

# SUMMER 4 - Acts 16-28 - Evangelism in Ephesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well friends, we've got a lot to do today and we've come to a passage that is almost exclusively concerned with the city of Ephesus and because of this I want to show you some pictures as we go and tell you a bit about Ephesus.

You might see on the map that you've got on the back of your outlines there, you'll see that there's a map of Paul's second missionary journey and his third missionary journey and you'll be able to spot where Ephesus is on the map.

Let me just tell you a bit about the city and its people. First of all, the city. Ephesus was the most important city in the province of Asia which is labelled on your map.

Now the part of the world that is now known as Western Turkey. It was a strategic place for ministry given that it was a leading city in the wealthiest, most densely populated province in the Roman East.

Its population was somewhere around about 300,000. Ephesus was a key centre of trade. The great overland road that went from India through Mesopotamia ended up in Ephesus.

[ 1 : 05 ] Ephesus was also the throughport for goods from all parts of the Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Black Seas. Unfortunately, because they had over-lumbered, over-grazed and charcoal burnt the topsoil, charcoal burnt things, the topsoil was actually falling into the streams.

And hence the streams were gradually turning into marshes and the storm waters were washing the silt down to the sea. The result was that the harbour at Ephesus was becoming increasingly choked.

And if I showed you the video clip that I wanted to tonight, you would see that the city of Ephesus is now set right back from the coast. But initially it actually had a port running into it.

In the first century, the sea came right up to Ephesus and the city was a harbour city. So Ephesus was a very important trade city. But it was not only important for trade, it was well known for another factor.

You see, Ephesus was one of the most important sites for the worship of the Greek god Artemis, who the Romans knew as Diana. And Artemis was a multi-breasted goddess of fertility.

[ 2 : 12 ] And I might even have a photo here for you of her. There she is. The Ephesians claimed that an image of her had fallen from the sky.

I suspect it may even have been a meteorite that resembled her in shape or something like that. In honour of her, the people of Ephesus had built a temple which was known as one of the seven wonders of the Roman world.

The temple was four times as large as the Parthenon in Athens. So it's a very significant building. And because, in fact, I probably got a slide of that as well, because the river was silting up and the port becoming increasingly non-viable, the Ephesians were turning more and more to tourism. And they were looking toward people visiting the temple of Artemis as a way of supporting their economy. It was very important to them. And that's the city that Paul journeyed to in the summer of probably A.D. 52.

And this would be the base of his ministry for three years. And during that time, he and his fellow workers would effectively evangelise the area until, in inverted commas, from Acts 19.10, all the residents of Asia heard the word of God, both Jew and Greek.

[ 3 : 26 ] By the way, I should show you one more picture, the theatre at Ephesus, which was reckoned to be able to see 25,000 people. It's a huge structure. Now, hopefully that gives you just a very little feel for the city of Ephesus.

Let me tell you about Paul's second missionary journey. As you might know, the church at Antioch sent Paul as a missionary to conduct evangelistic mission among Gentiles in places where the

gospel had not yet been heard.

And you can see the journey on the map that I've given you on the back of your outlines. Well, in Acts 18, he is in the last stages of that journey.

And in verse 19, we have the very first reference to Ephesus in the whole of the New Testament. Paul and his friends arrive. And Paul goes to the synagogue during the week.

That is, he goes not during the Sabbath, not on the Sabbath, because he wants to test the water, I think, for future evangelistic work later on. Verse 19 says that he reasoned with the Jews.

[ 4 : 30 ] In other words, he argued the case for Jesus. And he gets a reasonable response. The Jews, well, they want him to stay on. And he declines. However, he does promise a return visit if the Lord wills.

And he does appear to leave Priscilla and Aquila there. And in verse 26, we hear of this couple, Priscilla and Aquila. They are active in ministry in Ephesus soon after. Now, let me tell you that Romans chapter 16, verse 9, appears to indicate that Priscilla and Aquila set up a house church before returning to Rome four or five years later.

Anyway, Paul gets on his boat and then he arrives in Caesarea. Look at verse 22. We're told that he greets the church. That is probably the church that is the church in the church, the church in Jerusalem.

In other words, what he does is he talks to the church leaders in Jerusalem and then he heads off to his home church in Antioch. And verse 23 tells us he spends a fair degree of time there.

However, verse 23 also tells us that after this, he starts what is the third missionary journey. He goes from one place to another through the regions of Galatia and Phrygia.

[ 5 : 42 ] And here, Paul, a master pastor, is at work. He evangelized these places during his first missionary journey. And that is he planted the gospel of Jesus here.

Now he's checking out the gospel fruit. He's checking out to see what's happened. He's strengthening the disciples. You see, you don't just plant the gospel. You water it well. And that's what he's doing.

Now, let's get back to Ephesus and Acts 18, 24 to 19 through to the end. And that's where we're going to spend most of our time. You see, the gospel has now come to Ephesus. And God has not been inactive.

Look at Acts 18, verse 24 to Acts 19, verse 10. Do you remember how Paul had visited Ephesus and had a trial run in the synagogue that I mentioned earlier on?

Well, before long, a man called Apollos visits. I need to tell you a bit about Apollos. He is a Jew. He's an educated and eloquent man.

[ 6 : 40 ] Verse 24 says he's competent in the scriptures. Verse 25 indicates that somewhere and somehow he has been instructed about Jesus. Verse 25 also says that up until a certain point, he knew the gospel accurately and he preached it well.

But he didn't have a full picture of Jesus. And it appears as though he'd been taught by the disciples of John the Baptist. Probably he knew Jesus as the Messiah, but not much more.

But look at verse 26. As Priscilla and Aquila listen to him at work, they are impressed. But they realize there's something wrong. You know, they run a sort of theological geiger meter or whatever over him and they realize there's something missing.

Hence, they take him home and they explain things to him more fully. I think this is a wonderful picture in Acts, isn't it? A good wife and husband team jointly doing ministry together, jointly teaching the way of truth more accurately.

I think it's great. Heather and I have a model like this ourselves in our ministry. Here's a husband and wife team at work with Aquila and they seek to straighten him out.

[ 7 : 52 ] And although we're not explicitly told, he clearly listens and accepts. We're told about the ongoing ministry of this man. He decides that he would like to engage in ministry in Achaia where Corinth is.

And so the Christians in Ephesus write a letter of recommendation for him and Apollos goes off to Corinth. We'll hear about him, won't we, as we read the epistle to the Corinthians.

So anyway, while God supplies the needs of Christians in Galatia and Phrygia through Paul, he, Apollos, is going to supply the needs of the Corinthians for continuing Bible teaching ministry and the strengthening of the disciples.

And he also vigorously debates and argues with the Jews. Did you notice that, friends? It's a great picture. Evangelistic work has gone on. God has turned people to himself.

But he doesn't leave them alone, does he, you see? He provides them with people like Paul, Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos. Now, please understand this. You see, our pastors, whoever they might be, are not God.

[ 8 : 57 ] God uses them. But God has many people that he might use. He loves his church. And he alone supplies the needs of his church. So, friends, wherever you are from, pray for your leaders.

And pray that God will give you leaders who, can you see here, greatly help those who through grace have believed. And also leaders who can powerfully refute and show by the scriptures that Christ, the Christ is Jesus.

By the way, did you hear the words by grace? Christians are those who, by grace, believe. It is not by the expertise of a preacher. It is not by their own conviction.

It is by grace. So, pray for God to be at work to supply grace. And did you hear the words about powerfully refuting in this chapter?

Throughout Acts, we're going to see lots of examples like this. We've already seen a number, and we're going to see them in these two chapters. When Paul is at Corinth, we hear that he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews.

[ 10 : 02 ] Chapter 18, verse 4. The Jews complained to Galileo that this man is persuading the people. In Ephesus, Paul speaks boldly to the synagogue for three months.

The literal Greek of chapter 19, verse 8, is that he was arguing and persuading. In other words, Paul and Apollos definitely believed the gospel. They believed it was true, but they didn't just preach it and walk away.

They used arguments and evidence. They worked hard at convincing people. I wonder if you can hear what I'm saying, because it's a very needed word for our world today. Yes, God is at work through grace.

But he is at work through the gospel of grace. But he also uses powerful argument. He also uses the word of the scriptures. And all of this is so that Jesus may be known.

By the way, you'll notice I've put in there the heading, instructing in complete belief and encouraging growth. And we've seen all of this before, haven't we? We've seen the incomplete belief of Apollos.

[ 11 : 07 ] We've seen Christians gently take him aside. There doesn't appear to be any rebuking, challenging, but rather a gentle instruction. And I think that's the way good ministry proceeds.

A time may come for rebuke and for challenge. However, much of the time, Christian ministry is done by ordinary people. And it involves people sitting down and teaching others.

Friends, if you're in a prayer and Bible study group within our church or in any other church, that is the core, in many ways, the core of ministry amongst our churches.

The ministry of the gospel is for us all. It happens over meals. It happens in our homes. It happens in study groups and one-to-one. We'll later find out.

It happens in lecture theatres. It involves instructing incomplete believers and encouraging growth. So don't leave the ministry of the gospel to others and the ministry of encouragement to others and the ministry of education to others.

[ 12 : 09 ] Engage in it yourself. You see, do it as a couple. Do it as a family. But do it. We've been called to this ministry. Let's now turn to chapter 19. And let me tell you what actually happens.

What I'm going to do is quickly summarize the story of these first 10 verses and then make some observations about their importance for us. The first seven verses. Paul has strengthened the Christians in Galatia and Phrygia.

Now he's back in Ephesus as he promised he would be if God permitted. He has been in Ephesus a short time. And he goes around speaking about Jesus. And as he does so, he comes across a group of men who seem to be Christians.

That is, as he talks to them, I presume he finds out, well, you know, they believe in these sorts of things. Sound as though they're Christians. However, for some reason, Paul begins to think there's something wrong with their Christian experience.

So he puts the question to them. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they reply, or no.

[ 13 : 13 ] In fact, we haven't even heard there's a Holy Spirit. Now, I don't know what it was that wig Paul off here. But something did. And he asks the question. And Paul knows something is very

wrong.

So he decides to delve a little bit deeper. And he finds out that they are people who'd heard about Jesus through John the Baptist. And Paul explains to them that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance.

And that John's main role in God's plan was to point beyond himself toward Jesus. Having heard this, the men do the natural thing. Having heard about Jesus, what do they do? They put their faith in him.

The one to whom John pointed. They did what John would want them to do. They were baptized then in the name of Jesus. And Paul lays his hands on them. And the Holy Spirit comes upon them. And like Jews in Acts chapter 2 and the Samaritans in Acts 8 and the Gentiles in Acts 10, they speak in tongues and they prophesy. Now, Luke is carefully pointing out to us that God not only welcomes Jews and Samaritans and Gentiles, he also welcomes those who have hoped for the coming Messiah through the teachings of John the Baptist.

[14:20] So there's the story. Now, we're going to come back to it a bit later because it teaches us an important thing. Let's look at the closing verses. Verse 8. Luke goes on to give a simple overview of Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

And he tells us that Paul enjoys the hospitality of the synagogue for three months. After three months, some of the Jews begin to demonstrate the same hard-heartedness of Jews everywhere else.

And they begin to speak badly about Christians and about Christ in the synagogue. So Paul decides to leave again. And he takes his converts and fellow Christians and sets up shop in a lecture hall of some guy called Tyrannus.

If you want to know what it probably means, it's the tyrant. Not a great place to set up a, you know, a Sunday meeting, I suppose, or whatever it was. It seems from Acts chapter 20 verse 34 that Paul would spend some part of the day working with Priscilla and Aquila in a trade.

And it seems probable, his trade, and then it seems probable that this was the early morning, possibly the evening, that he then went about teaching people. In the heat of the day, he would give public lectures on Christianity.

[15:32] Let me tell you, today, the worst time I preached at every service at Holy Trinity. And let me tell you which the worst was. Not because they were not open, but because in here at 1.30 in the afternoon is not a great time to be preaching a sermon.

The Chinese tried to keep themselves awake, but I know I fall asleep at 1.30 in the afternoon listening in here. It's a terrible place. And that's sort of what Paul was doing, you see. He's in the heat of the day teaching people about Jesus.

And on top of this, we're told in Acts 20.20 that he spent time in people's houses proclaiming the message of Jesus. We also know that he sent various letters to his churches from Ephesus. Friends, can you see what Paul's doing? He's engaging in, you know, ordinary ministry or ordinary work, probably. He's teaching. He's writing.

He's gospeling. It's a grueling schedule that he's on about, but God blesses it. And by the end of this time, we're told the news of Christ had become known throughout the province of Asia.

[16:42] Later on in 1 Corinthians, Paul will say that he worked till he dropped. He says, by the grace of God, I am what I am. But his grace toward me did not prove vain, for I labored.

I worked even harder than all of them. And yet not I, but the grace of God with me. Now, I wonder if I could just make a point of application here. I want you to take a closer look at Acts 19.1-7.

So have a look at it. And I wonder if you notice something as we went through it. Here is Paul. And he observes that something is wrong with these Christians. It appears that they don't have some of the marks you would expect from Christians.

Most likely, they don't have some of the marks of the Holy Spirit you'd expect Christians to have. So what does Paul do? Now, look carefully. What does he do? Does he urge them?

Does he tell them about the Holy Spirit? You say, ah, look, I know what you guys are missing out on. Let me tell you about the Holy Spirit. Does he urge them to have a second experience of the Holy Spirit?

[17:45] Because they must have had one. Does he tell them that they had a first experience of the Holy Spirit when they believed? And now they need to be empowered for witness? No. When you find someone who's missing the Holy Spirit, what do you do?

Well, you do what Paul does here. Did you notice what he does? He tells them about Jesus. You see, if a person doesn't have the marks of the Spirit, they're not Christian. And if they're not Christian, what do they need?

They need to hear about Jesus. And if God is at work in them, then they will respond favorably in repentance and faith. And then they'll receive the Spirit.

You see, Paul makes this clear in Romans 8, verse 9. In Romans 8, verse 9, he says, Without qualification, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. That's true for these people.

It's true for you. If you don't have the Spirit, then what do you need? Not to go around searching for the Spirit, because the Spirit points you to Jesus. You need to go around and hear more about Jesus.

[ 18 : 50 ] And then as you receive him and embrace him, you will receive the Spirit. So, let's return to Paul's ongoing ministry in Ephesus. It's great fun or great work, if you like.

Look at verse 10. It gives a summary of things so far. My version is slightly different tonight. They, oh no, it's the same as yours. They went on this for two years. So that all Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

This is a summary statement about Paul's ministry here in Asia. But Luke also gives us some snapshots of some special events that marked his ministry.

First one is all about miracles. Second concerns supernatural. And the third concerns a riot. So, let's have a look at them. First, the miracles. Let me just branch out here a little bit into Shakespeare.

In Shakespeare's play, The Comedy of Errors, Antipholus of Syracuse comes to Ephesus. And here's what he says about it. They say that this town is full of cosenage.

[ 19 : 55 ] As nimble jugglers, they deceive the eye. Dark working sorcerers that change the mind. Soul killing witches that deform the body.

Disguised cheaters, prattling mountie banks and many such liberties of sin. Can you hear what he's saying about Ephesus? Did you hear the words? Dark working sorcerers.

Soul killing witches. Disguised cheaters. You see, now he's much, much later than Acts. But he knew what Ephesus had, Ephesus' reputation.

It is a place full of magic, witchcraft, sorceries, superstition. And so when Paul performs miracles in the name of Jesus, it is not surprising that the Ephesians appear to regard him as a magician of some sort.

And it's also not surprising that people take sweat cloths and his work apron and they apply them to the sick and the demon-possessed people, just like we see in verse 11.

[ 20 : 54 ] But what is most surprising is that these things are successful. Look at verse 12. Diseases leave the sick. Evil spirits come out of demon-possessed people.

But friends, don't think that this is normal, everyday stuff. Look at what Luke says in verse 11. These are miracles of an extraordinary kind. They are not usual, unusual things.

They are extraordinary. The only thing I can think of is that they were God's way of working in a place where magic and superstition were an integral part of life. You see, they were God's way of breaking through and supporting his word about Jesus.

Read Hebrews chapter 2, the first few verses, and you'll see that the miracles often accompany the gospel coming to a place. Similar things had happened with Jesus. Similar things happened in the ministry of Peter.

There's no reason why they couldn't happen in the ministry of Paul. Now, a second special event has to do with some wandering Jews that we meet in verse 13. Have a look. Verse 13.

[ 21 : 56 ] In the ancient world, magical names were used to cast out spirits. I love this little story. Okay. Because of the words that are said. And Jewish magicians and exorcists were highly esteemed.

People in the ancient world believed that Jewish magicians commanded particularly effective spells. And people in the ancient world also knew that Jews had a name of God that they were reluctant to pronounce.

Therefore, they naturally thought that the reason that they were so successful was the name of God was particularly powerful. So it's not surprising, is it, to hear of Jewish exorcists and magicians wandering the ancient world.

And these particular exorcists hear Paul speaking about Jesus. They presumably see him casting out demons in the name of Jesus.

And so they decide they're going to give it a try themselves. Got a good magic name. Why not give it a shot? So, the next time they come upon someone demon possessed, they speak to the demon. [ 23 : 01 ] And I guess they say something along the lines of, I command you by the name of Jesus whom Paul proclaims. Well, that's the sort of indication we get here. But let me tell you, the name of Jesus is not a magical name.

And so I reckon it's like an unfamiliar bomb exploding in their hands, isn't it? You see? Here they're wielding this name around and all of a sudden the bomb goes off. And the demon replies, it's wonderful words, isn't it?

Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you? It's very strong, isn't it?

Jesus I know, Paul I know, but you are nothing. Out of the males of demons in this case. The demon possessed man then leaps upon these exorcists and he assaults all seven of them.

And verse 16 states that they run from the house naked and wounded. They find themselves, you see, dealing with something far beyond their ability. And the city hears about it. And you can imagine the hubbub.

[ 24 : 01 ] People are astounded at the power of the name of Jesus. And the name of Jesus is then held in great reverence. It is honoured and it is praised even by people who don't follow Jesus.

And some magicians realise the sham they've been living in. They turn to God from superstition and magic and idolatry. And they choose to serve a living and true God.

And verse 19 says they then demonstrate their conversion and their faith in Jesus in the most spectacular way. They collect their papyrus scrolls of magical spells.

And they take them out. And they perform a public burning of them. And the cost of the scrolls was apparently 50,000 silver coins.

There's some debate about, you know, what was that actually worth. But let me tell you, it's a lot of money. However much it is worth. And that is the depth of their repentance. You see, these people had come to light.

[ 25 : 03 ] They no longer needed the ways of darkness. Prince, it's a great mark of repentance, isn't it? And I wonder what it tells us about us and our repentance. When you turned away from the ways of sin and turned to serve the living and true God, did you repent with such strength?

And when you choose to repent now, do you repent with such strength? The Ninevites at the time of Jonah repented with vigour and put the Jews to shame.

How zealous are we for God? How keen are we for holiness and sanctification? How grateful to God are we for his forgiveness and his acceptance?

Or do we just turn back to those sins lightly, and only return to them without a thought at the next opportunity? I fear, if you are like me, that our repentance is like the morning dew.

It dries quickly. It disappears. Anyway, remember, Ephesus is a city full of religion. City marked by needing tourist dollars.

[ 26 : 21 ] Because it no longer, you know, its harbour is sort of in trouble. And now some important figures are casting aside important elements of that religion and that superstition. And that moves us on to the third snapshot.

You see, when Luke records that the gospel was preached so effectively, and that all residents of Asia heard the gospel, it was not an understatement. In fact, the preaching of Paul and his fellow workers was so effective that it began to affect the social fabric of Ephesian society.

As Paul preached, you see, people began to have suspicions about the efficacy of the goddess Artemis. They stopped buying the local idols and all the other religious paraphernalia, such as miniature temples.

Many people began to throw out idols. And the silversmiths began to feel the pinch financially. Just to give you a little snapshot of this, when we were in ministry in Western Australia, we at one point had, we were having Chinese people become Christians.

And at one point, we had a man fluent, not a Chinese man, but a Westerner, fluent in Mandarin, come and spend the night with them. He knew Chinese culture.

[ 27 : 34 ] He knew Chinese superstition. And he shared the gospel with them again. They'd received the gospel. They'd become Christian. But he showed some of the implications. And the major woman of this household afterward, do you know what she did?

She went through all her cupboards and all her little holes in the wall. And she took out her elements of superstition. And she put them in a bag.

And she threw them in the rubbish bin. As a demonstration, you see, of her conversion. Friends, here, the president of the silversmiths guild calls a meeting.

He sets before them the seriousness of the situation. They are outraged. And they rise up in defense of their God. And they rise up in defense of their income.

And before long, a full-scale riot is in progress. And they grab Paul and his companions. They drag them to the theater. And Paul finds himself befriended by some of the noblest and wealthiest officials in the city.

[ 28 : 40 ] He wants to get out and speak to the crowd. But his disciples and these rich people know better. They hold him back. The Jews fear that there's going to be this outbreak of anti-Semitism.

And they send one of their leaders to disassociate themselves from Paul. And he's shouted down. And eventually, the town clerk arrives and quietens the crowd.

And he warns the crowd that the consequences of their actions will be very serious indeed. After all, you see, the Roman administration would not tolerate such things as this.

They might well act to take away their civic privileges. The honor and renown of the great goddess Artemis was not at stake. The men had committed no sacrilege.

Matters of concern could be dealt with at the proper time and place. You see, riots were a risky way of dealing with such issues in the ancient world. Now, so, friends, there are three snapshots of ministry in Ephesus.

[ 29 : 40 ] It's a very interesting place, isn't it? They're not the bread and butter, I think, of Paul's ministry. These are not the things that happen every day, which is why you record them, because they're not the everyday. Rather, they're the things that were extraordinary in the life and ministry of Paul at Ephesus.

And having recounted these things, Luke gives us another summary of how the ministry of the gospel is going. Have a look at it in your Bibles. We'll start at Acts chapter 6, verse 6. Okay, so flip back in your Bibles to Acts 6, verse 6.

Let's have a look at it. And the word of God, we're told, continued to increase. And the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.

And a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. That's after the ones that have been converted. So this next step after the conversions in Acts chapter 2. Now flip through to Acts chapter 9, verse 31.

Acts 6, 7. Now Acts 9, 31. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up and walking in fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

[ 30 : 51 ] It multiplied. Do you hear the growth factor again? Now Acts 12, 24. Just after some very significant persecution. Look at what's said.

And the word of God increased and multiplied. Now move again. Acts 16, verse 4. We read.

And they went on their way through the cities. And they delivered to them for observation the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and the elders who were in Jerusalem.

So here they go. And, you know, and then finally have a look at Acts 19, 20. We're told the word of God grew mightily and prevailed despite opposition.

You see, despite depression and heart searching on Paul's part, God's word about Jesus continues to grow mightily. It continues to prevail over demons and over demigods of the world.

[ 31 : 54 ] And people continue to turn from idols to serve the true and living God and wait for his son from heaven. And you've noticed that as we've moved through the passage, I've forgotten an important section. And I bet some of you have noticed.

I wonder if some of you think I was going to dodge it. That's right. It's verses 21 to 22. Have a look at it. But before I turn to them, I want you to hear Paul's reflections on ministry in Ephesus from his own lips.

You might like to write down these references. 1 Corinthians 15, 32. He says he was in some mortal danger in Ephesus. And he fought with wild animals here.

In 1 Corinthians 16, verse 9, he says he had many adversaries. In 2 Corinthians 1, 8 to 10, he talks about some affliction he experienced in Asia, which caused him to be so utterly, unbearably crushed that he despaired of life itself.

Romans 16, verse 4 talks about Priscilla and Aquila risking their necks for Paul's life. The most likely reference to this time is Ephesus.

[ 33 : 04 ] The point is being made that while we get the glossy picture from Luke, ministry in Ephesus was not what it looks like on the surface.

It was amongst the longest and the toughest that Paul experienced. And yet here in it, here in it, in the midst of that, those come these verses 21 and 22.

In the longest and toughest time of his ministry, or one of the longest and toughest, come verses 21 and 22. Paul begins to look onward and outward.

You see, these verses tell us that under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he resolved that he'd go back to some of the churches he'd founded in Philippi and Corinth.

And then he would go on to Jerusalem. And finally, he would make a journey to the center of the known world, to Rome itself. Paul had now seen the fulfillment of the first half of the instruction given in Acts 1, hadn't he?

[ 34 : 04 ] Remember Acts 1? Gospel to Judea. Samaria. Samaria. To the ends of the earth, as it were. It comes to the Gentiles.

He knows it has reached Rome. And so now he decides he will go to Rome with the intention of going through Rome and beyond it. He had used Antioch as a base to evangelize the eastern part of the empire.

And now he's going to use Rome as a base from which to evangelize the western part of the empire. Listen to him wrap up his proposal in the letter to the Roman Christians that he wrote, not long after he left Ephesus and he went to Philippi and Corinth.

Here's my summary of his words in Romans 15, which you might like to read later on. He says this. I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem as far around as Elycrium.

Now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come on my way to you, to Spain.

[ 35 : 07 ] To come to you on my way to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent by you once I've enjoyed your company for a little while. At present, I'm going to Jerusalem as a ministry to the saints.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the spirit to join me in my earnest prayer to God on my behalf, that I may be rescued from unbelievers in Judea and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

It's incredible, isn't it? Tough time. But he begins to look even so beyond it. So that's evangelism in Ephesus.

It's not enough for this servant of Jesus. He wants Jesus to be known more and more everywhere. He wants Jesus to be named where humans live and breathe. Wherever you can find humans, may the gospel be preached there.

And so he will keep on fighting beasts and struggling with uncertainty. But let me take just a step back from all of this and see some of its implications for us as we wrap up. I want to reflect on the case of the Jewish exorcists.

[ 36 : 16 ] I like them a lot in one sense, just because of the humor attached to it. You see, these Jewish guys were dabbling in the world of the supernatural. And they were well out of their depths.

You see, the world of the supernatural, even though the story's got some humor in it, is a very real world, friends. The world of the supernatural is a world of demonic forces, of the devil and of the God of the whole world.

That is the God who this world worships. It is a world where the real future of the world is worked out. If you dabble in this world, you need protection.

The warning is there. Don't play with this world. Playing in this world of the demonic without being in right relationship is like playing in a minefield. It's like playing with some unknown armed weapon that could go off in your hands.

Don't do it. Because this world of demonic forces knows Jesus. And it knows those who are in relationship with Jesus. And it has respect for such people, because they have God on their side.

[ 37 : 22 ] But the world of the demonic has no respect for anyone else. And that world can maim and damage in untold ways. Please hear me, friends. Don't play with it.

It's not a game. Second, I want you to watch this one-eyed gospel person in action. You see, Paul is a man who submits everything to the cause of the gospel. He thinks. He plans. He suffers. He endures. He goes where none have gone before. And he does it because he knows that the gospel ultimately matters. It is the gospel that brings us into right relationship with God.

And relationship with God is what is really important in life. And so Paul has one grand ambition. And today I want you to contemplate why Luke may have put this story here. You see, I think there is evidence in this passage, and in the passage we'll look at next, that Paul is an imitator of Jesus. And that we are meant to imitate both Jesus and Paul. I think actually structured in such a way as to indicate this. You see, Paul is an example to us.

[ 38 : 28 ] We are to be like him. Sacrificing our smaller goals and ambitions before the goal of the gospel of his son. We too are to be one-eyed gospel people. Third, I want to talk about what I will call the menace of missions.

You see, missionary work has had a bad press in our world today. And some of it, I think, is probably entirely deserved. You see, sometimes the missionary cause has too closely been tied with imperialism.

It's been too closely tied to vested interests of the state. Missionaries have often brought more culture than Christ. More culture than the gospel.

But there are some people who've got it right. And Paul is one of them. And when Paul comes to Ephesus, he tries to do what he does everywhere else. When with Jews, he tries to live as a Jew. When with Gentiles, he tries to live as a Gentile.

While maintaining his fidelity to Christ. He tries to be all things to all people. You see, he doesn't enforce one culture upon another. But what he does do is openly tell people that only through Jesus Christ can people enter a relationship with God.

[ 39 : 35 ] And if Christ is the only way to God, then all idols are false ways to God. And if idols are false ways to God, then there's no use in having them around. And if there's no use in having them around, you might as well get rid of them or no longer pay people to make them.

And if that destroys a culture, then that's the way it's got to be. You see, it is inevitable that Christianity will challenge culture.

Certain aspects of culture. It is inevitable. And why is that? Because certain aspects of our culture are just simply wrong. They are delusions.

They are false. They don't please God. And as such, they must be thrown away. So there are many things that Christian missionaries did that were wrong in the history of Australia.

And that is so, even if they were generally better and far less imperialistic than their secular counterparts. And where we have made mistakes, we need to apologize.

[ 40 : 37 ] And we need to do what has been done nationally. We need to seek reconciliation. But we Christians need to seek reconciliation. But we must never, never, never apologize for bringing the gospel to Aboriginal people of Australia.

They were in darkness. They needed the Lord Jesus Christ. And without him, they will remain in darkness.

And without him, all Australians will die in their sins. That's true of every country in the world. We must not be embarrassed about bringing the gospel to the world.

Finally, I want to reflect upon the impact of revival. Now, let me tell you, I long for a country where I can leave my front door and my car door unlocked.

I long for a country where my grandchildren can go to a public toilet without having to keep them company. I long for a land where there are no bars on my windows and where I don't have to be accosted with offensive things whenever I watch TV or walk down the street.

[ 41 : 53 ] I long for a land where jails are empty. Now, let me say that I am realistic. I'm realistic about the fact that things aren't going to get better.

And in fact, as you know, they're getting worse. I mean, that story this last Friday, I was traveling back from Sydney. And I heard it over and over again.

And it revolted me every time. Friends, laws aren't going to solve the problem either. Nor is an increase in police forces.

I know that laws and prisons and vigilantes and the like are not going to help in the long run. See, in the long run, these things only serve to curb the human character, don't they?

They don't change it. Friends, humans are sinful. Humans are sinful. If you don't believe it, read Genesis 3.

[ 42 : 54 ] And read the newspaper. Sinful people do sinful things. And until you deal with sin, you cannot hope that things will change. So if you want to live in a better society, what is the best way to do it?

The best way to do it is, in my view, to preach the gospel with all the vigor that we can. You see, we have a small snapshot of it in one sense.

In many places around the world. You see, in this city we have here in Ephesus though. Think about it again. Here's a city fascinated with spells and the occult and superstition.

And one man arrives. He preaches and he preaches and he preaches. And he draws a group of similarly minded people around him.

And before long, the very shape of society begins to change. And I'm told that is a pattern whenever revival has come in the world. So in the Welsh revival of 1904 and 1905, nearly 100,000 people were converted.

[ 44 : 03 ] The social impact was profound. Minors stopped swearing. Counted cases of drunkenness diminished.

Long-standing feuds were resolved. Dens of iniquity were abandoned. End of iniquity were abandoned. Employers' notices pronounced improvement in the quality of work being produced. Friends, the gospel changes people. And if you want the world to be changed and individual lives to be changed, then be aware that government policy cannot change the heart. Law cannot change the heart.

If you want hearts changed, start on your knees. Pray for revival. And if you want to help, really help people's lot in our country, then start with the determination that you'll give yourself to being a gospel person.

That your time, your money, your life will be given over to making Christ known. All other pursuits, while not unworthy, while not, while having great worth, they are in the end, band-aid solutions.

[ 45 : 17 ] The only solution of lasting value is the gospel about Jesus Christ. It changes the heart. It changes people. And it can even change cities.

So let us pray for this. Father, we do pray for our city here. Particularly, Father, as with so many cities around our country, it is deserting the gospel.

People are drifting away from faith, drifting away into atheism, drifting away into consumerism, and a whole lot of other things. Father, please, in our city, turn our hearts.

Turn the hearts of these people and raise up, will you, evangelists and preachers and teachers that your people might be, that people might be brought to faith and your people might be built up and prepared for ministry.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, thanks, friends. It was a long haul tonight and thank you for mostly sticking with me. A long haul, but very worth it, I thought.

[ 46 : 38 ] Thanks, Andrew. Let's stand and sing together. Let's sing together.