



Still Standing
Week 1: Standing Defined

And having prepared everything...take your stand.
(Ephesians 6:13b)

Ephesians 6:13

ESV ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand firm.**

HCSB ¹³ This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, **to take your stand.**

NASB ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, **to stand firm.**

NKJV ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand.**

NLT ¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

AMP ¹³ *Therefore, put on the complete armor of God, so that you will be able to [successfully] resist and stand your ground in the evil day [of danger], and having done everything [that the crisis demands], to stand firm [in your place, fully prepared, immovable, victorious].*

Ephesians 6:10-18

¹⁰ *In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [draw your strength from Him and be empowered through your union with Him] and in the power of His [boundless] might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God [for His precepts are like the splendid armor of a heavily-armed soldier], so that you may be able to [successfully] stand up against all the schemes and the strategies and the deceits of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this [present] darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) places.*

¹³ *Therefore, put on the complete armor of God, so that you will be able to [successfully] resist and stand your ground in the evil day [of danger], and having done everything [that the crisis demands], to stand firm [in your place, fully prepared, immovable, victorious].*

¹⁴ *So stand firm and hold your ground, having tightened the wide band of truth (personal integrity, moral courage) around your waist and having put on the breastplate of righteousness (an upright heart), ¹⁵ and having strapped on your feet the gospel of peace in preparation [to face the enemy with firm-footed stability and the readiness produced by the good news]. ¹⁶ Above all, lift up the [protective] shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*

¹⁸ *With all prayer and petition pray [with specific requests] at all times [on every occasion and in every season] in the Spirit, and with this in view, stay alert with all perseverance and petition*



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[interceding in prayer] *for all God's people.* ¹⁹ And *pray* for me, that words may be given to me when I open my mouth, to proclaim boldly the mystery of the good news [of salvation], ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. And *pray* that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly *and* courageously, as I should.

DEFINE STANDING:

- Not as a noun: i.e. Position, Status, Reputation OR Duration, Existence, Endurance
- Not an Adjective: i.e. Standing jump OR Standing invitation OR Standing water

A VERB (gerund(derived from a verb but behaves as a noun – ends with ing) or present participle)

An Action Word

Maintain an upright position supported by one's feet.

Upright. Rise. Rise to one's feet. Pick oneself up. Find one's feet. Be upstanding. Get up. Get to one's feet. Arise.

Put. Set. Set up. Upend. Place. Position. Locate. Situate. Prop. Lean. Plant. Stick. Install. Arrange. Deposit. Park.

Be situated. Be located. Be positioned. Be set. Be found. Be sited. Be established. Be perched. Sit. Perch. Nestle. Remain in force. Remain valid. Remain effective. Remain operative. Remain in operation. Hold. Obtain. Apply. Prevail. Exist. Be in use.

Be in a specified state or condition.

Withstand. Endure. Bear. Put up with. Take. Cope with. Handle. Sustain. Resist. Stand up to. Tolerate. Abide. Suffer. Support. Face. Stick. Stomach.

HOW DO WE LIVE THIS DEFINITION?

Installing a **PARAMETER** = Proactive Living = Boundary or Structure [Building]

Parameter: **1 Peter 4:1-2** ESV

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

PARAMETER:

ATTACK: [Sometimes, an attack is a result, sometimes it is not.]

RESULTS: **R:**

Paul's Parameters in **Acts 19-21**

Acts 19 Paul in Ephesus

19 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus.



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PARAMETER #1: Living for the will of God

*There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³ And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John's baptism.” ⁴ And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” **R1:**⁵ **On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, **R2:** **the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.** ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.*

PARAMETER #2: Living for the will of God

*⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for **three months** spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.*

ATTACK #1:

R3:⁹ *But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation,*

PARAMETER #3: Living for the will of God

*he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that **R4:** **all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.***

R5: The Sons of Sceva

*¹¹ And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,¹² so that even **handkerchiefs or aprons** that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³ Then some of the **itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits**, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” ¹⁴ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” ¹⁶ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ **And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.***

R6:¹⁸ *Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.*

A Riot at Ephesus

PARAMETER #4:



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²¹ Now after these events **Paul resolved in the Spirit** to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” ²² And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

ATTACK #2:

²³ *About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way.* ²⁴ *For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen.* ²⁵ *These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth.* ²⁶ *And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.* ²⁷ *And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”*

²⁸ *When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”* ²⁹ *So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel.* ³⁰ *But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him.* ³¹ *And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.* ³² *Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.* ³³ *Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd.* ³⁴ *But when they recognized that he was a Jew, **for about two hours** they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”*

³⁵ *And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky?”* ³⁶ *Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash.* ³⁷ *For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.* ³⁸ *If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.* ³⁹ *But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.* ⁴⁰ *For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.”* ⁴¹ *And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.*

Act 20

Paul in Macedonia and Greece

20 *After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.* ² *When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.* ³ *There he spent three months, and when*

ATTACK #3:

a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴ *Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.* ⁵ *These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶ but*



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we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

R7:? Eutychus Raised from the Dead

⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹ And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.” ¹¹ And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹² And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

¹³ But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. ¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. ¹⁵ And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus.

PARAMETER #5: (Did the Diana incident influence this decision?)

*¹⁶ For Paul had **decided to sail past Ephesus**, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.*

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

PARAMETER #6:

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

PARAMETER #7:

²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after



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them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

R8:

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Act 21-28

ARE PAUL'S ACTIONS "STANDING"?

7 Parameters:

PARAMETER #1: Living for the will of God

There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them,

PARAMETER #2: Living for the will of God

*⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for **three months** spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.*

PARAMETER #3: Living for the will of God

he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

PARAMETER #4:

²¹ Now after these events **Paul resolved in the Spirit** to pass through Macedonia and Achaia

PARAMETER #5: (Did the Diana incident influence this decision?)

¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus,

PARAMETER #6:

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

PARAMETER #7:

²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself,

What are signs that our Parameters are correct?

Do we measure by RESULTS?

19:

R1: *⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them,*

R2: *the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.*



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**Is there a connect between Parameters and Results?
Like the Spirit moving and people getting healed, etc?**

CONCLUSION:

Standing Involves:

- Setting parameters based on scripture

Measuring by results of:

- Attacks due to Jesus being glorified
- People's growing intimacy with the Jesus



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Paul: “purposed (determined) in the Spirit” **Acts 19:21. 20:24. 21:13-14**

Paul: Acts 19:1-20 Are Paul’s actions “standing”.

(Beginning of the church of Ephesus)

3. Paul in Ephesus (19:1–41)

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior (or ‘made his way overland’, JB) and arrived at Ephesus (1), keeping his promise to return if God willed it (18:21). It was, therefore, during Paul’s year of absence from Ephesus that Apollos came, ministered and left again.

a. Paul and John the Baptist’s followers (19:1b–7)

On arrival in Ephesus Paul *found some disciples*. At least, that is what they claimed to be. In reality, however, they were disciples of John the Baptist, and were decidedly less well informed than Apollos had been. Luke records the dialogue which developed between them (2–4) and its sequel (5–7).

Paul’s first question: *‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’*

Their answer: *‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’*

Paul’s second question: *‘Then what baptism did you receive?’*

Their answer: *‘John’s baptism.’*

Paul’s comment: *‘John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’*

⁵*On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus.* ⁶*When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.* ⁷*There were about twelve men in all.*

This incident has become a proof text in some pentecostal and charismatic circles, especially when the inaccurate and unwarranted AV translation of verse 2 is followed, namely ‘Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?’ From this it is sometimes argued that Christian initiation is in two stages, beginning with faith and conversion, and followed later by receiving the Holy Spirit. But those twelve ‘disciples’ cannot possibly be regarded as providing a norm for a two-stage initiation. On the contrary, as Michael Green has written, it is ‘crystal clear that these disciples were in no sense Christians’, having not yet believed in Jesus, whereas through the ministry of Paul they came to believe and were then baptized with water and the Spirit more or less simultaneously.

When Paul first met them, he assumed that they were believers, but noticed that they gave no evidence in their bearing or behaviour of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So he asked them his two leading questions, whether they had received the Spirit when they believed, and into what they had been baptized. His first question linked the Spirit with faith, and his second with baptism. That is, his questions expressed his assumptions that those who have believed have received the Spirit, and that those who have been baptized have received the Spirit, for he cannot separate the sign (water) from the thing signified (the Spirit). He took it for granted that baptized believers receive the Spirit, as Peter also taught (2:38–39). Both his questions imply that to have believed and been baptized and not to have received the Spirit constitutes an extraordinary anomaly.

Consider now the answers which Paul received to his questions. In answer to his first, they said that they had ‘not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit’. This cannot mean that they had never heard of the Spirit at all, for he is referred to many times in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist spoke of the Messiah as baptizing people with the Spirit. It must rather mean that, although they had heard John’s prophecy, they had not heard whether it had been fulfilled. They were ignorant of Pentecost. In answer to Paul’s second question, they explained that they had received John’s baptism, not Christian baptism. In a word, they were still living in the Old Testament which culminated with John the Baptist. They understood neither that the new age had been



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ushered in by Jesus, nor that those who believe in him and are baptized into him receive the distinctive blessing of the new age, the indwelling Spirit.

Once they came to understand this through Paul's instruction, they put their trust in Jesus of whose coming their teacher John the Baptist had spoken. They were then baptized into Christ, Paul laid his hands on them (giving his apostolic imprimatur to what was happening, as Peter and John had done in Samaria), the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. In other words, they experienced a mini-Pentecost. Better, Pentecost caught up on them. Better still, they were caught up into it, as its promised blessings became theirs.

The norm of Christian experience, then, is a cluster of four things: repentance, faith in Jesus, water baptism and the gift of the Spirit. Though the perceived order may vary a little, the four belong together and are universal in Christian initiation. The laying-on of apostolic hands, however, together with tongue-speaking and prophesying, were special to Ephesus, as to Samaria, in order to demonstrate visibly and publicly that particular groups were incorporated into Christ by the Spirit; the New Testament does not universalize them. There are no Samaritans or disciples of John the Baptist left in the world today.

b. Synagogue and lecture hall (19:8–10)

The pattern of Paul's evangelistic ministry in Ephesus was similar to that in Corinth. First, *Paul entered the synagogue*, where he was already known (18:19), *and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively* (RSV, 'arguing and pleading') *about the kingdom of God* (8). To argue from the Old Testament Scriptures about the kingdom is the same as to argue that Jesus is the Christ, since it is Jesus the Christ who inaugurated the kingdom (*cf.* 28:31). *But*, as in Corinth so in Ephesus, the Jewish people rejected the good news: *some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way*, as Christian discipleship is again called, since 'Christianity was for the disciples the way of all ways ... in which to walk.'⁴² As a direct result of this stubborn opposition in the synagogue, *Paul left them*. He also *took the disciples with him and had discussions* (*dialeghomenos*; RSV, 'argued') *daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus* (9). In fact this new outreach to the Gentiles in the form of dialogue evangelism *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* (10). It is a bit tantalizing that Luke tells us nothing about Tyrannus. One assumes that he was a philosopher or educator of some kind, who lectured during the cool hours of the morning, but was prepared to rent his school room or lecture hall (*scholē*) to the Christian evangelist during the heat of the day. Since *tyrannos* means a despot or tyrant, 'one wonders idly if this was the name his parents gave him or the name his pupils gave him!' What is clear is that Paul's daily Christian lecturing for two years led to the evangelization of the whole province.

c. Some power encounters (19:11–20)

In Corinth Christ encouraged his apostle and endorsed his teaching through a night vision; in Ephesus through signs and wonders by which Christ's power over disease, demon-possession and magic was demonstrated. *God did extraordinary miracles through Paul* (11). *Handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him* ('the sweat-rags being used for tying round his head and the aprons for tying round his waist' while he was engaged in his tentmaking) *were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them* (12). Liberal commentators are embarrassed by these verses and tend to dismiss them as legendary. At least four points may be made on the other side. First, Luke himself is not content to describe these events as mere 'miracles', *dynamēis*, demonstrations of divine power; he adds the adjective *tychousas*, which is variously translated 'special' (AV), 'singular' (NEB), 'remarkable' (JB) and 'extraordinary' (RSV, NIV). He does not regard them as typical, even for 'miracles'. Secondly, he does not regard them as magic either, for he sets them apart from the magical practices which Ephesian believers were soon to confess and renounce as evil (18–19). Thirdly, the wisest attitude to the sweat-rag miracles is neither that of the sceptics who declare them spurious, nor that of the mimics, who try to copy them, like those American televangelists who offer to send to the sick handkerchiefs which they have blessed, but rather that of Bible students who remember both that Paul regarded his miracles as his apostolic credentials and that Jesus himself condescended to the timorous faith of a woman by healing her when she touched the edge of his cloak.⁴⁶ Fourthly, as in the Gospels so in the Acts, demon-possession is distinguished from illness, and therefore exorcism from healing.



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The mention of exorcism leads Luke to tell of some Jewish exorcists, who attempted to tap the power they believed to inhere in the name of Jesus, with disastrous consequences: *Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, 'In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out' (13). Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, meaning probably that he belonged to a high-priestly family, were doing this (14). The evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know and I know about Paul, but who are you?' (15). Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding (16).* To be sure, there is power—saving and healing power—in the name of Jesus, as Luke has been at pains to illustrate (e.g. 3:6, 16; 4:10–12). But its efficacy is not mechanical, nor can people use it second-hand. Nevertheless, in spite of this misuse of the Name, the incident had a wholesome effect. *When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear (NEB, 'awestruck'), and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour (17).*

The power encounter of Jesus with the kingdom of Satan was not yet complete. After healing and exorcism came deliverance from occult practices. *Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds (18). A number who had practised sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas (19),* the drachma being a silver coin representing about a day's wage. We have already noted that Ephesus was famous for its 'Ephesian letters' (*grammata*), which were 'written charms, amulets and talismans'. That these young believers, instead of realizing the monetary value of their magic spells by selling them, were willing to throw them on a bonfire, was signal evidence of the genuineness of their conversion. Their example also led to more conversions, for *in this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power (20).*

d. Paul's future plans (19:21–22)

After all this had happened, after the synagogue and lecture-hall evangelism and the power encounters, but before the riot in the theatre, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, first passing through Macedonia and Achaia (21a). Luke does not add at this stage the reason for this circuitous route, but we know that he was going to pick up the offering which he had been urging the Christians of Northern and Southern Greece to collect for their poverty-stricken sisters and brothers in Judea. His eyes were not on Jerusalem, however. *'After I have been there,' he said, 'I must visit Rome also' (21b),* and beyond that he was even dreaming of Spain, 'the most westerly outpost of Roman civilization in Europe'.⁵⁰ His vision had no limits. As Bengel rightly commented, 'no Alexander, no Caesar, no other hero, approaches to the large-mindedness of this *little* (a play on his name *Paulos*, "little") Benjamite'. Meanwhile, *he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, ahead of him to Macedonia,* presumably in order to make last-minute preparations for the offering, *while he stayed in the province of Asia, indeed in Ephesus itself, a little longer (22),* because 'a great door for affective work' had opened before him, and many were opposing him. Both the opportunity and the opposition necessitated his continued presence in Ephesus.

e. The riot in the city (19:23–41)

Luke gives his readers a graphic account of the riot which Demetrius the silversmith instigated and the town clerk skilfully quelled. Perhaps he obtained his information from Aristarchus and/or Gaius, who found themselves caught up in the uproar (29) and later became Paul's and Luke's travelling companions (20:4–6). Haenchen's presuppositions lead him to find in the story 'a regular tangle of difficulties'. He elaborates six of them. But Howard Marshall is right to say that Haenchen's case 'disappears under scrutiny'. He gives an adequate explanation of each supposed problem.⁵⁴ Luke's narrative divides itself naturally into three sections relating to the origin, course and termination of the riot.

First, its origin. It was inevitable that sooner or later the kingly authority of Jesus would challenge Diana's evil sway.

²³About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. ²⁴A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. ²⁵He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: 'Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. ²⁶And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. ²⁷There is danger



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not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.'

Luke declares that the disturbance arose 'about the Way' (NEB, 'the Christian movement'). At root its cause was neither doctrinal, nor ethical, but economic. Demetrius, whom Ramsay called 'probably Master of the guild (*sc.* of silversmiths) for the year', drew the attention of his and other craftsmen to Paul's success in convincing people 'that man-made gods are no gods at all'. In consequence, the sales of 'silver shrines of Artemis' (either miniature models of the temple or statuettes of the goddess) were dwindling and their affluent life-style was threatened. Not that Demetrius played directly on their covetousness, however. He was subtle enough to develop three more respectable motives for concern, namely the dangers that their trade would lose its good name, their temple its prestige, and their goddess her divine majesty (27). Thus 'vested interests were disguised as local patriotism—in this case also under the cloak of religious zeal'.

Demetrius proved to be a skilled rabble-rouser, for the artisans' response was immediate.

²⁸*When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'* ²⁹*Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theatre.* ³⁰*Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him.* ³¹*Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theatre.*

³²*The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.* ³³*The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defence before the people.* ³⁴*But when they realised he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'*

'The most impressive ruins in Asia Minor . . . , Ephesus stands dignified and alone in its death', wrote H. V. Morton. The excavated site is magnificent; it is easy to visualize the riot. According to the Bezan text of verse 28, the infuriated craftsmen went 'running into the street' before they started to shout for Diana. This was probably the Arcadian Way, the main thoroughfare of Ephesus, eleven metres wide, marble-paved and colonnaded, leading from the harbour to the theatre. The theatre itself, still in a fine state of preservation, nestling at the foot of Mount Pion and nearly 500 feet in diameter, could accommodate at least 25,000 people. Here the crowd dragged Gaius and Aristarchus. And here Paul (overconfident perhaps in the immunity he believed his Roman citizenship would give him) was prevented from coming by the pleas of both the disciples and by some 'officials of the province' who were his friends (31). Luke rightly calls them 'Asiarchs'. These were leading citizens, who were prominent members of the provincial council of Asia, especially its 'annual presidents and perhaps expresidents', and/or the city's deputies who served on it, and/or 'the administrators of the various temples of the imperial cult, who were under the charge of high priests appointed by the provincial council'. Paul was fortunate to have the friendship and the advice of some of them. By now confusion reigned in the theatre. Some people were shouting this or that, but most of them had no idea why they were there. A diversion was caused when some Jews tried to put forward their spokesman, no doubt in order to disassociate Jews from Christians, but the crowd, who would not have comprehended the distinction, shouted him down and for two hours resumed their chanting of Diana's name. Indeed, this section begins and ends with the hysterical screams 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' (28, 34). Haenchen is right to comment that 'in final analysis the only thing heathenism can do against Paul is to shout itself hoarse'.

Luke now describes how the crowd's frenzy was calmed by 'the city clerk' (*grammateus*, 35), who was 'the elected head of the city executive' or 'the chief administrative assistant, annually elected, of the magistrates; he had a staff of permanent clerks, responsible for the paper work of the city'.⁶¹

³⁵*The city clerk quietened the crowd and said: 'Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven?'* ³⁶*Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash.* ³⁷*You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess.* ³⁸*If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges.* ³⁹*If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly.* ⁴⁰*As it is, we*



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*are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.'*⁴¹ After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

This city clerk was evidently a man of high intelligence and of great skill in crowd control. He made four points. First, the whole world knows that Ephesus is the guardian of Artemis' temple and image. Since this is undeniable, no-one is going to deny it, and the cult of Artemis is in no danger (35–36). Secondly, 'these men' (Gaius and Aristarchus) are guilty of neither sacrilege (robbing the temple) nor blasphemy (reviling the goddess). They are innocent (37). Thirdly, Demetrius and his colleagues are familiar with statutory legal procedures. If they have a private grievance, they should bring their case to the proconsular assizes. If, on the other hand, their case is more serious and more public, they should refer it to 'a legal assembly', the correct technical term for the regular (three times a month) official meetings of the *dēmos* or city council (38–39). As Dr Sherwin-White comments, Luke 'is very well informed about the finer points of municipal institutions at Ephesus in the first and second centuries AD'. Fourthly, the citizens of Ephesus are themselves in danger of being charged with civil disorder. If this were to happen, they would not be able to justify themselves. Each of these arguments was cogent; the four together were decisive. When the town clerk 'dismissed the assembly', they went home in a very chastened mood.

Luke's purpose in recounting this incident was clearly apologetic or political. He wanted to show that Rome had no case against Christianity in general or Paul in particular. In Corinth the proconsul Gallio had refused even to hear the Jews' charge. In Ephesus the town clerk implied that the opposition was purely emotional and that the Christians, being innocent, had nothing to fear from duly constituted legal processes. Thus the impartiality of Gallio, the friendship of Asiarchs and the cool reasonableness of the city clerk combined to give the gospel freedom to continue on its victorious course.

4. Paul's strategy for urban evangelism

In spite of the obvious cultural differences between first-century cities in the Roman Empire and the great urban complexes of today, there are also similarities. We may learn from Paul in Corinth and Ephesus important lessons about the where, the how and the when of urban evangelism.

a. The secular places he chose

It is true that in both Corinth and Ephesus he began in the Jewish synagogue; that was his custom. But when the Jews rejected the gospel, he withdrew from the synagogue and moved to a neutral building instead. In Corinth he chose a private house, the home of Titius Justus, while in Ephesus he rented the lecture hall of Tyrannus. And easily the greater part of his evangelistic ministry in both cities was spent in these secular situations.

In our day we still have to evangelize the religious. The equivalent to the synagogue in our culture is the church. It is here that the Scriptures are read, prayer is offered, and 'God-fearers' congregate, people on the fringe who are attracted but not committed. The gospel must be proclaimed to them. But we must not limit our evangelism to the religious and neglect the irreligious. If religious people can be reached in religious buildings, secular people have to be reached in secular buildings. Perhaps the equivalent to Paul's use of the house of Titius Justus is home evangelism, and the equivalent to his use of the hall of Tyrannus is lecture evangelism. People will come to a home, to listen to an informal talk and engage in free discussion, who would never darken the door of a church, and there is an important place for apologetic and/or explanatory Christian lectures in the local collage or university or in some other neutral, public place.

b. The reasoned presentation he made

Luke uses several verbs to describe Paul's evangelistic preaching. But two of them stand out in these chapters. Each occurs four times, almost equally divided between his ministry in Corinth and in Ephesus. They are the verbs to 'reason' or 'argue' (*dialogomai*) and to 'persuade' (*peithōō*). In Corinth 'every Sabbath he *reasoned* in the synagogue, trying to *persuade* Jews and Greeks' (18:4). In consequence, the Jews complained to Gallio that 'this man is *persuading the people* ...' (18:13). In Ephesus Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue for three months, '*arguing persuasively* [literally, "arguing and persuading"] about the kingdom of God' (19:8), and then after withdrawing from the synagogue he 'had discussions daily' [RSV, '*argued* daily'] in the hall of Tyrannus (19:9). Thus both in the religious context of the synagogue and in the secular context of the lecture hall, Paul combined argument and persuasion. As a result, Demetrius was able to complain that 'this fellow Paul has *convinced* [RSV,



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“persuaded”] ... large numbers of people ...’ (19:26). Martin Hengel conjectures plausibly that Paul’s letters (especially Romans and parts of 1 and 2 Corinthians) ‘contain brief summaries of lectures and ... the much reduced quintessence of what Paul taught’ during those years in Tyrannus’ lecture theatre.

This vocabulary shows that Paul’s presentation of the gospel was serious, well reasoned and persuasive. Because he believed the gospel to be true, he was not afraid to engage the minds of his hearers. He did not simply proclaim his message in a ‘take it or leave it’ fashion; instead, he marshalled arguments to support and demonstrate his case. He was seeking to convince in order to convert, and in fact, as Luke makes plain, many were ‘persuaded’. Luke indicates, moreover, that this was Paul’s method even in Corinth. What he renounced in Corinth was the wisdom of the world, not the wisdom of God, and the rhetoric of the Greeks, not the use of arguments. Arguments of course are no substitute for the work of the Holy Spirit. But then trust in the Holy Spirit is no substitute for arguments either. We must never set them over against each other as alternatives. No, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and he brings people to faith in Jesus not in spite of the evidence, but because of the evidence, when he opens their minds to attend to it.

c. The extended periods he stayed

Luke is careful to give us the details. In Corinth Paul began by preaching in the synagogue every sabbath, presumably for several weeks or months, and then moved to the house of Titius Justus and ‘stayed for a year and a half, teaching ... the word of God’ (18:11). Next, he ‘stayed on in Corinth for some time’ (18:18), so that probably he was in the city for about two years altogether. In Ephesus he began with three months in the synagogue and then lectured for two years in Tyrannus’ lecture hall (19:8, 10). Since later he also ‘stayed in the province of Asia a little longer’ (19:22), it is understandable that he could later refer to his ministry in Ephesus as having lasted ‘for three years’ (20:31). Thus he spent two years in Corinth and three years in Ephesus, and in both cases his teaching was comprehensive and thorough.

His use of the lecture hall of Tyrannus was specially remarkable. The accepted text says that he lectured there daily for two years, but the Bezan text adds that he did it ‘from the fifth hour to the tenth’ (19:9, RSV margin), that is, from 11 o’clock in the morning to 4 o’clock in the afternoon. Dr Bruce Metzger thinks that this addition ‘may represent an accurate piece of information, preserved in oral tradition before being incorporated into the text of certain manuscripts’.⁶⁵ According to Ramsay, ‘public life in the Ionian cities ended regularly at the fifth hour’, that is, at 11 a.m., having begun at sunrise and continued during the cool of the early morning. But at 11 the city stopped work, not for ‘elevenses’, but for an elongated siesta! According to Lake and Cadbury, ‘at 1 p.m. there were probably more people sound asleep than at 1 a.m.’⁶⁷ But Paul did not sleep in the daytime. Until 11 a.m. he would work at his tentmaking and Tyrannus would give his lectures. At 11, however, Tyrannus would go to rest, ‘the lecture-room would be disengaged’, and Paul would exchange leather-work for lecture-work, continuing for five hours, and stopping only at 4 p.m. when work was resumed in the city. Assuming that the apostle kept one day in seven for worship and rest, he will have given a daily five-hour lecture six days a week for two years, which makes 3,120 hours of gospel argument! It is not surprising that Luke continues: ‘all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord’ (19:10). For all the roads of Asia converged on Ephesus, and all the inhabitants of Asia visited Ephesus from time to time, to buy or sell, visit a relative, frequent the baths, attend the games in the stadium, watch a drama in the theatre, or worship the goddess. And while they were in Ephesus, they heard of this Christian lecturer named Paul, who was both speaking and answering questions for five hours in the middle of every day. Evidently many dropped in, listened and were converted. They then returned to their towns and villages as born-again believers. Thus the gospel must have spread to the Lycus valley and to its chief towns Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis, which Epaphras had visited but Paul had not, and perhaps to the remaining five of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3, namely Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia. This is a fine strategy for the great university and capital cities of the world. If the gospel is reasonably, systematically and thoroughly unfolded in the city centre, visitors will hear it, embrace it and take it back with them to their homes.

When we contrast much contemporary evangelism with Paul’s its shallowness is immediately shown up. Our evangelism tends to be too ecclesiastical (inviting people to church), whereas Paul also took the gospel out into the secular world; too emotional (appeals for decision without an adequate basis of understanding), whereas Paul taught, reasoned and tried to persuade; and too superficial (making brief encounters and expecting quick



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results), whereas Paul stayed in Corinth and Ephesus for five years, faithfully sowing gospel seed and in due time reaping a harvest.

15. More about Ephesus

20:1–21:17

Luke now narrates how Paul left Ephesus (20:1), having spent the best part of three years there during his third missionary expedition, and then travelled from place to place until at last he reached Jerusalem (21:17). True, Luke has let us into the secret that Paul was intending after visiting Jerusalem to make for Rome (19:21). Nevertheless, it was Jerusalem which filled his vision at this stage.

In fact, it is hard to resist the conclusion that Luke sees a parallel between Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, which is prominent in his first volume, and Paul's journey to Jerusalem, which he describes in his second. Of course the resemblance is far from being exact, and the mission of Jesus was unique; yet the correspondence between the two journeys seems too close to be a coincidence. (i) Like Jesus, Paul travelled to Jerusalem with a group of his disciples (20:4ff.). (ii) Like Jesus he was opposed by hostile Jews who plotted against his life (20:3, 19). (iii) Like Jesus he made or received three successive predictions of his 'passion' or sufferings (20:22–23; 21:4, 11) including his being handed over to the Gentiles (21:11). (iv) Like Jesus he declared his readiness to lay down his life (20:24; 21:13). (v) Like Jesus he was determined to complete his ministry and not be deflected from it (20:24; 21:13). (vi) Like Jesus he expressed his abandonment to the will of God (21:14). Even if some of these details are not to be pressed, Luke surely intends his readers to envisage Paul as following in his Master's footsteps when he 'steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem'.⁸

When the uproar had ended (1), and public order had been restored to the city of Ephesus, *Paul sent for the disciples* to come to him (was he still in hiding?) *and, after encouraging them, he said good-bye.* I imagine that his encouragement took the form of an exhortation similar to the one he would later give to their pastors in Miletus (20:17ff.). He will have urged them to remain loyal to Christ in spite of continuing persecution and 'to live a life worthy of [their] calling' as God's new and holy people. Then he *set out for Macedonia*, intending to catch up with Timothy and Erastus, whom he had sent on ahead of him (19:22). Whether he went by sea or by road, he must have journeyed north, and his first main stop is likely to have been Troas. Here he had expected 'to preach the gospel of Christ', and indeed he 'found that the Lord had opened a door' for him there. Unfortunately, however, he was unable to exploit this opportunity. For he had also expected to find Titus in Troas, whom he had recently sent on an important fact-finding mission to Corinth. But Titus was not there to meet him, and so, because he 'had no peace of mind', instead of staying to evangelize in Troas, he 'went on to Macedonia'.¹¹ It was later, probably in Philippi, that Paul's longed-for rendez-vous with Titus took place and his anxiety was transformed into joy. The good news Titus brought, along with other information, prompted Paul to write what we call his Second Letter to the Corinthians (which was actually his fourth).

1. Paul in northern and southern Greece (20:2–6)

Paul now *travelled through that area* (2a). He probably spent several months revisiting the Macedonian churches he had founded on his second missionary journey, namely Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, and Luke characterized his ministry to them as *speaking many words of encouragement to the people*. The word is *paraklēsis* (the noun which is cognate with the verb *parakaleō* in verse 1), and it has a range of meanings from appeal and entreaty through exhortation and encouragement to comfort and consolation. It is a vital ministry in establishing Christian disciples, and the principal means of its exercise is, literally, 'much word'. Nothing encourages and strengthens the people of God like the Word of God. It is likely also to have been during this period that Paul travelled further west along the Egnatian Way than he had previously gone, reaching even Illyricum on the Adriatic coast north of Macedonia.

After these Macedonian journeys Paul *finally arrived in Greece* (2b), *Hellas* being the popular name for Achaia. Here, almost certainly in Corinth, *he stayed three months* (3a). Much had happened in his relations with the Corinthian church since his first visit which Luke has described. He had written them four letters, and even paid them an interim visit (the so-called 'painful visit' of 2 Cor. 2:1, which Luke does not mention). So he will have had much to talk about with the church's leaders, in the realms of both doctrine and ethics. We also know that he finalized arrangements for the Corinthians' share in the collection for the Judean churches. In addition,



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it was during this visit to Corinth that Paul wrote his major manifesto of Christian faith and life, his Letter to the Romans. In Romans 15 he explained that he had now ‘from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum ... fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ’ and that in consequence ‘in these regions’ there was ‘no more place’ for him to work. That was why he hoped soon to visit Rome and go on to Spain.

Paul’s three months in Corinth are likely to have been during the winter, while he waited for the spring weather to open up navigation on the high seas. His purpose was *to sail for Syria* direct, as he had done after his first visit (18:18). As he was about to embark, however, he heard that *the Jews had made a plot against him*. Ramsay imagines the situation: ‘Paul’s intention must have been to take a pilgrim ship carrying Achaian and Asian Jews to the Passover.... With a shipload of hostile Jews, it would be easy to find opportunity to murder Paul’ and dump his body overboard. So Paul changed his plan at the last moment and *decided to go back through Macedonia* (3). The Bezan text adds that ‘the Spirit told him’ to do so. Yet it was his own decision; the two are not incompatible.

At this point Luke interrupts his narrative in order to tell us who Paul’s travelling companions were. It is noteworthy that Paul hardly ever travelled alone, and that when he was alone, he expressed his longing for human companionship, for example in Athens and in his final Roman imprisonment.¹⁸ That he favoured team work is specially clear during his missionary journeys. On his first he was accompanied by Barnabas and John Mark (until the latter defected), on his second by Silas and later Timothy, then Luke, and now at the end of his third Luke supplies his readers with a list of Paul’s friends. *He was accompanied by Sopater* (perhaps the same as the *Sosipater* who in Romans 16:21 is called one of Paul’s ‘relatives’) *son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus* (19:29; 27:2) *and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe* (probably the same as in 19:29, where one reading makes only Aristarchus a Macedonian, not Gaius), *Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia*. Trophimus came from Ephesus; perhaps Tychicus did also. In most cases Luke supplies these men’s home as well as their name in order both to identify them clearly and also (probably) to indicate how they represented the different regions which were taking part in the collection. Thus, Macedonia was represented by Sopater (Berea), Aristarchus and Secundus (Thessalonica) and perhaps Luke himself (Philippi); Galatia by Gaius (Derbe) and Timothy (Lystra); and Asia by Tychicus and Trophimus (Ephesus). Achaia is missing, but could have been represented by Paul himself, and/or by Titus,²¹ who according to Ramsay’s conjecture was a relative of Luke’s. This would mean that Paul’s entourage consisted of at least nine men.

Luke does not actually mention the offering in connection with them, although it must have been in his mind. In our minds, as we reflect on Paul’s associates, should be the threefold witness which they bear. The first is to the growth, unity, and even (one might say) ‘catholicity’ of the church. Already Christian leaders from inland and coastal Asia Minor, from both sides of the Aegean, and from the northern and southern halves of Greece, know that they belong to the same church and in consequence co-operate in the same cause. Secondly, they bear witness to the fruitfulness of Paul’s missionary expeditions, since Derbe and Lystra were evangelized during his first, Berea and Thessalonica during his second, and Ephesus during his third. All nine men must have been the fruits of mission. But they then became the agents of mission. For, thirdly, they give evidence of the missionary-mindedness of the young Christian communities, which already gave up some of their best local leadership to the wider work and witness of Christ’s church.

Reading between the lines of Luke’s compressed narrative, it seems that Paul and his group of associates left Corinth together and reached Philippi together. Perhaps it was here, and not earlier, that Luke joined the party (since the previous ‘we-section’ left him there, 16:12, and the next ‘we-section’ begins now in 20:5). Here too the group apparently split into two. *These men*, at least seven or eight of them, *went on ahead and waited for us at Troas* (5). *But we* (just Paul and Luke?) *sailed from Philippi*, that is, from its port Neapolis (16:11), *only after the Feast of Unleavened Bread*. This is unlikely to be a purely chronological note. Nor is Luke clearly saying that, having been foiled in his desire to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem, Paul celebrated it in Philippi instead. Are we sure that he continued to observe the Jewish feasts, even though for a particular purpose he intended to get to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost (20:16)? I prefer Professor Howard Marshall’s explanation: ‘It is probable that he was celebrating the Christian Passover, *i.e.* Easter, with the church at Philippi (1 Cor. 5:7f.).’ At all events, it was not until after the festival that they left Philippi, and then it was *five days later* that they *joined the others at Troas*. They must have encountered strong head winds, for their voyage in the opposite direction had taken only two days (16:11). Once in Troas, however, they *stayed seven days* (6).



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2. A week in Troas (20:7–12)

Luke records only one incident during this week in Troas, namely the dramatic sleep, fall, death and resuscitation of a young man called Eutychus. Because it took place in the context of a worship service, however, the story is also instructive in the area of early Christian worship.

a. The death and resuscitation of Eutychus

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread (7a). How we interpret this ‘first day’ depends on whether we think Luke followed the Jewish reckoning of a day (from sunset to sunset) or the Roman (from midnight to midnight). It is because the NEB translators opted for the former that they rendered the opening expression ‘on the Saturday night’. And certainly the Bezan text of 19:9 ‘from the fifth hour to the tenth’ (11 a.m. to 4 p.m.) is a Jewish calculation, with the day beginning at 6 a.m. But here Luke is following the Roman way of reckoning, since the ‘daylight’ of verse 11 is already ‘the next day’ of verse 7. Professor Bruce is surely right, therefore, that Luke’s reference to ‘the first day of the week’, *i.e.* Sunday, ‘is the earliest unambiguous evidence we have for the Christian practice of gathering together for worship on that day’. Moreover, the purpose of their assembly was ‘to break bread’, which Luke understood as the Lord’s Supper in the context of a fellowship meal, as in the upper room in Jerusalem.²⁵ In addition, *Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking* (JBP, ‘prolonged his address’) *until midnight* (7b).

Luke was himself present on this occasion (‘we came together’, 7, and ‘where we were meeting’, 8), so that he was able to supply several eyewitness details which help us to visualize the scene. First, it was an evening service or meeting, for if Paul’s address ended at midnight, it can hardly have begun at midday! No, it probably began at about sunset, the congregation assembling for worship at the conclusion of their day’s work. Next, the meeting was being held in a private house, upstairs (8), indeed on the third floor (9). Thirdly, *there were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting* (8), so that the atmosphere became stuffy and oily, even for *Eutychus* who was *seated in a window* (9a; NEB, ‘was sitting on the window-ledge’), which, being unglazed, gave him some fresh air to breathe. Fourthly, although Eutychus is called ‘a young man’ (*neanias*) in verse 9, in verse 12 he is only a ‘boy’ (NEB, JB) or ‘lad’ (RSV), *pais* normally covering the years from 8 to 14. Fifthly, Luke does not intend us to attach any blame to the boy for falling asleep during the apostle’s sermon. For the impression is that he had a protracted struggle with his sleepiness. To begin with, he was gradually *sinking into a deep sleep*, or better ‘grew drowsy’; it was only *as Paul talked on and on* that he fell *sound asleep* (NEB, JBP, he was ‘completely overcome by sleep’) and the accident happened: *he fell to the ground from the third storey and was picked up dead* (9b). The NEB ‘picked up for dead’, hinting that he might not really have been dead, is definitely wrong. Luke declares that he was dead; as a doctor he could vouch for it.

One can imagine the confusion which then took over, as everybody tried to run downstairs. *Paul* at once suspended his sermon and himself *went down*. Then, surely following the precedent established by Elijah with the son of the widow at Zarephath and by Elisha with the son of the Shunammite woman,²⁷ he *threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him, and said, ‘Don’t be alarmed.... He’s alive!’* (10). This was not a statement that he was still alive in spite of his disastrous fall, but that as a result of Paul embracing him he had come alive again. *Then he* (Paul) *went upstairs again and broke bread and ate*, sharing in both the Lord’s Supper and the fellowship supper, which had evidently not been served previously. Paul also resumed his sermon and *after talking until daylight, he left* (11). Meanwhile, *the people* (relatives and friends, one may assume) *took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted* (12).

b. Some principles of Christian worship

What can we learn about Christian worship from that Sunday evening service in Troas many centuries ago? We will be wise to exercise due caution in answering this question, for Luke’s account is purely descriptive, and is not intended to be prescriptive. We have no liberty, therefore, to be slavish, either in copying what took place (*e.g.* assembling in a house, indeed on the third floor, meeting in the evening, using oil lamps for illumination and listening to an inordinately lengthy sermon) or in omitting what is not mentioned (*e.g.* prayers, psalms, hymns and Scripture readings). Nevertheless, there seem to be principles of public worship here, which are endorsed by biblical teaching elsewhere and are applicable to us today.



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First, the disciples met on the Lord's Day for the Lord's Supper. At least verse 7 sounds like a description of the normal, regular practice of the church in Troas. And the evidence is that the Eucharist, as a thankful celebration of the now risen Saviour's death, very early became the main Sunday service, in the context of an *agapē*, that is, a 'love feast' of fellowship meal.

Secondly, in addition to the supper there was a sermon, indeed a very long one, for its first part lasted from sunset to midnight (7), and its second from midnight to sunrise (11). Not that we are to envisage Paul's preaching as purely monologue, since Luke uses the verb *dialegomai* twice (7, 9), which implies discussion, perhaps in the form of question and answers. The other word he uses is *homileō* (11), which JBP renders 'a long earnest talk' and NEB 'much conversation'. It was clearly more free and open than a formal sermon. But at least the apostle took his teaching responsibility seriously. So should we. 'There is no hint that Paul took the incident as a rebuke for long-windedness.' And since we have no living apostles comparable to Paul to instruct us today, we need to listen to the teaching of Christ's apostles as it has come down to us in the New Testament. From the earliest days local churches began to make their own collection of the memoirs and letters of the apostles, and obeyed the repeated apostolic injunction to read them, alongside the law and the prophets, in the public assembly.²⁹

So it is, thirdly, that word and sacrament were combined in the ministry given to the church at Troas, and the universal church has followed suit ever since. For God speaks to his people through his Word both as it is read and expounded from Scripture and as it is dramatized in the two gospel sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Perhaps 'word and sacrament' is not the best or most accurate coupling, common though it is. For strictly speaking the sacrament itself is a word, a 'visible word' according to Augustine. What builds up the church more than anything else is the ministry of God's word as it comes to us through Scripture and Sacrament (that is the right coupling), audibly and visibly, in declaration and drama.

3. A coastal voyage to Miletus (20:13–16)

This next brief paragraph in Luke's narrative (only four verses in our English Bibles) is a rather breathless account of Paul's voyage from Troas (where he addressed the local church) to Miletus (where he addressed the pastors of the Ephesian church). He tells us that Paul was 'in a hurry' (16); we get the impression that Luke was in a hurry too. He mentions four coastal or island ports at which Paul and his companions stopped (Assos, Mitylene, Kios and Samos) after leaving Troas and before arriving at Miletus. The we-section which began at verse 5 continues, so that Luke must be drawing on his own daily log of events. The ship evidently sailed each day and anchored each night. 'The reason', Ramsay explained, 'lies in the wind'. During the Aegean summer 'it generally blows from the north, beginning at a very early hour in the morning'. Then 'in the late afternoon it dies away' and 'at sunset there is a dead calm'.

Leaving Troas, Luke writes, *we went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos*, a port on the Asian mainland about twenty miles south of Troas, *where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot* (13), or perhaps simply 'by land' (RSV) or 'by road' (NEB). Luke shares two facts with us, without explaining them. First, Paul sent his companions on ahead of him. Did he delay his departure from Troas in order first to assure himself that Eutychus was not only alive but well? It is only a guess. Secondly, Paul arranged for his friends to travel to Assos by sea and for himself to go by land. Travel along the coastal road would be quicker than a sea voyage round the cape. But why did he want to be alone? Was it that this was the real beginning of his long journey to Jerusalem? We know that he was anxious both that he would be rescued from unbelievers in Judea and that his offering would be acceptable to the believers in Jerusalem, for he begged the Christians in Rome to join him in praying for these very things. Maybe it was these things which occupied his thoughts and prayers on his lonely walk from Troas to Assos. But again, it is only a guess.

When he met us at Assos, the pre-arranged rendez-vous, *we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene* (14), which was the main city of the island of Lesbos, and was situated on its south-east coast. *The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Kios* (15a), that is, anchored in a mainland port opposite the island of Kios. *The day after that we crossed over to Samos*, and island west of Ephesus, and 'after stopping at Trogyllium' (JB, following the Bezan text), a promontory at the entrance to the gulf, *on the following day arrived at Miletus* (15b), the mainland harbour at the mouth of the River Meander. *Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus*, and indeed had now done so in order to reach Miletus, because he wanted *to avoid spending time in the province of Asia*, a quick



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visit being in his judgment impossible, *for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost* (16).

4. Paul's address to the Ephesian elders (20:17–38)

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church (17). As the crow flies, Ephesus was only thirty miles north of Miletus, but the rather circuitous road was longer. It must have taken about three days for a messenger to travel to Ephesus and bring the elders back to Miletus. But in due course *they arrived* (18a).

a. Some introductory points

Before we are ready to study the text of Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, several introductory points need to be made. First, this is the only speech in the Acts which is addressed to a Christian audience. All the others are either evangelistic sermons, whether preached to Jewish people (2:14ff.; 3:12ff.; 13:16ff.) or Gentiles (10:34ff.; 14:14ff.; 17:22ff.), or legal defences, whether made before the Sanhedrin in the early days of the church (4:8ff.; 5:29ff.; 7:1ff.) or the five speeches before the Jewish and Roman authorities, which come near the end of the book (22–26).

Secondly, the leaders addressed are called 'elders' (17), 'pastors' (28a) and 'overseers' (28b), and it is evident that these terms denote the same people. 'Pastors' is the generic term which describes their role. In our day, in which there is much confusion about the nature and purpose of the pastoral ministry, and much questioning whether clergy are primarily social workers, psychotherapists, educators, facilitators or administrators, it is important to rehabilitate the noble word 'pastors', who are shepherds of Christ's sheep, called to tend, feed and protect them. This pastoral responsibility over the local congregation seems to have been shared by both deacons (though in a supportive role) and those who are called either *presbyteroi* (elders), a word borrowed from the Jewish synagogue, or *episkopoi* (overseers), a word borrowed from Greek contexts. These are often—and rightly—referred to as 'presbyter-bishops', in order to indicate that during the apostolic period the two titles referred to the same office. In those days there were only 'presbyter-bishops and deacons'. Those of us who belong to episcopally ordered churches, and believe that a threefold order (bishops, presbyters and deacons) can be defended and commended from Scripture, do not base our argument on the word *episkopoi*, but on people like Timothy and Titus who, though not called 'bishops', were nevertheless given an oversight and jurisdiction over several churches, with authority to select and ordain their presbyter-bishops and deacons.

Thirdly, the church of Ephesus clearly had a team of presbyter-bishops (*presbyteroi* in verse 17 and *episkopoi* in verse 28 are both in the plural). Similarly Paul appointed 'elders' in every Galatian church (14:23), as we have seen, and later instructed Titus to do the same in Crete. There is no biblical warrant either for the one-man-band (a single pastor playing all the instruments of the orchestra himself) or for a hierarchical or pyramidal structure in the local church (a single pastor perched at the apex of the pyramid). It is not even clear that each of the elders was in charge of an individual house-church. It is better to think of them as a team, some perhaps with the oversight of house-churches, but others with specialist ministries according to their gifts, and all sharing the pastoral care of Christ's flock. We need today to recover this concept of a pastoral team in the church.

Fourthly, Luke himself was present and heard this speech (see the 'we' in 21:1). Perhaps William Neil is correct in suggesting that 'Luke may have made notes at the time'. Certainly the address has an authentically Pauline flavour. What has struck many students is the correspondence, in both vocabulary and content, between the speech and Paul's letters. Themes in his letters which he touches on in his speech are the grace of God (24, 32), the kingdom of God (25), the purpose (*boulē*) of God (27), the redeeming blood of Christ (28), repentance and faith (21), the church of God and its edification (28, 32), the inevitability of suffering (23–24), the danger of false teachers (29–30), the need for vigilance (28, 31), running the race (24) and our final inheritance (32).

b. The message of Paul's speech

It may be helpful to divide Paul's speech into three portions, relating to the past, the future and the present.

(i) His ministry in Ephesus (20:18b–21)

You know how I lived, he says (18b). Again, *You know* (20), although this is a resumptive clause in the English text, which is not in the Greek. You again later 'you yourselves know' (34). This repeated emphasis on their



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knowledge of him is reminiscent of 1 Thessalonians 2, where he wrote ‘You know, brothers (1) ..., as you know (2) ..., You know (5) ..., Surely you remember (9) ..., You are witnesses (10) ..., For you know (11) ...’. A vicious smear campaign had been launched against Paul in Thessalonica. Because he had had to be smuggled out of the city by night and had not returned, his critics accused him of insincerity. Something similar seems to have happened in Ephesus during the year or so since he had left the city. So he needed to defend the sincerity of his motives and, as in Thessalonica so in Ephesus, he did it by reminding them of his visit. They knew how he had lived during the whole time he was with them from beginning to end. He appealed to their memory, especially of four aspects of his ministry—his humility (meaning perhaps his humiliations), his tears, his testings on account of ‘the machinations of the Jews’ (19, NEB), and his faithful preaching-teaching ministry, in public and in private, in which he concentrated on the need for both Jews and Gentiles to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus.

(ii) His future sufferings (20:22–27)

In this section Luke replaces the ‘you know ... you know ...’ of the previous paragraph with ‘I know (23) ..., I know (25) ..., I know (29)’. For Paul turns from the past which they knew to the future which the Holy Spirit was teaching him and which he now shared with them. The same Holy Spirit who warns him in every town (perhaps through prophets) of prison and hardships (23), nevertheless compels him to keep travelling to Jerusalem (22). For his overriding concern is not at all costs to survive, but rather that he may finish the race and complete his Christ-given task of bearing witness to the good news of God’s grace (24). And Paul knows something else. His prophetic eyes peer beyond Jerusalem and his sufferings there to the mission visits to Rome and to Spain of which he is still dreaming. It must be for this reason that he knows that none of them will see him again (25). This face adds a poignant finality to the occasion. He makes a solemn declaration that, as a watchman like Ezekiel, he is innocent of everybody’s blood (26). His conscience is clear. He has not shrunk from proclaiming to them God’s whole purpose of salvation (27). Consequently, he cannot be held responsible if any of them might perish.

(iii) His exhortation to the elders (20:28–35)

Having looked back to his ministry in Ephesus (which they know) and on to his coming sufferings and separation from them (which he knows), Paul now gives them his final charge. The past and the future will together shape their present ministry. In essence, his appeal is for vigilance: ‘Keep watch!’ (28) ... ‘Be on your guard!’ (31).

‘Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

³²‘Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”’

We note that the Ephesian pastors must first keep watch over themselves, and only then over the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made them responsible. For they cannot care adequately for others if they neglect the care and culture of their own souls. They are to ‘be shepherds’ of God’s church, *poimainō* meaning in general to ‘tend’ a flock and in particular ‘to lead a flock to pasture, and so to feed it’. This is the first duty of shepherds. ‘Should not the shepherds take care of the flock?’ Moreover pastors will be the more diligent in their ministry if they remember that their flock is *the church of God, which he bought with his own blood*. The startling concept of God having and shedding blood, although the church fathers Ignatius and Tertullian spoke of it, seems to have led some scribes to write ‘the church of the Lord’, meaning the Lord Jesus. But this expression occurs nowhere in the New Testament, whereas ‘the church of God’ is a regular Pauline expression. It should therefore be retained. Then the rest of the sentence should be translated ‘which he bought with the blood of his Own’ (RSV margin, NEB margin). This sense of *idios* (‘own’), writes F. F. Bruce, ‘is well attested by the papyri, where it is “used thus as a term of endearment to near relations”’.



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The second need for watchfulness is the wolves, that is, the false teachers who, Paul knows, will after his departure enter and devastate Christ's flock (29). Some of them will arise even from within the church. By distorting the truth, they will induce people to forsake it and follow them instead (30). So the Ephesian pastors must be on their guard, as Paul had constantly warned them while he was with them (31). We have only to read both Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Ephesus in Revelation 2:1ff. to know that what Paul predicted came to pass. Perhaps it would not have done if the pastors had been more vigilant.

After exhorting the Ephesian elders to be watchful both over the sheep and against the wolves, the apostle proceeds to commend them to God and his word of grace (32). Then suddenly, as if to enforce his appeal and commendation, he reminds them again of the example he has set them. Like Samuel in his farewell charge, Paul declares that he has coveted nobody's money or clothing (33). Instead, he has supported himself and his companions. One can imagine his gesture as he refers to 'these hands of mine' (34). And by his hard manual work he has exemplified the truth of an otherwise unknown saying of Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (35).

c. The farewell (20:36–38)

d. Ideals of pastoral ministry

In developing the pastoral metaphor, it is noteworthy that Paul described his own teaching ministry (as their 'shepherd'), warned them of false teachers ('wolves') and affirmed the value of their church members (God's 'sheep').

(i) The example of the apostle (the shepherd)

Several times he reminded the elders of his example. There had been a degree of thoroughness about it, which left his conscience clear. First, he had been thorough in his teaching. He had taught them about God's grace and kingdom (24–25) and the necessity of repentance and faith (21). He had not shrunk from declaring to them either what was profitable to them (20) or God's whole salvation plan (27). Secondly, he had been thorough in his coverage. He was as concerned to reach the whole population of Ephesus as he was to teach the whole purpose of God. He wanted to teach everything to everybody! So he had a ministry to both Jews and Gentiles, both residents and visitors. Thirdly, he was thorough in his methods. He taught both publicly (in synagogue and lecture hall) and privately (in homes), and he continued both day and night (20, 31). He was absolutely indefatigable. In modern terms, Paul's threefold thoroughness was a fine example of 'evangelism in depth'. He shared all possible truth with all possible people in all possible ways. He taught the whole gospel to the whole city with his whole strength. His pastoral example must have been an unflinching inspiration to the Ephesian pastors.

(ii) The rise of false teachers (the wolves)

In the ancient Near East wolves were the chief enemy of sheep. Hunting now singly now in packs, they were a constant threat. Sheep were defenceless against them. Shepherds could not afford to relax their vigilance. Nor can Christian pastors. Jesus himself warned of false prophets; 'wolves in sheep's clothing' he called them.

So the shepherds of Christ's flock have a double duty: to feed the sheep (by teaching the truth) and to protect them from wolves (by warning of error). As Paul put it to Titus, elders must hold firm the sure word according to apostolic teaching, so that they would be able both 'to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it'. This emphasis is unpopular today. We are frequently told always to be positive in our teaching, and never negative. But those who say this have either not read the New Testament or, having read it, they disagree with it. For the Lord Jesus and his apostles refuted error themselves and urged us to do the same. One wonders if it is the neglect of this obligation which is a major cause of today's theological confusion. If, when false teaching arises, Christian leaders sit idly by and do nothing, or turn tail and flee, they will earn the terrible epithet 'hirelings' who care nothing for Christ's flock. Then too it will be said of believers, as it was of Israel, that 'they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and ... they became food for all the wild animals'.⁴⁵

(iii) The value of the people (the sheep)



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Implicit in verse 28 is the truth that the pastoral oversight of the church belongs ultimately to God himself. Indeed, each of the three persons of the Trinity has a share in this oversight. To begin with, the church is ‘God’s church’. Next, whether we read that he redeemed it ‘with his own blood’ or ‘with the blood of his own’, it is plain that the purchase price was the blood of Christ. And over this church, which belongs to God and has been bought by Christ, the Holy Spirit appoints overseers. So the oversight is his too, or he could not delegate it to others. This splendid Trinitarian affirmation, that the pastoral oversight of the church belongs to God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), should have a profound effect on pastors. It should humble as to remember that the church is not ours, but God’s. And it should inspire us to faithfulness. For sheep are not at all the clean and cuddly creatures they may appear. In fact, they are dirty, subject to unpleasant pests, and regularly need to be dipped in strong chemicals to rid them of lice, ticks and worms. They are also unintelligent, wayward and obstinate. I hesitate to apply the metaphor too closely and characterize the people of God as dirty, lousy or stupid! But some people are a great trial to their pastors (and *vice versa*). And their pastors will persevere in caring for them only if they remember how valuable they are in God’s sight. They are the flock of God the Father, purchased by the precious blood of God the Son, and supervised by overseers appointed by God the Holy Spirit. If the three persons of the Trinity are thus committed to the welfare of the people, should we not be also?

Richard Baxter’s great book *The Reformed Pastor* (1656) is really an exposition of Acts 20:28. He wrote:

Oh then, let us hear these arguments of Christ, whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless: ‘Did I die for them, and wilt not thou look after them? Were they worth my blood and are they not worth thy labour? Did I come down from heaven to earth, to seek and to save that which was lost; and wilt thou not go to the next door or street or village to seek them? How small is thy labour and condescension as to mine? I debased myself to this, but it is thy honour to be so employed. Have I done and suffered so much for their salvation; and was I willing to make thee a co-worker with me, and wilt thou refuse that little that lieth upon thy hands?’

5. On to Jerusalem (21:1–17)

Saying goodbye to the Ephesian elders had been an emotional scene, especially because they and Paul believed that they would never see one another again. Paul’s party had had to ‘tear themselves away’ from them. And now began the final leg of the journey to Jerusalem, for which again Luke obviously drew on his diary. He mentions three or four stops (Cos, Rhodes, Patara and perhaps Myra), followed by three landings (Tyre, Ptolemais and Caesarea).

a. From Miletus to Tyre (21:1–6)

After we had torn ourselves away from them, we (Luke again unostentatiously draws attention to his presence) *put out to sea and sailed straight to Cos* (1a), a small island due south of Miletus. *The next day we went to Rhodes*, a larger island to the south-east, whose city of the same name was situated at its north-easterly tip, *and from there to Patara* (1b), due east of Rhodes, the Bezan text adding ‘and Myra’, a bit further east still. Both Patara and Myra are near to the southernmost promontory of the mainland of Asia Minor. Because ‘the harbour of Myra seems to have been the great port into the direct cross-sea traffic to the coasts of Syria and Egypt’, wrote William Ramsay, ‘it may ... be safely assumed that Myra was visited by Paul’s ship’. Here *we found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia*, on the Palestinian coast, so that they transferred themselves to it, *went on board and set sail* (2). Their route now took them south-east into the middle of the Eastern Mediterranean. It was a 400-mile voyage from Myra to Tyre. *After sighting Cyprus and passing to the South of it, we sailed on to Syria*.

We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo (3). At the same time their search for Christians in the town was successful. *Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days*, either because the unloading (and perhaps re-loading) took that long, or because their ship stopped there and they were waiting for another one. During this week the disciples *through the Spirit ... urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem* (4). *But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way* (5a). I will return later to the apparently contradictory signals which were coming from the Holy Spirit about Paul’s journey to Jerusalem. *All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray* (5). It must have been another emotional parting. *After saying good-bye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home* (6).



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b. From Tyre to Jerusalem (21:7–17)

We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, called Acre since the Middle Ages, about twenty-five miles south of Tyre. Here we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for a day (7). Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea, a magnificent city built by Herod the Great to serve as the port for Jerusalem, and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist (so-called to distinguish him from Philip the apostle), one of the Seven (8). It was here at Caesarea that Philip had settled about twenty years previously (8:40). Since then his family had grown up: he had four unmarried daughters who prophesied (9). Luke does not tell us exactly how long Paul and his party stayed in Caesarea, but they will have had much to talk about with Philip and his daughters. Perhaps it was now that Philip revealed the facts about himself and Stephen, which Luke later incorporated into Acts 6–8. During their stay, another prophecy of great interest was given.

*After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus (presumably the one who featured in 11:27ff.) came down from Judea (10). Coming over to us, he copied the miming practice of some of the Old Testament prophets, like Ahijah tearing Jeroboam’s cloak into twelve pieces, Isaiah going stripped and barefoot for three years⁴⁹ and Ezekiel laying siege to a drawing of Jerusalem. He took Paul’s belt, and tied his own hands and feet with it. This was not a short leather belt: ‘to bind himself hand and foot with such a girdle would have been an acrobatic performance’. It must rather have been a long piece of cloth which was worn as a girdle. Then Agabus said: ‘The Holy Spirit says, “In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles”’ (11). This was the second prophecy which seems incompatible with what the Spirit originally said to Paul; I will address this problem at the end of this chapter. When we heard this (Agabus’ prophecy), Luke continues, *we and the people there (he specifically includes himself) pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem (12). This time the apostle was outspoken in rejecting their pleas. Then Paul answered, ‘Why are you weeping and breaking my heart [NEB, “trying to weaken my resolution”]? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus’ (13). His words are almost identical with Peter’s: ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.’ The difference was that in the event Peter had faltered and failed (though in the end he suffered and died for Christ), whereas Paul was true to his word. When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said (not in feeble resignation but as a positive prayer), ‘The Lord’s will be done’ (14).**

After this we got ready, meaning either ‘we packed our baggage’ (NEB) or ‘equipped horses’⁵³ and went up to Jerusalem (15). Since the distance between Caesarea and Jerusalem was sixty-five miles, the journey would take two days, as the Bezan text says, and horses would be necessary. Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, which was in Jerusalem, and where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples (16), i.e. probably ‘a foundation-member of the Jerusalem church’. When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly (17).

c. The guidance of the Spirit

Thus at last, after many weeks of travel and suspense, and in spite of dire warnings, Paul arrived at his destination. But was he right to brush aside his friends who implored him to abandon his plan? What about those messages of the Holy Spirit through prophets? Are we to blame Paul for his obstinacy or admire him for his unshakeable resolve?

At first sight the promptings of the Spirit appear to have been in direct conflict with each other. In Miletus Paul told the Ephesian elders that he was going to Jerusalem ‘compelled by the Spirit’, in spite of the ‘prison and hardships’ of which the same Spirit warned him (20:22–23). In Tyre, however, it was ‘through the Spirit’ that certain disciples urged him (the imperfect *elegon* implies ‘again and again’, JBP) not to go on to Jerusalem (21:4), while in Caesarea Agabus began his prophecy with the formula ‘the Holy Spirit says’ (21:11). But Paul ignored both messages. Refusing to be dissuaded (21:14), he continued on his way (21:5).

How can we resolve this problem? Certainly not by concluding that the Spirit contradicted himself, telling Paul to go in chapter 20 and countermanding his instruction in chapter 21. Luke has too high a doctrine of the Holy Spirit to portray him as changing his mind. Even if 20:22 should be understood as referring rather to the compulsion of his own spirit than of the Holy Spirit, Paul still appears to go against the voice of the Holy Spirit in chapter 21.



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I think we should begin by affirming that Luke believed Paul to be right in going to Jerusalem. Probably he attributes to the Holy Spirit both the decision of 19:21 and the compulsion of 20:22, since both of them were *(en) tō pneumati*, ‘in the Spirit’. In addition, we have already suggested that Luke sees Paul’s journey to Jerusalem as the disciple following in his Master’s footsteps. What then are we to make of 21:4 and 11? Some have argued that the references to the Spirit here simply mean that the speakers were *claiming* inspiration, without necessarily being inspired. But then we would have to interpret other references to the Spirit in the same ambiguous way. The better solution is to draw a distinction between a prediction and a prohibition. Certainly Agabus only predicted that Paul would be bound and handed over to the Gentiles (21:11); the pleadings with Paul which followed are not attributed to the Spirit and may have been the fallible (indeed mistaken) human deduction from the Spirit’s prophecy. For if Paul had heeded his friends’ pleas, then Agabus’ prophecy would not have been fulfilled! It is more difficult to understand 21:4 in this way, since the ‘urging’ itself is said to be ‘through the Spirit’. But perhaps Luke’s statement is a condensed way of saying that the warning was divine while the urging was human. After all, the Spirit’s word to Paul combined the compulsion to go with a warning of the consequences (20:22–23).

So Luke surely intends us to admire Paul for his courage and perseverance. Like Jesus before him, he set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, and (like Jesus again) the divine predictions of suffering did not deter him.

What fortified Paul in his journey was the Christian fellowship which he and his travel companions experienced in every port. In Tyre they found disciples and stayed with them seven days (21:4). In Ptolemais they greeted their sisters and brothers and stayed with them one day (7). In Caesarea they were accommodated in the home of Philip the evangelist and stayed with him ‘a number of days’ (8, 10). The disciples from Caesarea then personally escorted Paul and his party to Jerusalem, where they were to stay with the early Cypriot convert Mnason (16), and on arrival in Jerusalem the sisters and brothers ‘received [them] warmly’ (17). It would be an exaggeration to call this Paul’s ‘triumphal entry’ into Jerusalem. But at least his warm reception strengthened him to bear the crowd’s shouts a few days later ‘Away with him!’ (36).¹

Hezekiah (leading others to stand) **2 Chronc 29** 2 Chronicles 29:10-11

The call to Stand before the LORD

Levites and the priest were charged by King Hezekiah to cleanse the temple that his father Ahaz defiled.

•

#1 rule = you must be surefooted and standing

- Uzziah (falling example) **2 Chronicles 25:1 – 27:9**
- Jehoshaphat (falling and then standing back up) **2 Chronicles 17:1-18:34**

Standing: (Have Mic come in and share this testimony?)

1 Corinthians 16:9

“For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

¹ Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Acts: the Spirit, the church & the world* (pp. 312–335). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



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⁹ because a wide door for effective service has opened to me [in Ephesus, a very promising opportunity], and there are many adversaries.

The Role of Proactive Arming (highlight throughout series)

Isaiah 11:2

“The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”

And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him—

The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,

The Spirit of counsel and strength,

The Spirit of knowledge and of the [reverential and obedient] fear of the Lord—