

Empowered

The Amazing Church of Jesus Christ

Week 9

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Acts 18:23 – 21:16

Teacher Notes

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*Bible versions used throughout the Empowered teacher notes are
NASB, ESV, NLT, and CEB.*

✿ Introduction to Week Nine

ILLUSTRATION: A friend's husband built their home. He emphasized that the most important part of construction was the foundation that the house would sit upon. If a homeowner wanted to avoid settling and dry wall cracks, he explained the value of digging deep to reach bedrock before pouring the foundation. It was very clear that the state of the foundation impacted the structure and health of the house that rested upon it.

- This week we will look at four different scenes:
 1. We will be introduced to Apollos and the plans God had for him, to use him in mighty ways.
 2. We will see the importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives as Paul meets a few men in Ephesus.
 3. We will see God use Paul to perform amazing miracles for all the people to see.
 4. We will see Paul's single-minded focus as he is led by the Holy Spirit to Jerusalem during Pentecost, and then on to Rome.
- God is continually using His people to transform people's lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Last week we followed Paul on his second missionary journey. He spent much of his time in Corinth, about eighteen months.
- In Corinth he met Priscilla and Aquila, a couple who would not only become his friends, but his spiritual co-workers.
- As Paul's second missionary trip comes to an end, he leaves Priscilla and Aquila behind in Ephesus.

TEACHING TIP: Imagine the amount of one-on-one time this couple shared with Paul. Consider the foundational teaching they received from Paul, a man who with clarity set forth the gospel.

Study One:

Acts 18:23-19:20

Helping Those Who Believed

- Paul began his third missionary journey. He travelled through Galatia and Phrygia.
 - ~ His heartbeat was to strengthen disciples, pour the Word into them—in order that they grow deeper in their faith.
- Back in Ephesus, a young man named Apollos arrived in town. Who was he? (Acts 18:24-28)
 - ~ From Alexandria (Egypt).
 - * One of the largest cities at the time.
 - * Known for education—rivalled Athens.
 - ~ A Jewish believer.

- ~ A gifted speaker, good communicator.
- ~ Mighty in the Scriptures.
- ~ Instructed in the way of the Lord—knew the Old Testament very well.
- ~ Fervent in spirit, taught accurately things about Jesus, but his knowledge was limited to John the Baptist.
- ~ Spoke with great boldness in the synagogue.

TEACHING TIP: Apollos' education and eloquence, combined with his powerful treatment of the Old Testament, made him a powerful debater.

- Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos as he spoke in the synagogue. They recognized his giftedness, but they also realized he did not have the full picture, his understanding was limited. *He was accurate in what he knew.*
- This couple, co-laborers of Paul, explained to Apollos the way of God more accurately.

TEACHING TIP: Priscilla and Aquila recognized that Apollo did not have a grasp on the full gospel message. His doctrine was accurate, but deficient. He had only been instructed in the baptism of John and did not understand the baptism in Jesus Christ.

- ~ John's Baptism: represented cleansing by God in repentance (or turning from sin).
- ~ Christ's Baptism: pictured a union with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection.
- ⇒ **Baptism in Christ basically states, "I am uniting my life to Jesus, not only as my Savior but also as my Lord. I am trusting Him alone for salvation and the promise of heaven for all of eternity."**

APPLICATION: This couple is such an incredible example for us today. First, they were so gracious in their approach with Apollos—they didn't correct him publicly, but gently, quietly, pulled him aside to speak truth to him—shared all that Jesus had accomplished and how to put one's faith in Him. Secondly, they were willing to take the time to step into his story—to mentor him, to disciple him, to teach him.

- ~ Are you willing to come alongside a believer who does not fully understand what it means to be IN Christ? Will you take the time, the effort, to pour truth into others?

- Armed with the complete picture of the gospel, he wanted to go to Achaia.
 - ~ He greatly helped those who had believed through grace.
 - ~ He powerfully refuted the Jews in public using scripture to prove Jesus was the Christ.

"Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)

- ⇒ **Apollos was an amazing preacher and a great apologist. Because of Apollos, the church continued to grow.**

TEACHING TIP: Observations of Apollos—

1. He received the Spirit of God.
2. He was teachable and willing to learn.
3. He was sent out on a mission.
4. He built his life on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ.

- While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul headed back to Ephesus.

TEACHING TIP: While in Ephesus, Paul wrote three letters—First and Second Corinthians and Romans. In 1 Corinthians 1:11-12, Paul spoke to a problem in Corinth—the people were quarreling about Paul and Apollos, basically stating their preference of one over the other.

Paul rebuked them in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6— *“What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.”* God changes hearts and lives.

⇒ **Great picture for us today! God gives us the same opportunity today—some will plant the seed of the gospel; others will water it—but only God can cause the growth of the seed.**

- When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he met twelve men who were disciples. (Acts 19:1-7)
- After spending time with them, Paul noticed something was missing and asked, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”* (Acts 19:2)
- The men responded that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit—they had been baptized into John’s baptism.
- Paul responded with clarification of the full gospel message, (Acts 19:4)—
 - ~ John baptized with a baptism of repentance.
 - ~ John preached that another was coming after him—Jesus.
 - ~ Jesus, the Son of God.
- These twelve men realized that the baptism of John was not enough; they needed Jesus.
 - ~ They immediately wanted to be baptized into the name of Jesus.
 - ~ They were baptized and received the Holy Spirit.
 - ~ They began speaking in tongues.

TEACHING TIP: These twelve men were like Apollos in their limited knowledge.

TEACHING TIP: The gift of tongues is mentioned exactly three times in Acts. Commentary helps us understand the purpose of each.

- ~ **The First:** at Pentecost in Acts 2—the purpose was to fulfil the words of the prophet Joel who said, *“I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind.”* (Joel 2:28) All could understand the Gospel in their language.
- ~ **The Second:** When Peter shared the gospel with Gentiles at the home of Cornelius—the purpose was to validate that God had accepted the Gentiles into His kingdom. (Acts 10:46)
- ~ **The Third:** we see in today’s study with the believers in Ephesus—they believed in Jesus, were baptized in His name, and began speaking with tongues. (Acts 19:6)

APPLICATION: Critical point that should not be missed—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the evidence that faith in Jesus has taken place. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit in one’s life it is an incomplete faith.

- ✚ **2 Corinthians 1:22** *“... [God]who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”*
- ⇒ **Is the Holy Spirit living in you—guaranteeing your future—guiding your life?**
- ✚ **John 3:3** *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”*

- As was his custom, Paul went to the synagogue. (Acts 19:8)
 - ~ He spoke regularly there for three months.
- Opposition to his teaching began to revolt against the followers of the Way.
 - ~ Acts 19:9 described these men as hardened and disobedient.
- Due to this hostile environment, Paul moved his teaching to the school of Tyrannus and daily reasoned with the people there. They had great dialogue.
 - ~ This time of teaching had a great impact.
- ✚ Acts 19:10 *“This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”*

TEACHING TIP: Paul was dealing with people who had resolved in their hearts NOT to believe, no matter the evidence.

TEACHING TIP: Some commentators believe this was a divinity-school of the Jews, while others think it was a philosophy-school for the Gentiles. In either case, the gospel was proclaimed.

- During this time God performed amazing miracles through Paul. (Acts 19:11-12)
 - ~ Handkerchiefs and aprons were taken from Paul’s body to the sick and people were healed, even the demon possessed had their evil spirits cast out.

⇒ **God was continually used these amazing miracles to affirm the message of the Apostle Paul and the power of Jesus.**

- Some took notice of these miracles performed *in Jesus' name*—specifically, seven brothers of a man named Sceva who was a Jewish chief priest. (Acts 19:14-17)
 - ~ They wanted to try their hand at using Jesus' name to cast out an evil spirit.
 - ~ PROBLEM: The evil spirit knew who Jesus and Paul were, but it did not recognize these men; thus, they had no power over it. Instead, the evil spirit overpowered them—they fled naked and wounded from the possessed man!
 - ~ The story of these seven brothers and their encounter with an evil spirit became very well known to all (Jews and Gentiles) throughout all of Ephesus.

TEACHING TIP: Jewish exorcists were the first who tried to counterfeit Paul's miracles by using Jesus' name in their evil practices. They summarily failed.

- The result of this event—the name of Jesus was being lifted high and people's hearts were coming to life in Jesus.

⇒ **The Lord showed the world that Jesus was greater than witchcraft and sorcery. He alone could be victorious over occultism. And those who had practiced such belief were saved!**

- The response of the people was amazing! They acted!
 - ~ They basically arranged a huge public bonfire.
 - ~ Those who had been involved with witchcraft and sorcery willingly came to burn their books of 'magic'—books worth fifty thousand silver coins.
 - ~ They had found the truth and did not want to pass on this evil to the next generation.
 - ~ They did this in the sight of everyone. Their books were destroyed for good.

TEACHING TIP: What a picture of changed hearts! In today's market, they burned about six million dollars' worth of books.

- The impact was great and expressed in v20 (which could be a theme verse for the chapter).

✠ Acts 19:20 *"So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing."*

⇒ **The flame of the church was growing, burning brighter and stronger, spreading and changing the world—as it still is today—empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

Study Two:

Acts 19:21-41

A Disorderly Gathering

- It was time for Paul to move on. He revealed his plans for the rest of his journey in verse 21.
 - ~ He was headed to Jerusalem and then eventually on to Rome.

- In Acts 19:23-40 we are introduced to Demetrius, an idol maker, who along with other idol makers, was not happy with Paul’s ministry.
 - ~ He was a silversmith craftsman and made silver shrines of Artemis, also known as Diana (her Roman name).
 - ~ The other idol artisans, along with Demetrius, crafted images of Artemis, both large and small scale.

TEACHING TIP: Central to the city of Ephesus was the beautiful temple of the goddess Artemis. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, having one hundred and seventy-seven marble pillars, a gold inlaid ceiling with gemstones. It was so large that it could hold up to fifty thousand people. The people believed that Artemis came falling from the sky like a meteor, as if she was falling from the star.

- Demetrius gathered his fellow artisans and stirred them up to riot against Paul—the man who was threatening their livelihood and that Artemis could be dethroned as worthless to follow. (Acts 19:25-27)

TEACHING TIP: Paul never spoke specifically against Artemis. He did, however, preach that man-made gods were not gods at all. He preached Jesus.

- Loss of business and discrediting Artemis were reasons enough to stir up an enraged mob who angrily shouted, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” (Acts 19:28)

- The city was filled with confusion. (Acts 19:29-34)
 - ~ The mob dragged Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions, into the theater.
 - ~ Paul wanted to go into the theater, but his friends prevented him.
 - ~ The mood in the theater was one of total chaos—shouting back and forth—the majority in the theater had no idea why they were even meeting.
 - ~ This went on for two hours!

TEACHING TIP: Paul was always ready to defend the gospel—no matter the circumstances or opposition.

- The town clerk took charge and quieted the crowd. (Acts 19:35-41)
 - ~ He first aligned himself with the angry crowd—understanding the status of Artemis, but not understanding why were they so riled?
 - ~ He stated that these men they were accusing had done nothing wrong—had not robbed from the temple nor had blasphemed Artemis.
 - ~ He told them that if they had a complaint they could take it before the legal assembly, the courts.
 - ~ He warned them that Rome may see their actions as a riot with no real cause, and that would be a problem for all of them.
 - ~ He then dismissed the assembly.

Study Three:

Acts 20:1-16 A Sleepy Saint

- After the uproar had ceased in Ephesus, Paul said his good-byes and headed to Macedonia.
- We see the heart of Paul in the first two verses of Acts 20—he gave exhortation to those leading and serving in the different regions.
- ⇒ **Paul was very relational. Relationships mattered greatly to him. First, his relationship with Jesus, then his relationship with his fellow man. He exemplified what it meant to ‘love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.’**

ILLUSTRATION: Corrie Ten Boom shared similar qualities with Paul. Her life was radically changed by the grace of God, as Paul’s was. Her family lived in the Netherlands when World War II began. During the Nazi Holocaust they hid Jews from the Gestapo in their home and helped many escape. Although she was not Jewish, Corrie knew that all people were created by God and created in His image—she loved God, and she loved others as herself. She, along with her father and sister, were ultimately arrested and imprisoned by the Nazi Germans.

She was later taken to Ravensbruck Concentration Camp. She miraculously smuggled a Bible into the camp and led Bible studies and worship at night. She shared the love of Jesus with the people, even while imprisoned. She was eventually released.

After the war she opened a hospital and cared for anyone who had a need. She told her story in the book, *The Hiding Place*.

- ⇒ **Corrie Ten Boom had seen and experienced the beauty of the gospel of Jesus, and to that she gave her life and her resources away in order to encourage and serve others in need and to, most importantly, share Jesus with them.**

- Paul arrived in Greece and spent three months there. A plot was formed against him, put in motion by the Jews as he was about to sail to Syria; most likely they wanted him killed.
- Paul decided, instead of sailing to Syria, he would return through Macedonia. He had seven traveling companions—Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus—who went ahead to Troas where he would meet up with them.
- Paul and Luke set sail from Philippi and headed to Troas; they planned to stay seven days.
- On his final day in Troas a surprising event occurred, actually a miracle. (Acts 20:7-12)
 - ~ Paul was teaching the people in an upper room on the third floor of a building.
 - ~ It seemed he had much to share because he spoke until midnight.
 - ~ Because it was so late, many lamps would have been burning in this room. Gases from the lamps could have caused sleepiness in the crowd.

- ~ A young man, Eutychus, fell fast asleep while sitting in an open window. He fell out of the window, three stories down, to his death.
- ~ Paul and everyone in the room ran down the stairs to Eutychus. Paul, however, fell upon him and began to hug him tightly. Eutychus began to breathe! He was alive—God through Paul had brought this young man back to life.
- ~ They all headed back upstairs to break bread and for Paul to further talk with them. He spoke until daybreak.

TEACHING TIP: Put yourself into this scene. Imagine all the emotions experienced—shock, fear, sorrow, amazement, joy!

- Paul departed with his eyes set on Jerusalem where he hoped to spend Pentecost.

Study Four:

Acts 20:17-38

Bound and Determined

- Paul arrived in Miletus and called the Ephesian elders to meet with him.
- His message was personal—remembering his past relationship with them.
 - ~ He recounted his time with the Ephesians.
 - * How he had been constantly with them.
 - * How he had faithfully taught them.
 - ~ Even in the face of trials (through the plots of the Jews), he had not shrunk back from faithfully teaching them publicly from house to house.
 - ~ He had taught repentance toward God to both the Jews and the Gentiles.
 - ~ His main desire/hope for them had been that they put their faith in Jesus Christ.

- Now “bound” by the Spirit he was headed to Jerusalem. (Acts 20:22-25)
 - ~ He knew the dangers that lay ahead of him because God had made it clear that hardships, even prison, awaited him in Jerusalem.
 - ~ He essentially shared a final goodbye—they would never see him again.

TEACHING TIP: Paul was compelled to journey on by single-minded devotion to Jesus—to fulfill the ministry to which Jesus had called him, no matter the danger.

⇒ **Paul did not understand all that going to Jerusalem would mean for him, but he felt compelled to ‘go’—and nothing would hold him back from moving ahead.**

▲ **QUOTE:** Charles Stanley— *“Be ready—because there will be times when God’s instructions just don’t make sense. But there is something you should know about God: He doesn’t expect you to understand Him or His ways of doing things. Your job is to worship and praise Him. Don’t try to figure Him out, it isn’t possible. Just trust Him and let Him show you how awesome and amazing He really is.”*

APPLICATION: The same is true for us—we often have no idea how our circumstances will play out, how our story will end. But the call is to trust God, be dependent upon the Holy Spirit, and build our lives on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ—no matter what we may face.

- His final words to the elders (Acts 20:28-31) were words of warning—*Be On Guard!*
 1. Be on guard for yourselves and the church.
 2. Be on guard for the savage wolves that will come into your midst.
 3. Be on guard for those within the church who will twist (pervert) truth.

⇒ **Paul knew that once he left them, false teachers without and within would come with the goal to destroy the church God had built there. His love for them led to his strong warning that they be on guard and alert.**

- After Paul spoke to them, they all knelt together and prayed.
- The love these believers had for Paul and their grief over his departure was deeply felt—so much so, that in reading vv37-38 you can feel their wrenching heartache as they accompanied him to the ship that would take him away ... forever.

QUOTE: R. Kent Hughes— “We must not develop a fortress mentality, assuming all to be well, for enemies are to be found both outside and inside the flock of God. History proves this to be true.”

“But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 11:3, ESV)

Study Five:

Acts 21:1-16 Submitted to Suffering

- Paul’s third missionary journey ended, but before he arrived in Jerusalem the Lord provided him respite in Caesarea in the home of an old friend, Philip the evangelist.
- A prophet named Agabus came down from Judea to visit Paul while he was in Caesarea and to prophesy Paul’s future. (Acts 21:10-11)
 - ~ He took Paul’s belt and tied his hand and feet with it, then shared what this action foretold—
- ✠ Acts 21:11 “... *This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”*

TEACHING TIP: Philip was one of the seven men who had been placed in charge of providing for the Hellenistic widows in Jerusalem. (Acts 6:5)

TEACHING TIP: Sometimes in the Old Testament a prophet would act out what they were prophesying. Here Agabus pointed toward Paul’s upcoming arrest and imprisonment.

- When the people heard this, they wept and begged Paul not to go into Jerusalem. Paul responded in Acts 21:13, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”
- ▲ **QUOTE:** Corrie Ten Boom— *“If you look at the world, you will be distressed. If you look within, you will be depressed. But if you look at God, you will be at rest.”*

APPLICATION: The only way to find peace in the storm is by keeping our focus on the only One who can calm the storm. Difficult circumstances may not change, but when we keep our eyes on Jesus, His peace will come and we can trust that He is working in whatever we are experiencing.

- The believers in Caesarea did not want Paul to go to Jerusalem because they wanted to keep him out of harm’s way, but God had other plans for Paul—and Paul had a single-minded focus that followed God’s path for him.
- The people could not dissuade him; the only thing left for them to say was “The will of the Lord be done!”

✧ FINAL THOUGHTS

✦ **There are five incredible points that we can learn from this week’s lesson:**

1. Paul had a great ‘revelation’ story.

- * Nothing was more important to him than knowing God and making Him known.
- * He was devoted to making disciples and helping them grow.

2. Paul was a man of prayer.

- * He understood that prayer was his lifeline to the Father; and he wanted to do the Father’s will, no matter the personal cost to him.

QUOTE: Corrie Ten Boom— *“The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world of not being able to do something. And enter God’s realm where everything is possible. He specialized in the impossible.”*

3. Paul was relational.

- ✓ He had a heart for people.
- ✓ He loved deeply and served intentionally.
- ✓ He was willing to give away his life so that others might know Christ.

4. Paul understood the source of eternal joy and chose to build his life on the firm foundation of Jesus as his Lord and Savior and guide. He ran the race of life with the goal of finishing well.

5. Paul knew that man cannot find rest apart from resting his soul in God.

- ✦ Paul was empowered by the Spirit of God to be a witness for Christ, to show us what matters more in life than anything else—to build your life on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ, to have a love relationship with your heavenly Father through His only Son, Jesus.