FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

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Chapter 12: Paul's Third Missionary Journey

The Ephesian outpouring, Paul's missionary strategy, and the Spirit-directed journey toward Jerusalem

Day 1: Understanding Acts and Preparing for Pentecost · Day 2: The Spirit-Empowered Church in Jerusalem and Beyond · Day 3: The Gentile Mission and Paul's Missionary Expansion · Day 4: Paul's Missionary Journeys, Jerusalem and Rome

Day 5: Final examination (2026-10-09)

Based on Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission by Denzil R. Miller. Africa's Hope, 2017.

CHAPTER 12 · UNIT 4 · DAY 4

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

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Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 12)

Chapter purpose. This chapter looks at Paul's third missionary journey, the Ephesian outpouring (the seventh of seven key outpourings), and the three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy.

After the second journey Paul returns, then begins the third from Antioch, with the Ephesian outpouring (the seventh of seven key outpourings) as the pneuma event launching this journey.

Bible reading: Acts 18:23-20:6

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 18:23-20:6. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading from within that passage. The last part of the lesson asks you to read Acts 20:1-38.

Learning Objectives

• State from where Paul began his third missionary journey, who went with him, and whether this affected his outlook or ministerial effectiveness.

• Explain what Luke's terminology in verse 6, "the Holy Spirit came on them," reminds us of in Acts 1:8.

• State Paul's first question to the twelve men when he arrived in Ephesus, and his purpose in asking it.

• List and describe the three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy.

• Identify the type of cross-cultural challenges that might face international missionary teams today, and why it is so important to meet these challenges successfully.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 18:23-20:6

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 18:23; read Acts 18:24-28; Acts 19:1-10; Acts 19:11-41; Acts 20:1-38.

The Big Idea

The Ephesian outpouring is the seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. In the Ephesian campaign, Luke sums up Paul's missionary strategy in three pillars: empowering, proclamation of the gospel with signs following, and mobilization.

Introduction to the Third Journey

• After an extended stay in Antioch, Paul launched his third missionary journey, which was his final journey in Acts.

• The journey began with a second pastoral visit to the regions of southern Galatia and Phrygia.

• Paul also returned to Ephesus, where he conducted the most successful evangelism and church planting campaign of his career.

• In this chapter we will look at these and other activities of Paul during his third missionary journey. In doing this, we will learn some valuable lessons about missions strategy.

The Story: Pastoral Visits to Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23)

After spending time in Antioch, Paul set out again, returning to the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. In each place he traveled, he strengthened the disciples.

Commentary on Acts 18:23

18:23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out

• Unlike his first two journeys, we are not told if Paul took anyone with him.

Strengthening all the disciples

• Paul's concern for people did not end when he led them to the Lord, or even

when he started a new church. He returned to strengthen those who had chosen to follow Christ.

• Although evangelism and church planting are major issues in missions, the role of the missionary is more than evangelistic; it is also pastoral.

• Not only must churches be planted, believers must also be encouraged and strengthened in their faith.

• They must be taught the Word of God and led into the Spirit-filled life. In this way they can grow into mature believers and effective witnesses for Christ.

The Story: Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila (Acts 18:24-28)

While Paul was ministering in Phrygia and Galatia, a brother by the name of Apollos from Alexandria, Egypt, arrived in Ephesus. Apollos was an educated man with a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. He had been taught the way of the Lord and preached with great fervor. Even though he had only received the baptism of John, he spoke accurately about Jesus. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly about Jesus in the synagogue, they took him aside and taught him about the ways of God more thoroughly.

Later, Apollos decided to go to Achaia. The brothers in Ephesus encouraged him and wrote a letter of recommendation for him addressed to the disciples in Achaia. When he arrived there, he was greatly used by God to strengthen the church. He powerfully refuted the Jews in public debates, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

Commentary on Acts 18:24-28

• The story of Apollos illustrates the fact that men and women other than the twelve apostles were faithfully proclaiming the message of Christ in many parts of the ancient world.

• There seems to have been an active church in Apollos' hometown, Alexandria, of which the book of Acts tells us nothing.

• Churches were being planted in many other places not mentioned in Acts or Paul's epistles. Luke only writes about those places that help to further his purpose in writing Acts.

18:24-25 Apollos

• Apollos is described as a learned man with "a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures."

• This understanding obviously included what the Scriptures taught about the Christ, for Apollos had been "instructed in the way of the Lord" and he "taught about Jesus accurately."

• In 1 Corinthians Paul described Apollos as the one who watered the gospel seed that he had planted, causing the church to grow (3:5-6; compare 1:12; 3:22; 4:6; 16:12).

18:25 He spoke with great fervor

• These words of the NIV are an interpretation of the Greek text, rather than a translation.

• An accurate translation of the Greek is "fervent in spirit (or Spirit)" (compare NASB, NKJV, RSV).

• The same expression is used in Romans 12:11, where the RSV translates it "aglow with the Spirit."

• This phrase seems to indicate that Apollos has been filled with the Spirit.

• That Apollos had been filled with the Spirit is also indicated by both his ministry in Ephesus (where he "spoke with great fervor" [v. 25]) and in Corinth (where he "vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate" [v. 28]) (compare 1:8).

18:27 The brothers wrote to the disciples there

• The fact that there were disciples in Ephesus indicates that there was a church there.

• It was possibly started when Paul first visited Ephesus near the end of his second journey (18:18-21).

• The church had been nurtured through the ministries of Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos (vv. 19, 24-26).

• The church, or part of it, possibly met in the household of Priscilla and Aquila (v. 26).

18:28 Proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ

• Like Peter (4:12), Philip (8:5), and Paul (9:22), Apollos' ministry centered on Jesus and the proclamation of the gospel.

The Story: The Ephesian Outpouring and Campaign (Acts 19:1-10)

While Apollos was ministering in Corinth, Paul set out from Phrygia and traveled westward through the interior of Asia, finally arriving at Ephesus. There he encountered twelve disciples. Without hesitation he asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered that they had not even heard about the Holy Spirit. Puzzled, Paul inquired further, "Then what baptism did you receive?" They answered, "John's baptism."

Paul then explained to them that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, which people received in anticipation of Jesus' coming. When the twelve disciples heard this, they were rebaptized, this time in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul then laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then they began to speak in tongues and prophesy.

Paul then took these men and went into the Jewish synagogue, where for three months he preached boldly and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. After a while, however, some members of the synagogue became obstinate and refused to believe what Paul was preaching. Some even slandered the Christian way.

Paul then left the synagogue and began teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. These lectures continued for two years. Amazingly, by the end of this time, everyone who lived in the entire province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, had heard the word of the Lord!

The Ephesian Outpouring (Acts 19:1-7)

• Paul's Ephesian campaign has been described as the chief achievement of his missionary career and the climax of his missionary work.

• Interestingly, Paul's ministry in Ephesus is the only recorded instance of his evangelistic and church planting efforts during his third missionary journey. It is as if Luke wanted to highlight this extraordinary work.

• In the Ephesian campaign, Luke sums up Paul's missionary strategy, a strategy he successfully employed throughout the Roman Empire (compare Romans 15:17-21). This strategy can serve as a model for missionary strategy today.

• Paul arrived in Ephesus with a well-thought-out goal and strategy. Paul's goal was to evangelize and establish churches throughout the Roman province of Asia (compare v. 10).

• His strategy involved three main elements, which we call pillars. The first pillar of Paul's strategy was to ensure that the Ephesian church was empowered by the Holy Spirit. This happened in the Ephesian outpouring (19:1-7).

• The Ephesian outpouring is the seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. As with the previous six, it resulted in powerful missional witness.

• Also, as with the previous six outpourings, it demonstrates Luke's empowerment-witness motif, first presented in Acts 1:8.

• Luke's primary intent in writing Acts was to call the church of his day (and ultimately the church of our day) back to its pentecostal and missionary roots.

• The Ephesian outpouring and campaign clearly demonstrate that any church, if it will be empowered by the Spirit and remain focused on the mission of God, can become a powerful witnessing community. And it can do this even in the midst of opposition and persecution.

19:1 Ephesus

• Ephesus, the provincial capital of Asia, was a great city of about 750 thousand inhabitants.

• It was the site of the famed Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

• For years Paul had wanted to go to Ephesus (compare 16:6; 18:19-21).

• He knew that establishing a strong, Spirit-empowered missional church in Ephesus was the key to evangelizing all of western Asia.

There he found some disciples

• These men were true Christians. Without exception, when Luke uses the word "disciple" without any qualifying adjective, he is talking about disciples of Christ.

• Although these twelve men had been born again, they had not yet been baptized

in the Holy Spirit, as the disciples had been on the Day of Pentecost.

• They were probably members of the emerging church in Ephesus.

19:2 Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?

• In asking this question, Paul was not inquiring as to the twelve disciples' salvation.

• He was rather inquiring as to their readiness to participate in the mission of reaching Ephesus and Asia with the gospel.

• A Spirit-empowered church was the first pillar of Paul's missionary strategy.

• When Paul asked this question, he could have had in mind the words of Jesus: "Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49; compare Acts 1:4-5).

19:6 Paul placed his hands on them

• Paul laid hands on the twelve disciples to help them be filled with the Spirit. He could also have been commissioning them for missional ministry.

• In Acts, the laying on of hands is often used in commissioning to ministry, as with the seven "deacons" (6:6) and Saul (9:17).

The Holy Spirit came on them

• Here, Luke intentionally uses the same wording he used in Acts 1:8 ("when the Holy Spirit comes upon you") so that his readers might understand that the Holy Spirit came upon these men just as he came on the disciples at Pentecost, not to bring about their new birth, but to empower them for witness.

• The Ephesian outpouring occurred twenty-five years after the Day of Pentecost.

• It is an appropriate example of those whom Peter described as being "far off" (2:38-39). They, too, could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so can we today!

They spoke in tongues and prophesied

• These twelve men spoke in tongues and prophesied, just as the Jews had done at Pentecost and the Gentiles at Caesarea (2:4; 10:46).

• According to Luke's teaching in Acts, there are two results that one can expect when he or she is baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• The first is speaking in tongues as the Spirit enables. This is the "initial physical evidence" of one's being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• The second is prophetic, that is, Spirit-empowered witness.

• Empowering is the first pillar in Paul's missionary strategy. This is the functional result of one's baptism in the Holy Spirit. Both results should be considered normative.

• The disciples prophesying in this instance should be understood as Spirit-empowered witness. It is a direct fulfillment of Jesus' statement in 1:8: "You will receive power... and you will be my witnesses."

The Ephesian Campaign (Acts 19:8-10)

• The Ephesian campaign directly followed the Ephesian outpouring.

• It took place over a period of about two years and resulted in every person in the Roman province of Asia hearing the gospel and in probably hundreds of churches being planted.

• In executing the Ephesian campaign, Paul was following a predetermined missionary strategy.

• Now that the church had been empowered by the Spirit, it needed to give itself to the proclamation of the gospel and the mobilization of workers to reach out to Ephesus and all of the province of Asia.

19:8 Paul spoke boldly

• Boldness is a characteristic of Spirit-empowered witness (compare Acts 4:29-31; 9:28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 28:31).

• The fact that Paul preached with great boldness, even in the midst of great opposition (compare 1 Corinthians 15:32; 16:9-10), is an indication that many years after his initial infilling with the Spirit (9:17-18), he was still full of the Holy Spirit.

• Paul's ministering in the power of the Spirit is also indicated by the fact that he laid hands on others to receive the Spirit (19:6) and was used by God to work extraordinary miracles (v. 11).

• The proclamation of the gospel with signs following is the second pillar of Paul's

missionary strategy (see Figure 12.2).

About the kingdom of God

• The kingdom of God is a key theme in Luke-Acts. It is mentioned 39 times in Luke and 8 times in Acts.

19:9 He took the disciples with him

• This is likely a reference to the same twelve disciples mentioned in verse 1.

• Once these twelve men had been filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul immediately took them into the synagogue with him to preach the gospel. This is mentoring at its very best.

Discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus

• Once Paul had ensured that the church in Ephesus was empowered by the Spirit, and while he was yet proclaiming the gospel with signs following, he set up a training school for missionaries and church planters.

• This represents the third pillar of Paul's missionary strategy, mobilization (see Figure 12.2).

19:10 Two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord

• What an amazing accomplishment! In just two years everyone in Asia, even those of various cultures and ethnic backgrounds, heard the gospel.

• Many churches were planted, including the seven churches of Asia mentioned in Revelation 2-3.

• Church history reveals that Asia became a center of Christian witness for many years. All these accomplishments testify to the effectiveness of Paul's strategy.

Further Insight: Paul's Missionary Strategy

• Luke includes the story of Paul's ministry in Ephesus as his most comprehensive example of Paul's missionary strategy.

• It in effect sums up his missionary strategy demonstrated in his first and second missionary journeys.

• Paul employed this strategy in reaching all of Asia with the gospel of Christ in

just two years.

• We will do well to understand and employ this strategy in our own missionary and church planting efforts today.

• In the Ephesian campaign, Paul's strategy included three key "pillars."

Pillar One: Empowering

• The first pillar of Paul's missionary strategy was empowering (see Figure 12.2).

• This empowering was twofold. It first involved the empowering of the missionary himself. Every missionary and church planter must go to ministry full of the Holy Spirit. Empowering also involved the empowering of the churches to be planted.

• Paul entered Ephesus full of the Holy Spirit. He thus ministered as a Spirit-empowered witness in accordance with Jesus' prescription in 1:8.

• Paul understood, however, that it was not enough for him alone to be full of the Spirit. He knew that if the work was to prosper, any church he planted must also be Spirit-empowered.

• Therefore, upon arriving in Ephesus, his first order of business was to ensure that the believers in that city had been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• That is why he asked the twelve disciples, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And that is why he immediately prayed with them to receive the Spirit.

• This concern of Paul's surely remained throughout his entire time in Ephesus. Also, Paul must have persisted in his insistence that all of those who were being added to the church were also baptized in the Holy Spirit and thus empowered for witness.

• Paul must have also worked to form in his disciples this same passion to see their converts empowered by the Holy Spirit.

• Thus, the two essential aspects of the first pillar are the empowering of the missionary and, equally important, the empowering of disciples in the church being planted.

• This twofold empowering laid the spiritual groundwork for the emerging missionary work of the Ephesian church. Having been empowered, the church in

Ephesus was to become a powerful center of missionary activity, reaching out to every corner of the province.

Pillar Two: Witness (proclamation of the gospel with signs following)

• The second pillar of Paul's missionary strategy was witness. This is to be expected since witness is the spontaneous result of one's being empowered by the Spirit (1:8).

• The commentary on 19:8 names this same pillar "the proclamation of the gospel with signs following."

• As with empowering, witness also has two aspects: proclamation and demonstration.

• First, Paul bore witness to the gospel through powerful proclamation. This proclamation began in the synagogue in Ephesus, where Paul "spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God" (19:8).

• He also taught "publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (20:20-21, NASB).

• The second aspect of witness is demonstration. Paul's oral witness was accompanied by powerful demonstrations of kingdom power through mighty signs following (vv. 11-20; compare Romans 15:17-19).

• No doubt, the witness of Paul's newly Spirit-filled colleagues included the same two aspects.

Pillar Three: Mobilization

• The third pillar of Paul's missionary strategy was mobilization.

• Once the church had been empowered by the Spirit, and while the gospel was yet being preached and its power demonstrated, Paul began mobilizing the church for regional missions.

• This mobilization is indicated in verse 10: "This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord."

• Without ever leaving Ephesus, Paul was able to reach the entire province of Asia with the gospel in just two years. This could only have been done by effectively

mobilizing the believers in Ephesus.

• As with the other two pillars, this pillar also has two aspects: training and sending.

• Paul trained workers and church planters in the school of Tyrannus. There seems to be a direct link between Paul's training and the fact that in the space of only two years, everyone living in Asia heard the word of the Lord.

• The school's curriculum must have included a strong emphasis on church planting and evangelism, and the atmosphere of the school must have been saturated with the presence of the Spirit.

• While the disciples were being trained, Paul sent them into every corner of the province to preach the gospel and plant Spirit-filled churches.

• No doubt, Paul's disciples employed the same missionary strategy as Paul.

• The application of this strategy resulted in a spontaneous multiplication of churches throughout the entire region "so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (19:10).

A New Testament Strategy of the Spirit

• Paul's strategy for Ephesus and Asia Minor did not originate with him. It was part of a larger New Testament strategy of the Spirit.

• Paul was simply following the example of Jesus when He sent His church into the world. And Jesus himself was following the plan that the Heavenly Father used in sending Him into the world.

• When the Father sent Jesus into the world, He sent Him with a clear mission: to redeem mankind. First, however, Jesus had to be empowered by the Spirit (compare Matthew 3:16-4:17; Mark 1:9-15; Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-14; and John 1:29-2:11).

• He then ministered in the Spirit's power, preaching the gospel and demonstrating the power of God's kingdom through signs and wonders.

• Jesus then used the same strategy in sending His church into the world. He mobilized His followers by training them and sending them out. As they went, they were to preach the gospel and to demonstrate its power with signs following.

• Before they did any of this, however, they were to wait in Jerusalem to be

empowered by the Spirit. This occurred on the Day of Pentecost and on many other occasions in Acts.

• Paul in his Ephesian campaign was simply "working the plan." He was following the example of the Father in sending Jesus into the world and of Jesus in sending His church into the world.

The Story: Further Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-41)

During Paul's time in Ephesus, God did extraordinary miracles through him. People would take cloths that had touched his body and place them on the sick, and they were cured and evil spirits left them.

One day some Jews, the seven sons of Sceva, tried to cast demons out of a man. They commanded the evil spirits to come out "in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches." To their surprise one of the evil spirits spoke back to them saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" At that, the demon possessed man jumped on them and gave them a beating. When word got out about what had happened, the people of Ephesus feared and held the name of the Lord Jesus in honor. Believers then began to come forward and publicly confess their misdeeds. A number of sorcerers brought their scrolls and burned them publicly. In this way the gospel message grew in power and spread throughout the region.

Paul then decided to return to Jerusalem, passing through Achaia and Macedonia on his way. After that he planned to visit Rome. He sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia to prepare the way; however, he remained in Ephesus for a while.

About that time, an idol-maker named Demetrius incited a great disturbance in Ephesus. He did this because the growth of the church was beginning to hurt his business. He stirred up a large crowd by claiming that Paul was defaming the Ephesian goddess, Artemis. Soon the entire city was in an uproar, with a wild mob shouting over and over, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

The crowd then seized two of Paul's companions and dragged them into the theater. Paul himself would have followed them there, but the disciples and city officials restrained him. After about two more hours of confusion and shouting, the city clerk was able to quiet the crowd. He explained to the people how Paul and his companions had neither robbed the temple nor blasphemed the Ephesian

goddess. If Demetrius and his colleagues had a complaint against these men, he said, they could file it in the courts. He then dismissed the assembly.

Commentary on Acts 19:11-41

• Success in ministry does not always bring applause; sometimes it results in bitter opposition.

• In Ephesus so many people were coming to the Lord that the local idol-making industry was severely impaired. Because of this, the leaders of this industry stirred up a riot against the church.

Spirit-Empowered Ministry (vv. 11-20)

• Paul's ministry in Ephesus was marked by power encounters. Luke cites two examples.

• The first was the overcoming of demons through "extraordinary" means (vv. 11-12).

• The second was the almost comical result of the seven sons of Sceva's misuse of the name of Jesus (vv. 13-19).

• As a result of seeing the power of God displayed, many people turned to the Lord (v. 20).

19:11 God did extraordinary miracles

• Paul's preaching in Ephesus was accompanied by powerful manifestations of divine power.

• Note that the subject of this sentence is "God." Paul was the channel; the miracles, however, were wrought by the power of the Spirit.

• Though God can, and at times will, work such extraordinary miracles, they are not to be considered normative.

19:17 The name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor

• The Spirit-empowered activities of Paul and others in Ephesus resulted in powerful witness. This is the predominant theme of the book of Acts.

• Because of this witness, "the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."

• Power encounter should be a part of our evangelistic ministries.

Riot and Vindication (vv. 12-41)

• As in every other case in Acts where the apostles were brought before the governing authorities, they were found innocent of any charges of treason or sedition.

19:23 A great disturbance about the Way

• In Ephesus the proclamation of Christ took place in the midst of great opposition.

• While there, Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, where he said, "I fought wild beasts in Ephesus" (15:32), and "there are many who oppose me" (16:9).

19:26 Large numbers of people in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia

• In spite of strong opposition, Paul and those he discipled continued to preach the gospel throughout the entire city and region.

• Thousands came to the Lord, and many churches were planted. Among these churches were probably the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3.

The Story: Final Ministry in Europe and Asia (Acts 20:1-38)

After the riot, Paul took time to encourage the Ephesian believers. He had hoped to set off immediately for Syria; however, because of a Jewish plot against his life, he decided to go first to Macedonia. Everywhere he went along the way, he encouraged the brethren. From Macedonia he went to Greece, where he remained for three months. With Paul and Luke was an international team of missionaries, including Sopater and Secundus from Macedonia, Gaius and Timothy from Galatia, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. These men took a different route than Paul; however, they eventually rejoined him and Luke in Troas.

On Sunday the believers in Troas met to receive the Lord's Supper and to hear Paul speak. Because he was going to leave the next day, Paul talked until midnight. As he spoke, a young man named Eutychus became so sleepy that he

fell from the window of the third story room where they were meeting. Rushing down, they found Eutychus dead. Paul, however, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said to the people. "He's alive!" Greatly encouraged, the disciples went back upstairs and continued their meeting until the next morning.

From Troas Paul went by foot to Assos, where he met the missionary party that had gone ahead of him by ship. The group then proceeded to Miletus, where Paul sent for the elders of the Ephesian church to come and meet with him. Knowing that this was the last time he would see them, he spoke with great affection. He reminded them of his conduct and his trials when he was with them and how he had gone about preaching the kingdom of God and had not hesitated to teach them everything they needed to know about following Christ. He further told them that the Spirit was compelling him to go to Jerusalem. Though he had been warned through prophetic words that he would be captured and put in prison there, he knew that he had to obey the Spirit's voice. His chief desire in life was to complete the mission that the Lord Jesus had given to him and to testify concerning the gospel of God's grace. He further told the elders that he was innocent before man and God because he had not hesitated to proclaim to them the whole will of God.

Paul then instructed the Ephesian elders to remain true to God and to the calling the Spirit of God had given them. They were to be faithful shepherds of the church, which Christ had purchased with His own blood. He further warned them that "savage wolves" would soon come in and ravage the church. Some would even arise from among them. They should therefore be vigilant and guard the flock of God.

Finally, Paul committed them to God and His grace. He exhorted them to follow his example of generosity, honesty, and hard work. They were to take care of not only themselves but also the weak among them, remembering the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

After Paul had finished speaking, everyone knelt down and prayed. They began to weep and embrace and kiss Paul. What caused them the most grief was Paul's statement that they would never see his face again. They then escorted him to the ship, where they bade him farewell.

Commentary on Acts 20:1-38

• Paul, during his stay in Ephesus of over two years, had established a strong church in the city and throughout the province of Asia. He had done this by applying his missionary strategy of the Spirit.

• In the process he had mentored and trained many leaders with whom he had formed strong bonds of affection. These bonds are seen in this story.

• Also seen is a glimpse of some important elements of Paul's teaching ministry. His pastoral concern for the Ephesian elders, and for those to whom they were called to minister, is evident.

• At the heart of all that he said and did was his unswerving commitment to the calling he received from Christ. Paul must have transferred that same commitment to these elders.

• Jesus said, "Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).

• Paul continued to move under the Spirit's direction. It was the Spirit of God who was directing him to go to Jerusalem and eventually to Rome (v. 22; compare 19:21).

International Missionary Team (vv. 1-6)

• Paul often moved with others in missionary teams. Many times those teams were international in makeup.

• We see a similar thing happening today. Missions has come full circle. It is now from all nations to all nations.

• Twenty-first century missionaries are often called upon to work in international teams. This requires that today's missionaries know how to relate cross-culturally not only with their host cultures but also with others on their missionary team.

20:2 Speaking many words of encouragement

• Again, we see Paul's pastoral heart. Everywhere Paul went, he encouraged the saints in those places.

20:4 He was accompanied

• In Paul's missionary team were men of at least four different nationalities.

• These men were traveling with Paul to help deliver the relief funds to the church in Jerusalem.

• They also, no doubt, assisted Paul in his missionary ministry along the way.

Eutychus Raised from the Dead (vv. 7-12)

• During Paul's short stay in Troas (where he had many years earlier received his Macedonian vision), the church met to receive the Lord's Supper and to hear the apostle's words of exhortation.

20:10-12 He's alive!

• The raising of Eutychus was indeed an outstanding miracle. As a result of this miracle "the people... were greatly comforted."

• Divine healing not only alerts sinners to the power of the gospel but also brings blessing and comfort to believers.

Farewell to the Ephesian Elders (20:13-38)

• Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders is one of the most moving speeches in Scripture.

• His words are full of emotion and concern for these fellow workers. They reveal Paul's great heart, a heart filled with love for Christ and His church, and his great commitment to the cause of Christ.

20:17 The elders of the church

• These are men whom Paul had trained and mentored during his two-year stay in Ephesus.

• They were now leaders in the church and were training and shepherding others.

• One of the greatest ways a missionary or pastor can extend his ministry is through the training and mentoring of others.

20:20 Publicly and from house to house

• Paul did not limit his teaching and preaching to public settings only.

• His passion to communicate Christ also took him from house to house preaching and teaching the message of Christ.

20:22 Compelled by the Spirit

• As had been the case so often in his ministry, Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit to do as he did (compare 11:28-30; 13:1-4; 16:6-10).

• Paul did not proceed to Jerusalem with no knowledge of what was to come. The Holy Spirit had given him ample warning of how prison and hardships awaited there (v. 23; compare 21:4, 11).

• Again, the Holy Spirit acted as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

20:24 If only I may finish the race

• Paul was not moved by threat of hardship or even death.

• He was moved by an intense desire to complete the task that the Lord Jesus had given him: to preach the gospel to those who had never heard (compare Romans 15:20).

20:27 The whole will of God

• While we are to preach the gospel to the lost, we are required to teach "the whole counsel of God" (NKJV, that is, the complete teachings of the Bible) to the church.

20:28 The Holy Spirit has made you overseers

• Pastors and elders are to realize that it is the Holy Spirit who made them overseers and shepherds of the church, which Christ purchased with His own blood.

• They must, therefore, look to Christ and then to the Word of God for direction about how they should conduct their ministries.

• They must never forget that church leaders will be held accountable to God for how they do their work (Romans 14:12; Hebrews 13:17; James 1:3).

20:33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing

• Those ministers of the gospel who love money have disqualified themselves from effective Christian service.

• Paul was not motivated by the love of money or fine clothes. He was motivated by the Spirit of God and by love for Christ and the ones for whom He died.

• Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith: "Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man

of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:10-11).

• This is the way for true ministers of Christ.

Conclusion

• So ends the story of Paul's three missionary journeys. It does not, however, end the apostle's passion to take the gospel "where Christ was not known" (Romans 15:20).

• Paul still hoped to visit Jerusalem, and from there travel to Rome (Acts 19:21; Romans 1:15). From Rome he hoped to take the gospel even farther westward into Spain (Romans 15:24, 28).

• Paul would, indeed, visit Rome, but not as he had originally planned. He would visit as a prisoner.

• In the next two chapters we will look at Paul's visits and ministry in Jerusalem and Rome.

Figure 12.1: Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Figure 12.1. The route of Paul's third missionary journey, as named in this chapter. The journey began in Antioch and moved through pastoral visits, the Ephesian campaign, and final ministry in Europe and Asia toward Jerusalem.

• Antioch: After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out. Unlike his first two journeys, we are not told if he took anyone with him.

• Phrygia and Galatia: A second pastoral visit. In each place he traveled, he strengthened the disciples.

• Interior of Asia: Paul set out from Phrygia and traveled westward through the interior of Asia.

• Ephesus: The twelve disciples receive the Spirit. Paul teaches two years in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. All in the province of Asia hear the word of the Lord.

• Macedonia: After the riot, because of a Jewish plot, Paul goes first to Macedonia, encouraging the brethren along the way.

• Greece: He remains three months. An international team travels with Paul and

Luke.

• Troas: The church meets for the Lord's Supper. Eutychus falls and is raised. The disciples are greatly comforted.

• Assos and Miletus: Paul meets the party at Assos, then sends for the Ephesian elders at Miletus. The Spirit is compelling him to go to Jerusalem.

Figure 12.2: Missionary Strategy

Figure 12.2. The three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy, as Luke sums them up in the Ephesian campaign.

• Empowering: Twofold: the empowering of the missionary himself, and the empowering of the churches to be planted. A Spirit-empowered church was the first pillar.

• Proclamation of the gospel with signs following: The second pillar. In the Further Insight section this pillar is also called witness, with two aspects: proclamation and demonstration.

• Mobilization: The third pillar, with two aspects: training and sending. Paul trained workers in the school of Tyrannus and sent them into every corner of the province.

Important Terms

Ephesian outpouring. The seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts, when the Spirit came on the twelve disciples in Ephesus.

Empowering. The first pillar of Paul's missionary strategy: the missionary and the church being planted must both be full of the Holy Spirit.

Proclamation of the gospel with signs following. The second pillar: preach the gospel, and God confirms the word with demonstrations of kingdom power.

Mobilization. The third pillar: train workers and send them out so the whole region can hear the gospel.

Initial physical evidence. Speaking in tongues as the Spirit enables, the first result Luke teaches we can expect when a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Empowerment-witness motif. Luke's repeated pattern from Acts 1:8: the Spirit

comes, and witness follows.

Lecture hall of Tyrannus. The place in Ephesus where Paul taught daily for two years, training missionaries and church planters.

Spirit-empowered missional church. A church filled with the Spirit that can carry the gospel out into the region around it.

Key People

• Paul: Begins the third journey from Antioch, often at first alone. In Ephesus he prays with the twelve to receive the Spirit, teaches two years in the hall of Tyrannus, and is later compelled by the Spirit toward Jerusalem.

• Apollos: A learned man from Alexandria, Egypt, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had received only the baptism of John, yet taught about Jesus accurately. Priscilla and Aquila taught him more thoroughly. He later strengthened the church in Achaia.

• Priscilla and Aquila: Heard Apollos in the Ephesian synagogue, took him aside, and taught him the ways of God more thoroughly. The church, or part of it, possibly met in their household.

• The twelve disciples: True Christians in Ephesus who had been born again but had not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Paul laid hands on them, the Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

• The seven sons of Sceva: Jews who tried to cast out demons "in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches." The evil spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" and the possessed man beat them.

• Demetrius: An idol-maker who incited a great disturbance because the growth of the church was hurting his business. He claimed Paul was defaming the Ephesian goddess, Artemis.

• Eutychus: A young man in Troas who fell from a third-story window while Paul spoke until midnight. They found him dead. Paul threw himself on him, and he was alive. The people were greatly comforted.

• The Ephesian elders: Men Paul had trained and mentored during his two-year stay. He sent for them at Miletus, warned them of savage wolves, and committed them to God and His grace.

• The international missionary team: With Paul and Luke: Sopater and Secundus from Macedonia, Gaius and Timothy from Galatia, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. Men of at least four different nationalities, traveling to help deliver relief funds to Jerusalem.

Key Places

• Antioch: Where Paul began his third missionary journey after an extended stay, his final journey in Acts.

• Phrygia and Galatia: The journey began with a second pastoral visit here. In each place Paul strengthened the disciples.

• Ephesus: Provincial capital of Asia, about 750 thousand inhabitants, site of the Temple of Artemis (Diana). Scene of the Ephesian outpouring and a two-year campaign.

• Lecture hall of Tyrannus: Where Paul taught daily for two years, training missionaries and church planters.

• The province of Asia: Paul's goal was to evangelize and establish churches throughout this Roman province. In two years all the Jews and Greeks there heard the word of the Lord.

• Macedonia and Greece: After the riot Paul went first to Macedonia, then to Greece for three months, encouraging the brethren along the way.

• Troas: Where the church met for the Lord's Supper, Eutychus was raised, and years earlier Paul had received the Macedonian vision.

• Miletus: Where Paul sent for the Ephesian elders, spoke his farewell, and was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem.

Key Event

The Ephesian outpouring: Paul lays his hands on the twelve disciples, the Holy Spirit comes on them, and they speak in tongues and prophesy (Acts 19:6).

This is the seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. Luke uses the same wording as Acts 1:8 so readers will understand that the Spirit came on these men as at Pentecost, not to bring about their new birth, but to empower them for witness. It launches the Ephesian campaign.

Key Verse

"When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied."

Acts 19:6

Remember This

• Paul's concern for people did not end when he led them to the Lord.

• The Ephesian outpouring is the seventh key outpouring in Acts.

• Boldness is a characteristic of Spirit-empowered witness.

• Power encounter should be a part of our evangelistic ministries.

• Missions is now from all nations to all nations.

Life Application: Go Forward Even If You Begin Alone

• Sometimes in gospel ministry we must "go it alone" as did Paul at the beginning of his third missionary journey.

• At such times, we must not be tempted to withdraw or shirk our responsibilities to God. We must press forward to the work.

• If we will be faithful to do the work that the Lord assigns us, even when we have to do it alone, in His time He will bring companions to our side to help us.

• Although Paul began this journey alone, before it was completed he had a large team of workers with him (compare 20:4).

Life Application: Mentor Individuals in the Faith

• When public or classroom teaching is not sufficient, sometimes we must do as Priscilla and Aquila did with Apollos.

• We must personally instruct certain individuals and mentor them in the faith and in ministry.

• We must do this so that they might more clearly understand the gospel and their responsibility in spreading it.

Life Application: Use a Biblically Based Strategy

• We as missionaries and church planters must approach our work with a well-thought-out, biblically-based strategy. Everything we do must be focused and intentional.

• Our labors must be aimed at planting Spirit-empowered missional churches.

• To do this, we must make sure that we enter ministry full of the Holy Spirit, and we must further ensure that the people we lead to Christ and the churches we plant have also been empowered by the Spirit.

• Only then will these believers and churches have the spiritual dynamic necessary to spread the gospel to the surrounding areas.

• Further, we must preach the gospel in the power of the Spirit, expecting Christ to confirm His word with signs following.

• Finally, we must carefully mobilize the churches we plant for further missional ministry. We can do this through focused intentional training and the effective sending and placement of those who have been trained.

Life Application: Expect Opposition

• When we enter new areas to preach Christ, we can expect opposition, especially if we are successful.

• Local religious and business leaders will often rise to oppose our efforts to establish the church in their area.

• In such cases we should not be deterred. We must stay full of the Spirit and remain focused on the task that God has given us.

• As we do, we can expect God to confirm the preaching of the gospel with miraculous signs.

Life Application: Stay Faithful to the Calling

• As ministers of the gospel, our chief desire in life must be to be faithful to the calling we have received from Christ.

• We can do this only if we will keep our motives pure, live holy lives, remain full of the Spirit, and stay true to the Word of God.

• Every minister of the gospel must be steadfast in prayer and always open to the voice of the Spirit.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. From where did Paul begin his third missionary journey? Who went with him? Did this affect his outlook or ministerial effectiveness?

• 2. Luke's terminology in verse 6, "the Holy Spirit came on them," reminds us of what promise in Acts 1:8?

• 3. What was Paul's first question to these men when he arrived in Ephesus? What was his purpose in asking the question?

• 4. List and describe the three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy.

• 5. What type of cross-cultural challenges might face international missionary teams today? Why is it so important to meet these challenges successfully?

Quick Review

1. From where did Paul begin his third missionary journey, and who went with him?

Answer: He began from Antioch. Unlike his first two journeys, we are not told if he took anyone with him. Beginning alone did not stop the work: before the journey was completed he had a large team with him (compare 20:4).

2. Which of the seven key outpourings is the Ephesian outpouring?

Answer: The seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. It occurred twenty-five years after the Day of Pentecost.

3. What was Paul's first question to the twelve men in Ephesus, and why did he ask it?

Answer: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" He was not inquiring as to their salvation. He was inquiring as to their readiness to participate in the mission of reaching Ephesus and Asia with the gospel.

4. What are the three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy?

Answer: Empowering; proclamation of the gospel with signs following (also called witness); and mobilization.

5. How long did Paul teach in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, and what was the

result?

Answer: Two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Chapter Summary

The Ephesian outpouring is the seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. In the Ephesian campaign, Luke sums up Paul's missionary strategy in three pillars: empowering, proclamation of the gospel with signs following, and mobilization.

• Paul began the third journey from Antioch. Unlike his first two journeys, we are not told if he took anyone with him. He first strengthened the disciples in Phrygia and Galatia.

• In Ephesus the Spirit came on twelve disciples (Acts 19:6). Paul then taught two years in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, and all in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

• The Spirit later compelled Paul toward Jerusalem. At Miletus he charged the Ephesian elders to shepherd the church Christ purchased with His own blood.

Enter ministry full of the Spirit, plant Spirit-empowered missional churches, preach the gospel expecting signs following, and mobilize trained workers to reach the whole region.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

Paul begins the third journey from Antioch, the Spirit is poured out on the twelve in Ephesus, and a two-year campaign using three strategy pillars reaches all of Asia.