



ACTS: ENDS OF THE EARTH ACTS 18:24-19:10

STUDY GUIDE
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ACTS 18:24-19:10 ESV

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus. 1 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. 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." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. 7 There were about twelve men in all. 8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, 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 all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

STRUCTURE

- I. **A Jewish disciple of John in Ephesus receives proper understanding—and more fruitful ministry as a result (18:24-28).**
 - a. *Intro to Apollos:* Jewish, biblically competent, gospel fluent, Spirit-filled, disciple of John (18:24-25).
 - b. Priscilla and Aquila correct Apollos's understanding (18:26).
 - c. Apollos ministers in Corinth more fruitfully as a result (18:27-28).
- II. **Jewish disciples of John in Ephesus receive proper understanding—and the baptism of the Spirit as a result (19:1-7).**
 - a. *Intro to "the Ephesian twelve":* Jewish, not knowledgeable of the Spirit or the gospel, disciples of John (19:1-4).
 - b. Paul corrects their understanding (19:4-5).
 - c. The Ephesian twelve are baptized in water and the Spirit as a result (19:5-7).
- III. **Jews in Ephesus reject the gospel, but God opens the door across all Asia (19:8-10).**
 - a. Paul's ineffective ministry in the synagogue (19:8).
 - b. Paul's effective ministry in a pagan lecture hall (19:9-10).

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

After a brief description of Paul's travels after ministry in Corinth (18:18-23), the following section breaks down into three parts. The first two parts are perfectly parallel, inviting us to compare them: both involve disciples of John who are living in Ephesus; both parties possess insufficient knowledge; both receive correction; yet the outcomes differ.

The first subsection introduces Apollos. Apollos is a true believer in the Lord and recipient of the gospel, ministering in the power of God's Word and Spirit. He "taught accurately" (18:25) about Jesus, but Paul's companions—Priscilla and Aquila, whom he met in Corinth—teach him "more accurately" (18:26). Luke never informs us of the precise nature of Apollos's insufficient understanding, but he provides enough detail for us to conclude that Apollos had already accepted the gospel. Therefore, the correction they offer does not result in conversion or the baptism of the Spirit. Apollos had already received both. Instead, their correction increases the fruitfulness of his ministry, opening a door for him to travel to Corinth and pastor the church plant there.

In contrast to Apollos, the "Ephesian twelve" had an insufficient grasp of the gospel. They did not know about the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity (Jesus and the Holy Spirit). Therefore, Paul's correction of them differs from the one delivered by Priscilla and Aquila. The latter refined Apollos's already-accurate doctrine; the former redirected twelve men to receive Christ, the gospel, water baptism, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The back-to-back portrayal of these stories reveals the nature of the baptism of the Holy Spirit: it is associated with conversion. Apollos had already converted; therefore, he did not require the baptism of the Spirit. The "Ephesian twelve" had not yet been converted; therefore, they required both water baptism and Spirit baptism. This agrees with Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). I define baptism in the Spirit like this: **It is the promise of the Father, by the work of the Son, to immerse new believers in the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of incorporating them into Christ's body—the church.** This is distinct from the filling of the Holy Spirit, which I define like this: **It is the temporary, repeatable, empowerment of the Holy Spirit for testifying to Jesus.**

In the contemporary church, this clarifies that we should not think of the baptism of the Spirit as a "Second Blessing," enabling us to serve God more powerfully. It is not as though we are converted first, and then years later, we experience a baptism of the Spirit. Pentecostals believe this, and we love them! While I affirm their experiences with the Holy Spirit that occur sometime after conversion, I would not use their vocabulary to depict it. I would not refer to their so-called "second blessing" as "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." That happened at conversion. Instead, I would refer to it perhaps as a filling of the Holy Spirit. Peter was filled with the Spirit three times (Acts 2 and twice in Acts 4); Paul was filled with the Spirit two times (Acts 9 and 13). I affirm many encounters with the Holy Spirit, and many fillings. But I fear that the Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit results in two classes of Christian: "awesome, Spirit-baptized, tongue-speaking Christians," and "everybody else." More importantly, I don't think the Pentecostal depiction of a "Second Blessing" called the "Baptism of the Spirit" best fits the biblical data.

Besides teaching us about the baptism of the Spirit, these back-to-back sections show us the importance of doctrinal correction. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Three out of the four uses—rebuking, correcting, and training—all carry a sense of *saying hard things*. Even "training" implies painful instruction, which explains why it is normally translated, "discipline" (Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:5, 7-8, 11). Both Apollos and the Ephesian twelve receive doctrinal correction. As ministers of the gospel, we must be willing to say hard things; as disciples of Jesus, we must be willing to receive them. The church will never grow in holiness if we don't allow God's words, on the lips of His people, to correct us.

The last section (Acts 19:8-10) seems detached from the other two, as it highlights Paul's ministry in Asia. But it is not detached. Rather, it displays the ongoing effect of the doctrinal correction that took place earlier. After Paul corrects the Ephesian twelve, we see him continuing to confront false doctrines with gospel truth. The church is built not only through instruction but through continual doctrinal correction, refinement, and growth in the truth of God's Word.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

—Contextually, the prior verses (vv. 18-23) reveal Paul's travel schedule. After preaching in Corinth (18:1-17), Paul traveled to Syria and then Ephesus with his new ministry partners, Priscilla and Aquila (v. 18). He left these partners in Ephesus, promising to return "if God wills" (v. 21). God indeed willed Paul's return to Ephesus, which we read about in 19:1ff. During Paul's absence in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila minister to Apollos there, which we read about in our present scene (18:24-26). Their ministry to Apollos sharpens him, which in turn sets the stage for Apollos's subsequent ministry in Corinth (18:27-28). In summary, Paul brings Priscilla and Aquila to Ephesus and leaves them there, where they refine Apollos's understanding, enabling him to minister more effectively in Corinth.

—"Apollos":

- This verse introduces another key player. What can we learn about Apollos?
- He was a "Jew" and "native of Alexandria" (v. 24). As a Jew, he had followed John into the waters of baptism. John's baptism was one of "repentance" (19:4) and not the same as the baptism of the Spirit. These two baptisms were distinct, as we see in 1:4-5: "[the risen Jesus] *ordered them [the apostles] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me: for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'*"

- Not every Jew submitted to John's baptism. The Jewish posture toward John's baptism revealed their heart's condition: *"When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him"* (Luke 7:29-30).
- Apollos had received John's baptism, accepting God's purpose for himself.
- Apollos "was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24). According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT words, "eloquent" means "a learned man, skilled in literature and the arts." Hailing from "Alexandria", this should not surprise us. Alexandria was second to Athens as a center for learning. Founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BCE, the city became home to the famous Library of Alexandria, one of the largest and most significant libraries in the ancient world, which attracted scholars from across the Mediterranean. In Alexandria, scholars could study a broad range of subjects, from philosophy and mathematics to astronomy and rhetoric, contributing to its reputation as a center of knowledge and intellectual pursuit. Alexandria also housed a vibrant Jewish community, which contributed to the development of Hellenistic Jewish thought and interpretation of Scripture. Thus, Apollos, coming from such a distinguished and intellectually rich environment, would have been highly educated, well-versed in Greek rhetoric, and skilled in interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures. His background in Alexandria explains his eloquence and competence in the Scriptures, as he would have been exposed to various schools of thought and had access to significant scholarly resources.
- "Alexandria" is also where the Septuagint (LXX) was written about two centuries prior. This was the Greek translation of the OT used by the apostles.
- Furthermore, Apollos "had been instructed in the way of the Lord [Jesus]" (Acts 18:25). John preached about Jesus and baptized Him. Therefore, Apollos understood enough of the gospel to be saved. He was a true believer.
- Apollos was "fervent in spirit". The ESV footnote says "Or, 'in the Spirit.'" I think Luke's intention is the latter—Apollos was "fervent in the Spirit," meaning that he preached with a passion fueled by the third Person of the Trinity. Unlike the "Ephesian twelve" of 19:1-7, Apollos deeply knew the Scriptures (18:24), preached accurately the way of Jesus (18:25), ministered in the power of the Spirit (18:25), and was not baptized in water as if he needed conversion. He lacked some understanding about Jesus (18:26), which Priscilla and Aquila corrected (18:26), but he knew enough to be saved. This is why they did not baptize him. In contrast, Paul baptized the Ephesian twelve of 19:1-7 because they did not know the Lord.
- The stories of Apollos (18:24-28) and the Ephesian twelve (19:1-7) are told back-to-back in order that we might compare them. In contrast to Apollos, Luke says nothing about the "Ephesian twelve" knowing the Scripture; they are ignorant of the Holy Spirit (19:2); they are ignorant of the Christ (19:4); and Paul leads them to the sacrament of Christian conversion: baptism (19:5).
- I think we are on safe ground to conclude that Apollos was saved despite his incomplete knowledge (with Priscilla/Aquila filling in some gaps), but that the other disciples were not saved until Paul preached. Why is this relevant? Because Pentecostals use the story of the Ephesian twelve to say that Spirit baptism is subsequent to conversion, arguing that they were already saved, but baptized in the Spirit much later. I believe this contradicts the context.

—"He began to speak boldly in the synagogue": his bold speech suggests that Apollos preached Christ—a message that his hearers would have opposed. If he only taught basic Jewish laws and practices, it would not have required boldness.

—"but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately":

- "Priscilla and Aquila": we met this holy couple earlier in Acts 18 when they fled Rome due to an ethnic deportation by Emperor Claudius. They met Paul in the common business of tentmaking and became ministry partners.
- Priscilla was no less part of this doctrinal correction than her husband Aquila. In fact, Priscilla's name is mentioned first (unlike in 18:2 at their first introduction) suggesting, perhaps, a primary

role in the correction. While the Scripture does limit elder-type teaching in church gatherings to men (1 Tim. 2:12), it would be unbiblical to prohibit women from teaching wholesale. Apollos was “competent in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:25), yet he needed a woman (along with Aquila) to take “him aside” and explain “to him the way of God more accurately.” A man abuses 1 Timothy 2:12 if he can’t receive doctrinal pushback from a woman. Priscilla is portrayed as doctrinally sound, able to give feedback to a man who had the equivalent of seminary-level expertise. Spiritual gifts are not *gendered*. God gives teaching gifts to women. Furthermore, all women are commanded to “make disciples... *teaching* them to obey” our Lord’s commands (Matt. 28:18-19). Women along with men are called to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, *teaching* and admonishing one another with all wisdom...” (Col. 3:16).

- Apollos “taught accurately the things concerning Jesus,” but Priscilla and Aquila “explained to him the way of God more accurately.” It seems that Apollos had the gospel down since he understood “the things concerning Jesus,” but he had an incomplete understanding about “the way of God”.
- Stott: “It is not possible to be sure which Christian truths Apollos knew when he taught ‘accurately’ and which were explained to him ‘more accurately’.” On the one hand, Luke could hardly have described him as ‘instructed in the way of the Lord’ if at that stage he was still completely ignorant of the death and resurrection of Jesus. On the other hand, if his knowledge was largely limited to John’s baptism and teaching, his grasp of these events may have been minimal, and he will also have needed to hear about Jesus’ commission, exaltation and gift of the Spirit. Such truths as these Priscilla and Aquila taught him.”
- I would disagree with Stott on the one point of the “gift of the Spirit” being unknown to Apollos. Verse 25 depicts him as “fervent in spirit” or “in the Spirit.” Given that Apollos did not subsequently receive the baptism of the Spirit (as the “Ephesian twelve” did in 19:1ff), it suggests that Apollos already had the Spirit.

27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

—“Achaia”: where Corinth was located. Later, Apollos will “water” the seed Paul “planted” in Corinth, operating as a pastor. No doubt, the clarifications from Priscilla and Aquila prepared him for effective ministry in Paul’s church plant.

—“wrote to the disciples to welcome him”: Because Priscilla and Aquila corrected his doctrine, he bore more fruit in Ephesus, earning respect from “the brothers” who in turn “wrote to the disciples to welcome him.” Corinth received Apollos due to this endorsement.

—“greatly helped”: When you read the letter of 1 Corinthians, you realize how much they needed help! God used Paul’s connection with Priscilla and Aquila to influence Apollos, who in turn blessed Paul’s church plant in Corinth. This offers a picture of how God multiplies our ministry. He provides key partnerships whereby we sharpen one another, empowering greater fruitfulness even in locations where we no longer minister. Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila no longer served in Corinth, but one of their disciples continued the work after their departure.

—This makes me think of the many disciples I left behind at Wellspring Church who continue to faithfully serve the church there. One reason God moved me on was that my disciples were ready to carry the torch.

—“who through grace had believed”:

- “those who had believed through grace” (NKJV); “those who by God’s grace had believed” (NIV); “those who by grace had believed” (CSB); “those who had believed through grace” (NASB).
- The NASB contains a footnote reading, “Or, ‘helped greatly through grace those who had believed.’” In other words, the “grace” could refer to God’s empowerment of Apollos in ministry, or it could refer to the means by which people believed.
- Since every translation renders it almost the same way—and since these translations are rendered by large teams of scholars—this should incline us to accept the common translation that “grace” refers to the means by which people came to believe the gospel.
- Other verses reinforce that not only salvation but even faith is a gift:

- Rom. 12:3: "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."
- Phil. 1:29: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."
- 2 Pet. 1:1: ""Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."
- Similarly, on repentance as a gift in Acts 11:18: "When they heard these things, they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.'"
- If even our faith is a gift from God, then we can't boast in being smarter than everyone else for believing. Conversion is entirely God's gift. On our own, we fail to seek God (Rom. 3:10-12). We need God to open our hearts (Acts 16:24).

—"for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public":

- "for" indicates that Apollos "helped" the Corinthians by refuting the unbelieving Jews. We are all edified by watching apologists debate unbelievers.
- With his clearer doctrinal understanding came even more powerful refutations of false doctrine and proclamation of the gospel. If our understanding lacks clarity, our communication will be muddy. We must strive for deep and accurate doctrinal understanding so that we can communicate "the way of God more accurately."

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

—In 18:21, Paul told the Ephesians that he would return to them "if God wills." Here, we learn that God indeed willed Paul's return.

—The prior story involving Priscilla, Aquilla, and Apollos occurred during Paul's absence from Ephesus. Now, Paul returns to Ephesus and encounters a similar group of men. These stories are told back-to-back with strong links so that we compare them: both passages address the Spirit; both occur in Ephesus; both involve disciples of John; both involve an insufficient understanding that is corrected. The connections stop there, though. The evidence suggests that Apollos had sufficient understanding to be saved, but these twelve men have insufficient understanding to be saved.

—"some disciples": some argue that these were believers based on the label, "disciples." It is clear from the context, however, that they were "disciples" of John, not Jesus.

—"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed": Paul expects a link between faith and the baptism of the Spirit. He does not expect a subsequent "baptism of the Spirit" after one is saved, as Pentecostals teach. At first, he assumes that these "disciples" are saved, but the context clarifies that they did not know Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Living in the Bible belt, we often have similar experiences. We think somebody is saved based on some shared vocabulary, but once the person starts talking, we realize they are not in fact saved.

—"we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit":

- These disciples of John must not have hung around him for very long. John spoke about a coming baptism of the Spirit by the Christ. They knew neither the Spirit nor the Christ.
- It is unlikely that they had never heard at all about the Holy Spirit, given that they were Jews familiar with the Old Testament. The Spirit is all over the Old Testament. More likely, they did not understand "that there is a Holy Spirit" who is "poured out on all flesh" (Acts 2:17) and in whom people can be "baptized" (Acts 1:5).

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." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

—"Into what then were you baptized?"

- Paul's line of questioning shows how we must learn to ask good questions of those who think they are saved. According to a poll by ABC News, 75% of Americans believe they will go to heaven. Just because people think they're saved, it doesn't mean they are. Jesus tells a religious man he must still be "born again" (John 3). Jesus also says that "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7:21). It's possible to call Jesus Lord and not make it in!
- If someone says, "I'm a Christian," we should not assume automatically they are saved based on that confession. By asking different questions, we can discover the truth. Some helpful questions: What does being a Christian mean to you? Can you explain what it means to be born again? How did you come to faith in Christ? How does someone get saved? How do you live out your faith on a daily basis?

—"John's baptism": These men had been baptized into John, which reflected an embrace of God's purpose for themselves (Luke 7:29-30). But they had no understanding of the gospel. They were well-meaning, good-hearted men, with a healthy desire for God, but this was not sufficient to save. You can't be saved if you don't know Jesus or the gospel.

—"telling people to believe in... Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized":

- The phrase, "On hearing this" implies that they had never heard of Jesus. That Paul baptizes them suggests that he did not previously view them as true believers. They most clearly were not believers, for verse 4 says they need "to believe in... Jesus."
- Michael Greene (qtd. by Stott): "[it is] crystal clear that these disciples were in no sense Christians."

—"they began speaking in tongues and prophesying":

- I disagree with those who require speaking in tongues as the "initial physical evidence" for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this case, they not only spoke in tongues but also prophesied.
- It is possible that the three thousand converts (2:41) spoke in tongues and we were not told about it; it's also possible that they never spoke in tongues. We cannot discern conclusively from Acts alone whether tongues is always "the initial physical evidence" of Spirit-baptism.
- We can cross-reference, however, and reasonably conclude that not every believer is intended by God to speak in tongues:
 - [1Co 12:28-31 ESV] "28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way."
 - Paul's implied answer to each of these questions is 'no.' Not everyone will receive the gift of tongues. Since, however, the baptism of the Spirit is for every believer, we must conclude that tongues is not necessarily the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Spirit.

8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, 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 all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

—"reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God":

- Normally, we read that Paul preaches about Jesus, but here Luke characterizes his sermons as centered on the kingdom of God. Is there a difference? No. Jesus is the Davidic King of the Kingdom of God. After rising from the grave, our Lord spent "forty days... speaking about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The final verse in Acts brings together both the kingdom of God and King Jesus, showing that they coalesce into a singular message: "[Paul was] proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (28:31).
- The story of Jesus is the story of the kingdom. From the beginning, God commissioned Adam, Eve, and all humanity, to "subdue the earth" as God's representative rulers made in His image (Gen. 1:26-28). Unfortunately, they failed (Gen. 3), plunging humanity into submission to Satan—who was subsequently labeled "the ruler" and "the prince of the power of the air." Since then, we have been

caught up in an epic spiritual battle: “the offspring of the serpent” versus the “offspring of the woman” (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9). It’s a battle between family trees—two kingdoms and two dynasties. The original commission of subduing the earth under God’s rule has never ceased. Through covenants with Noah, Abraham, David, Israel, God slowly established His “kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9) on the earth. Unfortunately, God alone kept His promises, and we failed just like our first parents. Therefore, God established a “New Covenant” through the One who proclaimed, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17; 9:35). Jesus advanced God’s Kingdom through preaching, casting out demons, healing the sick, and ultimately dying and rising as the One with “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). On His way to the cross, Jesus said, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31). In fulfillment of God’s promise in Genesis 3:15, the “offspring of the woman”—Jesus—conquered the “offspring of the serpent” who is also “the ruler of this world.” When He ascended to the Father’s right hand, “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” (Eph. 1:21), He liberated us from slavery to “the prince of the power of the air” (2:3) and “seated us with” Christ “in the heavenly places” (2:6), far above Satan’s dominion. Sharing now in Christ’s authority over Satan, we continue in our original commission of subduing the earth, no longer bound in spiritual slavery. Until Christ returns, we will continue in our shared mission as the kingdom spreads across the earth like leaven through bread (Matt. 13:33). When Christ returns, Jesus finishes what He started: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

—“the Way”:

- This is a common label for Christianity in Acts:
 - Acts 9:2: “and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to **the Way**, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”
 - Acts 19:9: “But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of **the Way** before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.”
 - Acts 19:23: “About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning **the Way**.”
 - Acts 22:4: “I persecuted **this Way** to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women.”
 - Acts 24:14: “But this I confess to you, that according to **the Way**, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets.”
 - Acts 24:22: “But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of **the Way**, put them off, saying, ‘When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.’”
- “Way” is elsewhere translated as “road” (Matt. 10:5; 13:4, 19; 20:17; etc.), “journey” (10:10; Luke 2:44), and “streets” (22:10). Christianity is a way, a road, a street, a journey. It is not a destination. The image conveys that we do not “arrive” upon conversion; rather, we begin. Christianity is a way of life. It is a friendship with Jesus involving hills, valleys, sharp turns, and changing terrain. If we think that finding Christ is the end of our journey, we are mistaken. It is the end of our old journey but the beginning of a new one.

—“withdrew from them and took the disciples with him”: After the Jews rejected Jesus in typical fashion, Paul takes the faithful Jews who received his message—also in typical fashion. Saying “yes” to the Way involved a repudiation of their former journey and embarking on a new one. This new beginning was not just spiritual or intellectual but communal and tangible. Walking with Jesus means walking with His people.

—“reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus”:

- “reasoning”:
 - In context, Paul was preaching. But his preaching—“reasoning”— appealed to logic and tearing down falsehoods. It was not just an emotional appeal.
 - The Greek word for “reasoning” is the same as in 19:8 (the prior verse), where Paul reasons about the kingdom of God in the synagogue. The parallel between the two verses shows

how, after rejection, Paul simply continued his ministry of “reasoning” elsewhere—where people received it.

- “daily”: Paul preached daily!
- “hall of Tyrannus”:
 - This is about as opposite of “synagogue” as you can get: a pagan philosophical lecture hall.
 - In Jerusalem, they taught in the temple—specifically, Solomon’s Colonnade, which was within the temple. Here, Paul preaches in a lecture hall.
 - This verse provides a biblical precedent for renting out schools, theaters, and other public venues for the purpose of preaching the gospel.
 - Some manuscripts add, “from the fifth hour to the tenth hour,” which is to say, 11am to 4pm!!!!

—“this continued for two years”: When God closes a door, as He had with the Jews, you move on. But when God opens a door, as He does here, you walk through it!

—“so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord”:

- Although Paul planted house churches almost everywhere he went, we cannot discount the value of public preaching. God loves the preaching of His Word.
- “all the residents of Asia”
 - Wow! Preaching is pivotal. We can’t read the Book of Acts and conclude that preaching did not matter. By my count, Luke records 9-10 significant sermons, showing us how the gospel spread. From the early church through all church history, the Word of God has multiplied not only from house to house but also from pulpit to pulpit. We cannot downplay one for the other.
 - When someone asks me, “What’s more important—‘big church’ or house church—it feels like a trick question (although it’s genuine, sincere, and worthy of being asked). In Acts 2:42, they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and prayer, which primarily took place in large venues, but also fellowship and the breaking of bread, which occurred in homes. Pulpits and kitchen tables both provide avenues for gospel multiplication. Asking which is more important is like asking, “What’s more important—discipleship or evangelism? Fellowship or teaching? Communion or prayer?” Well, we need them all. That’s why Convergence is “a church of house churches.”
- “heard the word of the Lord”:
 - This does not mean that all of Asia *received* the word of the Lord. It only means that they *heard* it.
 - Preaching matters not only because it bears fruit in peoples’ lives; it matters also because it bears testimony in the heavens. Even when people don’t receive the Word, it matters before God that we give them the chance to hear it. God’s Word never returns to Him void (Isa. 55:11).
 - God called Ezekiel to preach to a “rebellious house” with hard “hearts” and “foreheads” (Ezek. 3:8-9). God called Isaiah to preach until the cities were in ruins because they refused to repent (Isa. 6:8-13). The hallmark of a prophet was rejection, not reception (Luke 6:22-23, 26). As ministers of the gospel, we operate as God’s mouthpiece—His prophets—as Revelation 19:10 announces: “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”
 - As God’s “prophets,” we are called to speak for Him, proclaiming His Word as a testimony in the heavens—regardless of whether people repent.
Evangelism is prophecy.

—In 16:6, Paul had “been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.” Now we know why. Given the productive ministry in Philippi, Corinth, and elsewhere that God had ordained first, God’s plan for Asia required him to wait. Perhaps Asia was not yet ripe. In forbidding Paul’s ministry in Asia at first, God had not given up on the region. Far from it! Sometimes God’s work requires us to wait. In due time, “all the residents of Asia” would hear God’s Word. We must learn to walk with the Holy Spirit and trust His timing rather than ramming down doors that, for now, He has shut.