way it is in the kingdom — evangelistic success is never without cost (Luke 9:23). Luke's alleged 'theology of glory' is constantly tempered with the recognition that discipleship is a matter of cross-bearing (Luke 14:27)....Disciples of the Messiah will be known by their scars."

Is Willimon referring to the Way? Baptism in the name of the Trinity and the high cost of true evangelism? What does this quote, and the experience of Jesus and Paul in Luke's writing suggest about the "prosperity gospel?" It is good to remember that the resurrected one is also the crucified one. It is good to remember that for all his success, Paul is constantly threatened and even flogged.

(Willimon, Acts, WJKP, 1988 and 2010, page 149-150)

13: N.T. Wright on Acts 20:

"Alongside continual trial and vindication, the journey is the other great theme that Luke is tapping into as he tells his story, particularly his story of Paul. Few people today spend most of their lives on the move. We nevertheless feel the power and pull of a story which enables us to reflect on the journey through time which we are all making. The journey of our lives has many twists and turns....Even if we live on the same street all our life long, we are on a journey whether we like it or not; and we greatly value stories that help us to see that....

Two of Paul's most powerful letters emerge from this period. He was writing 2 Corinthians, it seems, while on the way around northern Greece (20:1-2) before winding up in Corinth. Then, while at Corinth, he wrote his masterpiece, the letter to Rome."

In other words, Wright, by aligning the chronology of Luke and Paul's own words in 1 and 2 Corinthians is setting the stage for us to understand that Paul is increasing his traveling companions, increasing his travel, and writing more than he has before. We might say he is spending less time arguing and preaching than he is writing. Is this a signal that his physical ministry is winding down? What happens to us, modern Christians, if Paul doesn't turn his urgent concern to writing letters over preaching and arguing?

(Wright, Acts: 24 Studies for Individuals and Groups, 2010, IVP Connect, pages 98-99)

3 Links to further study:

L1: A map and “explanation” of Paul’s third missionary journey:

<http://www.biblestudy.org/maps/apostle-paul-third-missionary-journey-map.html>

L2: The great temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

<https://www.ancient.eu/article/128/the-temple-of-artemis-at-ephesus-the-un-greek-temp/>

L3: As Paul sets his sites on Rome, the end of his life gets closer and closer. Acts ends at 28:31 rather ambiguously. Paul is in Rome, under guard. This is all Luke tells us. How did he die - as we know he never left Rome? It is a bit of mystery, left to legend and antiquity.

<http://www.biblestudy.org/question/sauldie.html>