

**The Conclusion of Ministry in Corinth  
Acts 18:12-22**

It's wonderful to sing and praise the Lord, and the more we know about the Lord, the more we'll be able to praise the Lord. That's why we study the Scriptures - so we can understand Him better, and the better we understand Him, the more we can exalt His name. Specifically, as we look through the narrative literature of the Bible (that's the stories, the accounts, and the history of what God has done), we can see God's faithfulness in this. And we praise the Lord that He has accomplished His will in His way throughout the course of history.

Today, we'll look at Acts chapter 18, and we will see a passage of Scripture that probably isn't one of the memory verses you have collected in your brain, but it is a significant part of the history of the church... that we should recognize what God has done at that place, at that time, and how that was an important piece of how God brought us to the knowledge of Him as the course of history went on. So, today, our passage will be Acts 18:12-22, and Acts chapter 18:12-22 is going to conclude Paul's second missionary journey to the area of Europe, Greece, and we will see an important ruling from a Roman official and then a lengthy return over many miles back to Antioch where the missionary journey began. Okay. So, that's where we are in the Scripture, and this missionary journey, this second missionary journey, where Paul originally intended to go and visit the territories of the first missionary journey, to visit the churches, was directed by God to move toward Macedonia and to see the people of Europe come to know the gospel.

So, he arrived in Philippi across the Aegean Sea (and tracked down because of the opposition from the Jews) to move toward Thessalonica, to Berea - more opposition from the Jews - then led him to flee south from the area of Macedonia in the northern part of Greece to the area of Achaia in the southern part of Greece. So, that's where Athens is. That's where Corinth is. And we saw his ministry at Athens in Acts chapter 17. Then he went a bit west over to Corinth. And now, in chapter 18, we have seen the ministry in Corinth. Beginning in Acts 18:12, we find the Jews once again rising up against Paul, and we'll see him detained in Corinth by the Jews, brought before this fellow named Gallio a proconsul of Achaia, the proconsul of Achaia. So, let's read a few verses here and get into this account where Luke writes, "But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord

rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, saying, ‘This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.’ ”

So, they’re bringing him before the proconsul Gallio, and this man Gallio was a very powerful, the most powerful, official in this area of Achaia. He was well known and different than the other people that we find ruling over Paul because of the territory that he oversaw, not only the land mass, but also the significance of Achaia within the Roman Empire. Athens being sort of the cultural heart of the Roman Empire. Corinth being a very large city, ten times the size of Athens (it would’ve been back then). So, Gallio resided in Corinth, and he was a very powerful figure. He reported, in fact, directly to the Roman Empire, Emperor Claudius, so that’s the degree of significance of this person. If you wanted to look at kind of an organizational chart, the Roman Empire emperor was over the entire empire, and he had a senate that was kind of stocked with cronies and kind of a rubber stamp. And then the proconsuls like Gallio would be the next person representing him. So, this person/power was vast. The ability to track the chronology of Paul’s ministry is greatly helped by Gallio. He ruled over Achaia only from 51 to 52 AD, not very long. So, when we find Paul beforehand in Achaia, that is one of those markers in the book of Acts (it doesn’t come with a lot of dates and that sort of stuff) that helps us to say, okay, now we know based on historical accounts (because Gallio was a very significant ruling figure at the time) that we can target Paul’s ministry in Corinth to 51 to 52 AD and helps us with putting together the chronology.

So, they made their charge saying, “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.” So this charge they made of Paul teaching contrary to Law was essentially described... attempting to make Christianity illegal, to say he’s not legally able to do this because he is not abiding by the teachings of Judaism, so therefore he has got a contrary religion of worshipping God and therefore would be illegal. He’s not connected in his teaching to Judaism. He’s teaching contrary to Judaism; therefore, this is against the law. This is creating another religion that is not an authorized religion in the Roman Empire. This attempt was to get the Roman government to be participating with the Jews to oppose Christianity on an official level. The Jews had done this before if you might recall. In Philippi, there was a similar statement saying he’s teaching contrary to the Law. In other words, this isn’t legal, and the mob of Jews kind of rose up there, and they incited the Gentiles to be upset about this, and so the Romans then,

basically, just threw Paul and Silas into prison to kind of quiet the crowd and get rid of the uproar. There was an earthquake that freed Paul and Silas and all the other prisoners and... they're being superstitious just said, you know, get out of town. You know, this is just too much trouble for us, and they sent Paul away. Then, when they got to Thessalonica, then the Jews at Thessalonica did the same thing and sought to oppose Paul and to get the government opposing Paul as well.

This is different. The reason this is different is the strength of leadership that Gallio would bring as a proconsul meant the stakes were much higher. He had the ability through precedent to basically outlaw Christianity. His authority to effectively ban the practice of Christianity with a ruling existed, and if he did that, then the believers would have been able to be officially persecuted by Romans as a rogue religion, and this would have created a great difficulty for the church. So, that's what is going on here. So, what does he do? When he gets this charge before him, this man, Paul, persuades other men to worship God contrary to the Law. Paul, realizing the significance of this event, is about to defend himself in verse 14; "But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, 'If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.' And he drove them away from the judgment seat." So, he basically says I don't care. Get out of here. Leave me alone. This is an interreligious squabble of words and practices, and this is your own business. I don't want to be bothered with this. Get lost.

This decision to say leave me alone was significant because it brought legitimacy to Christianity for the next dozen years up until 64 AD and the persecution under Emperor Nero, which was a great persecution of the church. So, from now which is about 52 AD, for the next dozen years, we're going to find peace for the church from the government, and this gives a chance for the church to take root. Now, if you were to plant grass and a few days after you planted it, a storm comes and destroys the ground that you planted in, the grass isn't growing. Or, if a drought comes and it gets no water, it dies. There comes a time where there is enough root taking place that when a drought comes or a vicious storm comes, the grass is going to survive. Well, we have the same thing happening here. If, immediately, the Roman government began to crack down on the church (with the few people

in Europe that had been believers at this point), this would've been much more significant, but the Lord through history worked in the lives of even unbelieving rulers to, sort of, legitimize things - so that it gave the church some depth and some breadth - so that when persecution did take place, the church survived. So, I think, we can look back at these historical accounts and be thankful and praising the Lord that these things turned out the way they did, and this man Gallio did not intercede on behalf of the Jews to essentially stamp out Christianity.

And that brings us to verse 17 which says, "And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things." So, what's going on here? This is kind of a... people kind of debate this a bit. Some people think, well, this is the Greeks, the Gentiles, grabbing the leader of the synagogue and beating him up. Well, the challenge here is who "they" is referring to; "...they all took hold of Sosthenes..." Well, if you look at this pronoun, it's not just here, it's throughout this story. The "they" consistently only refers to one group, the Jews. There's no other Gentiles, here, the "they" is referring to, and even the prior verse, verse 16; "...he (that's Gallio) drove them (that's the Jews) away from the judgment seat. And they all took hold of Sosthenes..." So, I think, clearly, the pronoun is referring to the Jews.

So, the next question is why are the Jews attacking Sosthenes the leader of the synagogue? Are they just upset he's done such a poor job of arguing their case before Gallio, and they're mad at him for that? Well, there's a couple of verses that I think help us. One is verse 8 in the same chapter. If you just go back ten verses, we find another leader of the synagogue, Crispus, and "Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians..." So there was a leader of the synagogue who was a believer and became a follower of Jesus. Here, I think, is another leader of the synagogue who become a believer, a follower. I believe this Sosthenes was a believer, and he received the wrath of the Jews as a traitor. They took out their anger on him. Why would they do that? Because he was the leader of the synagogue like Crispus, and now, was someone that they viewed as being sympathetic with Paul. Here's some evidence of this, 1 Corinthians 1:1. Probably, you might have some vague idea of what that might say because whenever Paul starts a letter he always says who's writing, him, and so we have identifying Paul as the author. And,

as often we find in the epistles, there's someone else writing, as well, with him, and in that case, in the case of the letter of 1 Corinthians which is written about five years later to the Corinthians, he is writing with a guy named Sosthenes, same guy. So, they would be familiar with Sosthenes, and, actually, when Luke wrote this (in Acts chapter 18), the book of 1 Corinthians had already been written. So, these people were familiar with Sosthenes, and Luke undoubtedly was knowledgeable that Sosthenes was familiar to the people of Corinth. So, I believe Sosthenes was a believer that got the wrath of the Jews taken out upon him; and Gallio was okay because, as far as he was concerned, this was just their own business, and he didn't care about any of this.

So, let's look at the Jews here and what they do. They're certainly opposing Christianity, violently as well as philosophically, and attempting to exercise their power to bring the stamping out of Christianity. They don't just oppose Jesus, they also used tactics to do this that are different from Christianity. The Jews not only differ from the Christians regarding their view of Jesus, but also in their approach to the government. We look at how the Christians approach the government, how they dealt with the government. What'd they do? Well, throughout the Scripture, we don't find them trying to get the government to enact their cause. The Jews sought the assistance of the government to further their cause. We don't find that as being the tactic of the church. Here's what we do find - the Scripture, not calling the us, or the example of the early church, to bring societal change to affect their agenda through the government, but rather to seek peace with the government through submission (in Romans 13) and prayer (in 1 Timothy 2).

So, this is significant enough. I think it's... you know, hey, it's an election year. Let's touch base on this because so many Christians think we need to get what we want to see happen in our society, happening through the government. So, we look at the Scripture, and we don't see Jesus building His church on the back of the Romans. In fact, what Jesus did was He didn't participate with this. In fact, the people that were trying to bring about change in the government, the zealots... Jesus called one guy Simon the Zealot to be one of His followers. That's the way He's seeking to build the church. But then, we have specific instructions, and so, we look at Romans 13. What is the instruction of the Scripture to the church? And it's this. It's to be submissive. "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist

are established by God.” In another words, God oversees all of this, and if God wants something to happen, it will happen, and we don’t need to resist the authority because God is ultimately able to do what He wants to do. So, there’s that approach, and that’s what we see the church doing, basically, just looking to be submissive.

But then, there’s the reason for this, and then we get to 1 Timothy, and Paul writes to Timothy a little more information about how to do this, and specifically why to do this. So, Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:1; “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that (and now here’s the reason why we’re praying for these rulers) we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.” Now, you and me and a whole bunch of people like a tranquil and quiet life. We like to kind of be left alone and just being able to do our own thing. Right? That doesn’t, really, separate us out. What separates us out is the reason for this. Why do we want a tranquil and quiet life? Why do we just want to be submitting and participating as opposed to what some Christians would advocate we do which is flex our political muscle and exhort our attempt to bring change through our power and our will? Here’s the reason. Verse 3; “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all...” Christ “...gave Himself as a ransom for all...” That is our agenda.

Believers have a greater mission, and that is the salvation of mankind. So, the intent of the Scriptures is to have us busy about the mission of the church, not to try to fix the society to function in a way that’s more corresponding to the way that we think it ought to, even according to the teaching of the Scripture. They didn’t do that. Now, you could say they didn’t do that because of the oppressive government. What are they going to do to bring about that affect? We have a participatory government. We can vote. We can run for office. We have a different ability so, therefore, we should take advantage of that different ability. Well, aside from the fact that, once again, this is not, really, what the church was seeking to do (so you kind of don’t have that to go to), I would just suggest all you need to do is look at how that’s gone. Just look back at the history of this participatory government that we have. We can see times where the church, Christians,



decided that society would be much better if they followed certain morals that we think are better. For example, a hundred years ago, 1920, we the people enacted the amendment banning alcohol, Prohibition. There was enough political energy expended by the church to accomplish that. How did that go? That went so badly that the people voted to overturn. You know how easy that is to do, to actually overturn an amendment that you put into place? Because the people of our society are not believers by and large. Not only is that true, if you want to just go and investigate that; the Scriptures say, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "...the [road] is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it." The road is narrow that leads to life. There's few of those who find it... Most people are not on board with following Jesus, so we by essence are a minority.

You could say, oh. that's like a hundred years ago. Well, let's pick something just in your lifetime here. I think it was 2008, only what, eight years ago? We had a proposition to ban same sex marriage in California, and many Christians put signs outside their house, maybe you did, and guess what? We established the banning of same sex marriage in California. We were successful. How did that go? Not too good. We are unsuccessful, decidedly unsuccessful, in achieving change through the political system to accomplish the will of the Scriptures in our society. It's failing. It's failing miserably. Why is it failing? Because people aren't, really, believing in Jesus to start with. So, they're kind of like Gallio. At some point, they'll say what do I care. Leave me alone. They are not on board with our agenda because they don't believe in Jesus. That's why the Scripture is moving us to have a higher calling here, and that is to bring the message of Jesus Christ to people, and when you have that, then you have internal change, and when you have internal change, then you, actually, want do to the right thing rather than you're forced to do the right thing because we're making you. So, that's my two cents. Plus, we have a bigger mission here as believers, and that's what the Scripture and the book of Acts is moving us toward. And in the end, we don't end up with these political tug-a-wars with people. We're ending up trying to help them to understand Jesus, and they might even be a little more interested in listening to us if we weren't in a political tug-a-war.

Let's move on because we got other things to talk about here. We got a whole journey to Antioch, and that's where we go to next. Verse 18; "Paul, having remained many days longer [in Corinth], took leave of the brethren

and put out to sea for Syria...” That’s where Antioch is. That’s where he started from. So, he’s looking to return “...and with him were Priscilla and Aquila.” We learned about Priscilla and Aquila in the beginning of Acts chapter 18. Those are the people that joined with him when Paul first got to Corinth as tent makers, and they’ve been ministering with him. In fact, there’s evidence in the Scripture that the church met at their home. Verse 18 also says, “In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.” Now most of this journey back, it’s going to be pretty straight forward, but there’s this, kind of, one part here that I think is worth looking at because it’s a little... it’s a little interesting. You wonder, why is Paul keeping a vow? What’s the purpose there? So, in order to address that, I think, first of all, we have to look at what is a vow. Okay? A vow is a solemn oath or promise or pledge particularly made to God. That’s a vow – an oath, a promise, particularly to God.

Okay, so now that we understand what that is, why is Paul doing this? Well, we need a little more background. Okay? First we have to establish, people make vows they take oaths in our society. Here’s the oath of office for president. Maybe you made marriage vows. I’d show you mine, but it shows how much I’ve aged, so I don’t want to go there. There’s the Hippocratic oath of doctors... I guess there’s Greek for you up there, the Hippocratic oath... There’s when people become citizens in the United States, naturalized, they have a ceremony where they take an oath. So, this happens in our society. Vows, oaths, are not intrinsically wrong. We find them in the Old Testament, not commanded per se, but governed. So, if they were intrinsically wrong, it wouldn’t be governed in the Old Testament. Also, even God is described in Hebrews 6 as taking an oath, so it cannot be just flat out wrong. But some people think it is, and they’ll just even refuse to take an oath. So, if they’re called into court, then they kind of need to say it another way because they refuse to swear and take an oath, and the reason they do this is because of the teaching of Jesus. So, we have to look at the teaching of Jesus.

While vows are not intrinsically wrong, Jesus taught His disciples to make no oath at all, Matthew 5:33-37, and James reiterated this teaching. So, let’s look at what Jesus taught, and as we understand what Jesus taught, hopefully, we’ll understand then what Paul is doing here. So, in Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your



vows to the Lord.’ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.” So, you can kind of see why people might say, well, I can’t do that. Then you have James 5:12 which, incidentally, was penned before Paul was here taking his vow, so James 5 says... very similar wording; “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.”

So, you’ve got this. What was going on? The issue that Jesus spoke against - against using an oath to confirm a promise - so when you make your oath, or you promise, you pledge (now, a definition of a vow here), to do this, to confirm what you’re saying... so to say I promise, I vow, based on this thing. The Jews had a sophisticated system that they had established. They had a lot of sophisticated systems. One of this governed vows. They had a whole construct to govern the vows in order to constitute what is an actual binding commitment. So, you can make a vow according to Jerusalem or according to your hair on your head or whatever that is, and these would be levels of that. So, Jesus says don’t do that, make “...your yes is to be yes, and your no, no...” So, when you say something, you should be committed to what you’re saying, not, well, I didn’t say based on Valley Bible Church, I just said it based on what I said, or I had my fingers crossed behind my back, so it didn’t really count in the same way. So, these kind of games that the Jews were playing with vows He smashed and said don’t do this. Just let “...your yes is to be yes, and your no, no...,” and that’s the end of it.

Righteous people do not need any confirmation to appeal to a higher authority. We should just be able to commit ourselves and say yes, rather than have to invoke something else to guarantee that when we say yes, we really mean it. We don’t need that as righteous people. As Christians, actually, we represent Christ, so when we commit to something, it’s not just us; we are representing the Lord. And so, when we renege on our commitment, it looks not just bad for us, it kind of taints the name of Jesus who we say we’re following. So, as Christians, we represent Christ with our word. We have to have integrity. We have to communicate so that when people are led to believe something because we have committed ourselves,

we need to follow through, or we become untrustworthy or unfaithful, unreliable, and that reflects on Jesus. Okay?

That doesn't explain yet, what about Paul? What is he doing in Acts chapter 18? So, I'll try to deal with this now. We've already established that all you need is to say yes, and you are committed; let "...your yes is to be yes, and your no, no..." What Paul is doing is he's ending his vow with the cutting of his hair. That gives some interesting information. That makes this very likely, I think highly likely, that what he is doing is taking a special Jewish vow of commitment to the Lord, that is known as a Vow of the Nazarite, from Romans... I mean, from Numbers, chapter 6. Numbers 6 refers to this special commitment to the Lord, and the reason I think this has to be that is because the cutting of the hair was the way that you ended this special vow. So, why is he taking this special vow commitment to the Lord? Wasn't he committed to the Lord? I think you have to say Paul was committed. I mean, for heaven's sake, he has traveled so far, endured such things, to serve the Lord Jesus, you cannot view his commitment any other way than 100 percent. So, he didn't need to take a vow in order to solidify his commitment. He was committed. So, what's going on? Well, Paul's reason isn't stated. There is no statement about why he's doing this, but we know the location of where he did this. So, where did he do this? He did this in Cenchrea; "In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow." So, I think this helps us.

And you might think, why does this help us? Well, you have to understand where Cenchrea is. Cenchrea is right outside of Corinth on the sea. In other words, it's the port city of Corinth. He got as far as the port city. Cenchrea was the port city of Corinth, meaning that he ended his vow upon his departure from Corinth. It's like, if I'm going to fly to the east coast, I am going to drive to LAX and take an airplane. That's how I leave. He left Corinth by means of taking a ship at the port city of Cenchrea. So, this is tantamount to when he departs Corinth, he ends his vow. Why does this help us? Well, I think this can give us a good conclusion of why he's doing it when he leaves Corinth; therefore, the purpose of Paul's oath was not to validate his commitment, but rather to identify himself with the Jews of Corinth. He's identifying himself with the Jews of Corinth for a purpose, and that purpose is the winning of those Jews to Christ during his eighteen months stay. Corinth is the only city that he's visited that he's spent anywhere near that much time, so this eighteen month stay in Corinth gave

the people of Corinth the ability to see his length of hair and to be able to see that.

But Paul himself described how he functioned in ministry at Corinth, and that is in 1 Corinthians 9:20. So, we'll just use what Paul said to the Corinthians to say what he's doing. In 1 Corinthians 9:20, starting in verse 19, Paul writes, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law..." And then, he did the same thing with the Gentiles, as winning those who were without the Law, he became... "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some." Timothy at the beginning of this second missionary journey - the same thing where he was circumcised. He wasn't circumcised because there was any value in that. Paul clearly said there's no value in this, intrinsically, in being circumcised. The reason was for the ministry to the Jews. Same thing here; this vow was for the ministry in Corinth to the Jews. He became to the Jews, a Jew, though he didn't need this to be himself committed to the Lord. He was doing this for the sake of this ministry to others.

So, I would say, today, we take oaths in order... when it's deemed necessary by others. So, if you want to be the President of the United States, you'll need to take an oath of office... or some other official. You need to take an oath of office - can you do that? Sure, you can do that. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with this. You could say yes. Like if you take a marriage vow, you could say I'm committed to marriage; I'm marrying you. You could say it however you want to say it and make a binding commitment, and let "...your yes is to be yes, and your no, no..." but you can say do you solemnly swear and still say sure. It's the same thing. If that's what others need, then we can do that, but for the righteousness of ourselves, our yes is yes and our no, no. Paul is effecting ministry by keeping a vow for the sake of the Jews.

Then he moves and sails to Ephesus. Ephesus was a major commercial city, and it was a focal city of ministry for the third missionary journey. We're going to see a lot of Ephesus in the next missionary journey beginning in Acts chapter 19. The town of Ephesus is on the west coast of what's modern day Turkey just across the Aegean Sea. That's where he sailed. Okay? And

later, we're going to see the people he took with him, Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus, remaining on. Verse 19; "They came to Ephesus, and he left them there." And Priscilla and Aquila stayed there. "...he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking leave of them and saying, 'I will return to you again if God wills,' he set sail from Ephesus." So, he stopped there, ministered to the Jews, and continued on.

Luke does not provide us with the reason why Paul did not agree to remain longer, just he didn't. If you have the King James Version or if you have the New King James Version, you have a phrase in there that describes why he didn't stay, and that's because he was looking to keep the feast at Jerusalem. So, you're thinking, well, my Bible doesn't say that. And that's because this was added later. So, if you have a more modern translation, you have a better translation. The New King James Version or the King James Version includes information that was not in the earliest manuscripts about why. Okay? (So, if you want to know too much information about that, more than you ever want to know, I taught a class this summer on these ancient manuscripts, and it's online on our website, and have at it.) That's what's going on here. So, there's no statement about why. Is that a very possible reason? Absolutely. It's very likely that he's looking to get to Jerusalem to keep the Passover and probably effects why he was going in the fall of 52 AD. This travel was not easy in the winter, and so he's most likely going in more favorable conditions because the Passover, reminding you, was in the spring, was in April, and so, to do this lengthy trip, probably would have been difficult if you embarked too much in the late winter. So that kind of helps us with the time frame, but that's conjecture.

Paul's example of not remaining in Ephesus but desiring to continue to minister to them is instructive to us because he says if [the Lord] wills," he will return. "I will return to you again if [the Lord] wills." I think that helps us. His commitment to minister to them and return to them was dependent upon the Lord's will, and when we intend to do things... you probably have lots of intentions, lots of desires, to do stuff. When you encounter those commitments, you don't know the future, and you can say "...if [the Lord] wills." That's what he did. I think that's what James chapter 4 teaches us. Don't say today or tomorrow, we'll go to such and such a city engage in business and make a profit, "...if [the Lord] wills," we'll do this or that.

And then, “he set sail from Ephesus.” So, this is a fifteen-hundred-mile journey that he’s doing that is now condensed in just a few verses. We go from Corinth, Cenchrea, sailing to Ephesus, staying for a bit at Ephesus, then in verse 22, goes to Caesarea, and then up to greet the church. Now, when we go up to greet the church, that’s a phrasing that means up in elevation. Very highly likely that we’re talking about Jerusalem because when you land at Caesarea, you go up to meet the apostles at the church of Jerusalem and then “...down to Antioch.” We’ve seen that phrase before of traveling from Jerusalem down to Antioch in the book of Acts. So, that, I think, undoubtedly means Paul set sail from Ephesus to Caesarea, on the shore, up to Jerusalem, spent some time with the church at Jerusalem probably for the Passover as well and then “...went down to Antioch.” ...where we’re going to be locked and loaded for this third missionary journey and heads back out there in verse 23.

We see just this expanse of territory that Paul covered, and this speaks to us. Here’s what I think this says to us. This shows a commitment by Paul to ministry, and I would say may we demonstrate our commitment to the Lord with that same willingness to expand ourselves, to give of ourselves for serving others. If we just take just a few footsteps in this same path that Paul took of seeking to serve others, against our own, maybe, personal safety. Paul wasn’t taking this journey because he enjoyed the scenery or just loved to travel, wanted to see new places, he did it because of one reason, to bring the gospel to people that had never heard - and committed himself to this, to his own personal sacrifice. May we do the same thing. May we be willing to give over ourselves to help others, to serve others and expand ourselves for that service.