# Paul Returns to Antioch

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Date: 24 August 2025

Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0:00] Welcome here for this Sunday, August the 24th, 2024. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my joy to be the pastor here.! Well, August 8th, everybody chuckle.

Yeah, that's your pastor showing his arms. This is because I was way too hot. So, this was extremely cold. It looks refreshing and very pastoral, pun intended, but it was cold, wasn't it, Gabe? Yeah, very cold. It was chilly. So, this was August 8th, and we were camping together, the Kinoshita family, and so the extended family, it includes Gabriel, who's with us this morning, and it's Joanne's family, and it's my best friend's family, and so all of those things.
So, we were all gathered together to camp together to recognize Mass, Kinoshita, and his life. And then also, after our church picnic, June, July 20th?
I think it was 20th. So, Gabriel came up to me, and he said, I'm feeling like it's time for me to be baptized. But, you know, I'm kind of trying to process that.
[1:14] And I said, well, I would love to do it. I know a guy. And so, we talked about it a little bit, and then all of a sudden, both of us, I think, had the exact same inspiration at the exact same moment because we both said, what about if we did it in the lake at Kukanusa when we're camping together?

And we both just went. That feels, I get chills about it now again. But I got chills up my spine because it just felt absolutely right. And so, this was that day. So, me just blathering as I have a tendency to do, and then the moment of truth.
So, a friend of ours took that picture, and I had to zoom it in because the mountains were in the background, and there was a lot in that bigger image. But just look at the stillness of that water beyond us, and then the ripples from us outwards.
I think the Holy Spirit was, I know the Holy Spirit was with us in that moment. Look at the water cascading off Gabriel's right shoulder. Isn't that amazing? So, I can't take credit.
I was not, clearly, not the photographer. But I want to formally recognize Gabriel's baptism because he's here with us this morning. I was going to talk about it last week, and I said, no, I want to wait until you're able to be there.
[2:36] So, would you join me in congratulating Gabriel and taking this step in his faith journey of baptism? And so, the next step after baptism is often church membership.

So, we've also had that conversation. So, your pastor's going to bring a motion at our congregational meeting after the service. So, be there for that. It might relate to Gabriel.
All right. Well, this morning, we're continuing in our ongoing sermon series, Acts to All the World. And through this series, we've been exploring the New Testament book of Acts.
I was talking to a pastor friend of mine who's a pastor of a small church in BC, and he said to me, so, what are your plans for preaching for the next few months or into the new year?
And I said, well, I said, it's all kind of lined up. And he said, oh, you're preaching an act still. And I said, yes. And he said, look at you preaching through a book. And I said, well, you're the good boy who encouraged me to do it, so it's your fault.
[3:44] So, this friend of mine loves exegetical preaching, which is preaching through a book of the Bible. And so, he inspired me to do it. I was quivering in my boots a little bit because I'd never done it before.

But I don't know about you, but this has been extremely rich and rewarding to me to unpack Scripture in this way, in this very specific way. And also, as we go along, to drill down into some of the things that these people, these events, these circumstances, these things that we know, some of them we know, some of them we don't know that well, how all these things can still factor into our own lives, still do factor into our own lives in very real ways.

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And so, I am doing my best as we go along to point that out to you, where there are connections to us. There are always connections to us from Scripture, right? But through Acts, I'm pointing out the things that we need to remember and be encouraged by that are here in Scripture for us.
So, our passage for this morning is found in Acts 18, 18-23. And so, if you have your Bible, you can turn to that. And if you don't have a Bible with you, maybe it's on your phone, you have an app, or there's a Bible in the pew in front of you that you can grab.
So, Acts 18, 18-23. And once you have it open to that, you can just keep it open because we'll be going back and forth through there a bit together. So, I'll also read that for us now.
[5:13] Acts 18, 18-23. Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila.

Before he sailed, he had cut his hair off at Sencria because of a vow he had taken. They arrived at Ephesus where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.
When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. But as he left, he promised, I will come back if it is God's will. Then he set sail from Ephesus.
When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.
Our sermon this morning is titled Paul Returns to Antioch. And we're continuing to follow Paul's ministry as he spread the gospel of Jesus Christ first to Jews and then to Gentiles.
[6:22] So maybe you've reflected on this as we've been studying together. If not, for God's prompting and encouraging of Paul, the gospel may never have reached the Gentiles.

Have you ever thought about that? Certainly not in the same way if Paul had not been involved. And, take it a step further, if that had not happened, it would never have been passed on in the same way from generation to generation and reached you or me.
God's plan was always for the gospel to be shared and passed along so that the whole world would come to have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. pretty amazing.
So back to Paul. After a long and successful stay at Corinth, as we explored a bit last week, Paul began the last leg of his second missionary journey, for anyone keeping score at home.
So traveling from Corinth, he went back to a place called Syrian Antioch, or Antioch of Syria, scripture sometimes says. And our passage this morning tells us that Paul's route took him through several places that are mentioned.
[7:38] Sancria, Ephesus, Caesarea, and then Jerusalem. So remember, the book of Acts is actually Luke's description of the last leg of Paul's second journey.

And he does go into Paul's further exploits after that, and as we continue in this series, we'll get there as well. So the description of this last leg of Paul's second journey and Luke's description is actually really short.
And it's covered in just six verses, the six that we've heard this morning, Acts 18, 18 to 23. Then right at the end of the passage we just heard, Luke wastes no time.
He jumps, maybe it's because he was a physician, right? He was a doctor, so he's a logic guy keeping things moving. So right at the end of the passage we heard this morning, he doesn't even stop. He goes right into starting to talk about Paul's next trip.
But what I want to do is just stay here for a moment. Just explore this last part of this second mission trip of Paul together. So the last leg of the journey, his second missionary journey.
[8:47] Paul first went from Corinth to Ephesus. And we read that after being there for some time, Scripture says, and scholars say roughly a year and a half. We considered that last week.

Paul left Corinth and then Aquila and Priscilla, if you remember, he was staying with them, living with them, went with him. Do you remember them from last week?
They were a Jewish couple who, if you remember, had been expelled from Rome because they were Jews. So with a common faith and a common vocation of tent making, as we know, Paul lived with them while he was in Corinth.
Paul clearly valued Aquila and Priscilla. He valued these people and he thought highly of them because he mentioned them later in other letters that he wrote, mentioned them by name.
They appear in Romans 16, verse 3. 1 Corinthians 16, verse 19. And 2 Timothy 4, verse 19 again.

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[9:49] So these were people that were important to Paul. So then in nearby Sancria, Sancria was a port city roughly six miles east of Corinth.

We learn that Paul cut his hair, scripture says, as part of a vow he had taken. So scholars suggest that the vow was probably related to his Jewish heritage in some way.
But Luke does not go into any detail. So it's interesting to me that Luke can be laser focused and detail focused in his accounts. And then sometimes he goes, hmm, not important.
Sideline, right? So we do recognize that in some of the writing in Acts. So as a Jew, we know that Paul had no problems with observing certain elements of the Jewish law, right?
He had been a fiercely practicing Jew who had actually persecuted the Christian church because they were not Jewish and were not connected to what he viewed to be the true faith.
[10:53] But then as Paul converted to Christianity and began to follow Jesus, he became clear in all of his teaching that following the Jewish law, while it was not a bad thing necessarily, it was not necessary to be saved.

Following or abiding by the Jewish law laid out in the Old Testament was not critical for salvation. That was not the key. So then next we learn in Acts 18 verses 19 to 21 that Paul arrived in Ephesus.
And we've heard, you know the name of Ephesus. And Paul at that place, at that time, parted ways with Aquila and Priscilla. So obviously we can learn from the way he referred to them, the way he obviously cared about them and valued them.
This wasn't a break, right? This wasn't something that happened that went wrong and he said, forget you, I'm going a different direction. Not the case. They just parted ways.
And we know that Aquila and Priscilla stayed in Ephesus. We learn that in 1 Corinthians 16 verse 19. And eventually, these folks, this couple, would come to have a church that met in their home.
[12:05] So that was important for them. So Paul went to his favorite meeting spot, which is local synagogue. And there he reasoned and debated with the Jews that were there.

And as was the case in the past, they wanted him, we hear, they wanted him to stay longer, right? They were interested in what he had to say. But he declined. But interesting that he lets them down, but then makes a promise of sorts.
He felt drawn, clearly, to go on to Jerusalem. He felt like he had unfinished business on this journey and it would take him to Jerusalem. But he also promised to them, promised these people, that he would return to them at some point, did you catch the one important piece, if it was God's will.
So Paul's saying, if it were up to me, solely, I'd come back and visit you again. But I don't report to you or to myself, so we'll see what happens.
So spoilers, Paul actually did return to Ephesus and we'll see that in Acts 19. So, some scholars suggest that Paul may have wanted to, or felt an urgent pull to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Passover there.
[13:21] that he wanted to be there for Passover. But again, Luke didn't specify, doesn't specify in his account in Acts. So, we know what we know, you get what you get, don't get upset.

So the next step was that Paul moved on from Ephesus to Jerusalem. And we read in Acts 18, verses 21 and 22, that Paul sailed from Ephesus to a place called Caesarea.
So do you know the name Caesarea from Scripture? Yes, hands raised. No, never heard of it before. Some hands coming up, some nods, lots of blank stares, which is good.
Keeps me on my toes. So we read there that Paul went from Ephesus to Caesarea. So in my research into this, I learned something new. I learned something really interesting that I want to share.
And hopefully, it's interesting to you as well, and it's not just a Bible study geek thing that I found interesting. And you'll be like, yeah, whatever. Stay with me. So the name Caesarea, or a variation of it, is used and heard 17 times in the New Testament.
[14:31] Everybody goes, so? But it actually, I learned, refers to two different places. Aha! Two distinct cities that were in different places.

Caesarea Philippi, which was one, and Caesarea Meritima, which was the other one. So what's the difference? Well, Caesarea Philippi is mentioned in the Gospels in relation to Jesus' ministry.
So when you hear Caesarea in the Gospels relating to Jesus and what he was doing in his ministry, it was the place also where Jesus questioned his disciples about his identity.

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Remember that? In the Gospels, Jesus says, who do you say that I am? Right? That's where it happened. Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Meritima is the more prominent city in the book of Acts. So the Caesarea we hear about in Acts is Caesarea Meritima, a different place. And it's known for events like the conversion of Cornelius, which we've learned about, and Paul's eventual imprisonment.
[15:35] So Caesarea Meritima relates more to Paul in his ministry and his timeline, and Caesarea Philippi relates to Jesus. And so it's Caesarea Meritima that's the city that we're talking about this morning.

No one's sleeping. You stayed with me. Thank you. So scholars suggest that Caesarea Meritima was Palestine's chief port. It was a key port city.
And maybe the route, did you catch it, maritime in there that we know in English is a clue to that for us, that it was a port city. So we're going to see in the weeks ahead as we look at Acts 21, verse 8 down there, that Paul will return to this place.
Interesting. Another interesting thing I learned. Verse 8 tells us that after landing at Caesarea Meritima, Paul went up to Jerusalem, it says. Did you catch that?
Did it just go right by you? If you look at a map and these two cities, wouldn't Paul actually be heading down? It's southern geographically to where he was.
[16:46] It's a southern point on a map. Well, good point, right? The up that is used in this verse is actually intended to indicate elevation.

Something else I learned that was new. Did you know that? Indicated elevation, not direction on a map. So that was new for me and maybe for you too.
So in Acts 18, verse 22, it tells us that Paul went up, elevation-wise, right, and visited the church there. And it's safe to assume this was referring to the church in Jerusalem because that's where he was headed, right?
So here we get to Jerusalem. After his time in Jerusalem, Paul went back down, we hear in Scripture, in elevation, to Antioch. And Antioch of Syria was actually north of Jerusalem, but it was definitely downhill in relation to it.
We read in Acts 18, verse 23, that Paul spent, the passage says, some time in Antioch of Syria. You may know this name.
[17:51] Bible scholar John Stott suggests this was probably the time that Paul was there was probably from early summer, 52 AD, to early spring of 53 AD.

So he actually did some analysis into the timeline. So with that, Paul's second journey that began in Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas split, went their separate ways.
Remember I said Paul's moving on from Aquila and Priscilla was not a conflict of any kind, whereas his break with Barnabas was. So that second leg, that last leg, was done.
And then as I said, Luke wastes no time in launching into his account of Paul's third missionary journey. It's like, Luke, whoa, slow down, we're not, slow down. So in Acts 18, verse 23, he's jumping ahead right away, right?
He's right into the third journey right away. So we won't jump ahead there yet. So I think it's important for us to consider some things relating to what we've talked about.
[18:55] The impact of Paul's second journey. There was lots of impacts, which shouldn't surprise you too much. But first, Paul's second journey had an impact on churches.

Paul was able to encourage some churches. Churches in Syria and Cilicia. Churches in places called Derbe and Lystra and Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia.
But more than that, Paul was also able to establish some churches. In Philippi, in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Paul was a busy, busy man and was on a mission for God.
So second, Paul's second journey had an impact on fellow believers. Paul began lasting relationships with co-workers, people that he worked with closely in ministry.
Silas, for example. Paul chose him as his ministry partner as we learned back in Acts 15. Paul chose Silas specifically. Silas served faithfully alongside Paul in good times and bad.
[20:07] And he actually had a front row seat to God working in amazing ways. Paul talked about Silas often to other people throughout his ministry and his writing.

And he referred to or addressed him in his other letters. You see Paul's other writing. Some of his openings or closings or other things he will mention people.

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and he mentioned Silas. Timothy was another co-worker of Paul's. He would join Paul and Silas on their missions. Timothy often joined Silas to serve with him when Paul had been called somewhere else.
Timothy and Silas would go off and serve together. Paul relied on Timothy in many ways and in many situations and we hear about it throughout Scripture. Sometimes he sent him as an emissary of sorts.
Sometimes he included him in the opening salutation of his letters to churches as with Silas. Paul also referred to Timothy as his co-worker sometimes and even as his brother at other times.
[21:15] He wrote two personal letters perhaps you didn't know directly to Timothy. Luke the author of Acts If it wasn't for Luke's first-hand accounts in the book of Acts we likely or Lukely perhaps if you'd prefer wouldn't have the comprehensive details and information about Paul's ministry that we have now.

The things that we're reading this morning were recorded by Luke and have been passed down over the centuries. Luke's voice as a narrator we've talked about this a few times also appears here and there throughout the book of Acts.
We can hear that particularly I'll give you a passage here Acts 16 10-13 so listen to this After Paul had seen the vision we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.
From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia and we stayed there several days.
You getting it? On the Sabbath we went outside near the city gate to the river you'll probably remember this event where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.
[22:47] Paul also referred to Luke in his other letters in the opening salutations again and other places throughout his writing. And then last but not least and fitting as we've been talking about them more recently we come to the dynamic duo of Aquila and Priscilla.

We've been considering them in our most recent sermons in the past few weeks in the series. Paul met them in Corinth and they came with him when he sailed on his mission.
Paul greets them by name early in Romans and again in 2 Timothy. As we learned this morning they also had a church that met in their home. So we can see that Paul building lasting personal and working relationships happened with many people.
Paul also began lasting relationships with fellow Christians at Philippi Thessalonica and Corinth and you can read all about those connections many other connections as well in those letters.
Philippians 1st and 2nd Thessalonians 1st and 2nd Corinthians! Third Paul's second journey had an impact on establishing historical background.
[24:07] So what do I mean by that? In exploring his missionary journey we've heard the names of churches to whom Paul would later write letters that we now know as books.

Galatians would be written to the churches in Antioch of Pisidia Lystra Iconium and Derbe
Philippians would be written to the church at any guesses?
Philippi the books of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians would be written to the church at Thessalonica Thessaloniatown no Thessalonica and the books of 1st and 2nd Corinthians would be written to the church at Corinth perfect in exploring this missionary journey we've also been introduced to people whose impacts are found in other books of the New Testament as we've been reminded Luke was the author of both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts and Timothy was the recipient of 1st and 2nd Timothy as we wrap up this exploration of Paul's second missionary journey I also want us to take note of the notable examples of conversion that we've heard about do you remember Lydia of Thyatira dealt in purple cloth which I love the Philippian jailer we heard about in Acts 16 the large group of Corinthian people who heard
Paul speak and responded in Acts 18 we've also explored some amazing examples of Christian character Timothy the dedicated disciple Lydia the hospitable convert and the Berean Jews that we hear about in Acts 17 who eagerly received Paul's message and then studied the scriptures with passion to confirm that what Paul had told them was true my hope is that these powerful examples of conversion and character that we've been learning about really do inspire us in our own devotion to the Lord thanks be to God for his plan at work through Paul and Silas and Timothy and Barnabas and the many others we've been talking about together in this series so far folks without their

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obedience and commitment to the Lord's work in them
God's work through them into the world we would not be here today amen amen

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