

***“Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy —
The Great Transition, The Glorious Sweep of God’s Abundant Grace — Part 17
Blessings Untold for the Ephesians But As Always, Grace Rules”***

Last Time: “God’s Blessings Abound in Corinth, for Jews & Gentiles”

- ***Paul’s Departure from Athens Reaps Benefits Untold in Corinth***
- ***Paul Testifies to the Jews Who Resist and He Departs from the Synagogue to the Gentiles***
- ***The Corinthian Church is Founded on the Faith of a Leading Jew & Gentile***
 - ***There is a major theme revealed in these chapters of the Acts: That apart from the building of the Church the Body of Christ as Paul goes city by city preaching the gospel of the grace of God, that he was also, at the same time, being used by the Lord to set apart Israel, step by step, city by city, synagogue by synagogue. When they resisted, he left and went to the Gentiles as here in Corinth so clearly seen. One practical conclusion from this might be that much of the Lord’s work involves separation. Another would be that there are critical turning points in God’s dealings with mankind.***
 - ***Dispensationally, as we Rightly Divide the Word of Truth (and the understanding of that is our main objective in our review of the Book of Acts these weeks), these chapters illustrating that theme are very important. The Acts is the book of transition as we have been seeing, from the early post-resurrection preaching of the coming promised Kingdom for the Jews to the preaching of the grace of God toward sinners, whether Jew or Greek. Here in Corinth there was the rejection of the message in the synagogue although there were nevertheless leading Jews saved, even the rulers of the synagogue themselves and another, Justus, who lived next door. They were the foundation of the church in Corinth. But Paul departed to minister directly to the Gentiles and the rest of the Jews were left behind with those memorable words: “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.”***
 - ***So great fruit was gained for Christ in those days in Corinth and some names of the saved go down in history:***

Acts 18:7-11

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named **Justus**, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And **Crispus**, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

- ***Justus may be a Jewish proselyte, a Gentile who has believed. Since his house was right next to the synagogue, it is clear that he was a godly Gentile and the description “one that worshipped God” also indicates that as we have already seen in Acts 16:14 with Lydia.***
- ***Even the ruler of the synagogue was saved, Crispus! All these names go down in history. But God is not finished yet in Corinth. Many were saved and though Paul was fearful of his own life, he was encouraged. The Lord had many there [a reference to election, perhaps] and Paul stayed 18 months, a very long time indeed. What happens next was also unexpected but glorious:***
- ***Another Leading Jew in Corinth Also Believes Expanding the Church***

Acts 18:12-17.

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

13 Saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

14 And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such *matters*.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took **Sosthenes**, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

- ***The new ruler of the synagogue, Sosthenes, having taken the place of Crispus, it seems, after being beaten by the Greeks, himself becomes a believer! So Jews and Gentiles are the founders of the church there in Corinth, a center of Greek pagan worship. He also becomes a devoted servant and co-minister with Paul as we see in the introduction to the first letter to the Corinthians, where the***

salutation at the beginning says the letter is from Paul and Sosthenes.

Our Outline Today: “Blessings Untold for the Ephesians But As Always, Grace Rules”

- *After Visiting Ephesus, the Second Missionary Journey Ends Triumphantly*
- *Paul Begins His Third Missionary Journey into Asia Confirming the Saints*
- *Miraculous Signs Multiply Also for the Gentiles, “To Make Them Obedient”!*

I. After Visiting Ephesus, the Second Missionary Journey Ends Triumphantly:

Acts 18:18-21

18 And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

- *He left immediately even though there was an open door of ministry awaiting. But he promised to return and he surely did as we will see in this study. Paul left because he had a responsibility toward the “poor saints in Jerusalem”!*

II. Paul Begins His Third Missionary Journey into Asia Confirming the Saints:

[READ] Acts 18:22-28

22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

23 And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed, and went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

- *We stop just for a moment to see how a Jew named Apollos was saved ... the implication is that he believed also “through grace” as verses 27 & 28 indicate occurred for others to whom Apollos ministered. It surely was the new dispensation of grace that Aquila and Priscilla introduced Apollos to and through which teaching he was saved (or transitioned, for he may already have been saved as a Godly Gentile as it seems to imply here).*
- *Was Apollos a Jew or a Gentile would be a good question here? His knowledge of the scriptures points to him being a Jew —but his name speaks otherwise. I think we must conclude that.*

III. Miraculous Signs Multiply Also for the Gentiles, “To Make Them Obedient”!

- *As the divine history unfolds here, we now will now see how God worked great miracles through Paul and many, Jews, yes, but also a very great many Gentiles were saved. Unquestionably the signs and wonders did play a key role in this. Understanding that is our challenge for today and as we study the Acts, our most critical challenge. But God has given us the key to understanding this outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 15 where he wrote all about this very subject. In addition, you will remember that it is also the subject of several chapters in the first letter to the Corinthians:*

Rom. 15:12-28

12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

24 Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your *company*.

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things [*signs, wonder and miracles*] their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things [*gifts and offerings*].

28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

- ***Compare the other references to this principle of a sort of divine reciprocity which is so critical to understand if we would know the essence of the Transition Period in the book of Acts. We see here that principle of divine reciprocity being worked out and it is that which is at the heart of Paul's motive in returning from time to time to Jerusalem. 1 Corinthians chapters 13 & 14 explain how these gifts were temporary and should not be taken as normative for the church today. See also 1 Cor. 9:11 for that teaching and then that great statement of this principle found in Rom. 11:11-15 which we will look at in our study in just a few moments.***
- ***But now look back to the book of Acts, chapters 19 & 20 where we see that principle working with many signs and wonders on display in Ephesus and then later in Troas (Troy):***
- ***Example 1 - Twelve Jewish disciples who knew only John's baptism:***

[READ] Acts 19:1-7

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve. *[Tongues as a sign for Jews]*

Acts 19:8-9

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

- *It is in First Corinthians that the doctrine of spiritual outpourings is taught and revealed to be merely temporary. That it would be there where the assembly was founded based on the leaders of the synagogue is perhaps significant. But even that church would become predominantly Gentile is short order. These “gifts of the spirit” would be abundantly visible for a time, but would then soon be “passing away” as Paul taught in chapters 13 & 14 where he answers the “when” question:*

1 Cor. 13:8-10

8 Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

- *These are very important verses given for our understanding. The timing of the “passing away” of these miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s working is identified here as when the “complete” has come. This is in the context linked to the revealed word of God since knowledge and prophecy are referred to and verse 10 reveals the point in the divine working out of his plan for these “Greeks” to notice that those signs and wonders had completely ceased to operate. Quoting a little later from the prophet Isaiah, Paul answers the question “why?”:*

1 Cor. 14:21-22 [See Is. 28:9-13]

21 In the law it is written, With *men of* other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

- *One central “sign” referenced here is the pouring out on Gentiles Israel’s special “spiritual things”, like speaking foreign unlearned languages, so useful during missionary campaigns in foreign lands. So, he writes here that signs are for unbelieving Jews and regard the coming judgment for sinners without a savior.*

But Romans 11 has the strongest teaching on this:

Rom. 11:11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Rom. 11:14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

- ***So we should expect to see many signs and wonders during this period of the book of Acts — and we do:***

- ***Example 2 - Many Special Miracles Were Wrought by Paul:***

[READ] Acts 19:10-12

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

- *The signs and miracles were intended then for both Jews AND Gentiles ... AND it is clear that they were multiplied greatly in that period of time. It has been said that the Lord worked more miracles through Paul than through Peter, perhaps twice as many as some have counted.*
 - *This work of the Lord had ongoing fruit in Ephesus as we read next. Paul was in Ephesus two years and the work brought many to Christ, both Jews and Gentiles. But many Jews still resisted and their opposition was very visible and yet not effective. Satan is never effective when the Lord God is at work.*
- *Example 3 - Sons of Sceva, a Jew and, as it says, the chief of priests:*

[READ] Acts 19:13-20

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

- ***Example 4 - A Young (Gentile) Man Named Eutychus is Healed:***

[READ] Acts 20:7-12 [A great miracle indeed in Troas — with a Gentile!]

7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

- ***Some Dispensational Context and Considerations:***

- ***To Make the Gentiles Obedient — that is one purpose for these signs Dispensationally. They do not fit in the Dispensation of the Grace of God, but when there was a need, as here during the Transition, God brought them forth. But God was still reaching out to Israel as well during this dispensation. So we can expect that the purpose of these gifts from the Lord God's perspective might have something to do with the Jews as well, and they do:***

Rom. 15:15-19

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

CONCLUSIONS:

- *It is the gospel of the grace of God that is to be preached. There were signs and wonders evident during the Acts period surely as we have seen, but there was also an active outreach to the Jews of the dispersion as well as to the Gentiles. Many of those Gentiles early on were from the synagogues as they were proselytes. Therefore the signs were expected as they had been previously taught. That explains so much. As long as Paul is going into the synagogues in each city those things relevant to Israel's promises are what we should expect to see.*
- *But the prison letters of Paul written last to the churches, for example, Ephesians, or Colossians, show no signs of signs and wonders for these spiritual manifestations had ceased as those letters were written AFTER Acts 28:28, Paul's final announcement of God turning now finally to the Gentiles and away from Israel.*
- *And the Corinthian letters give us the teaching of Paul regarding the temporary status of this gifts. Yes, Signs, Wonders, and Miracles were very much a reality in the early grace assemblies founded by the apostle. BUT, those gifts were merely temporary manifestation among the Gentiles of Israel's "spiritual things" and were therefore given to the Gentiles to make "Israel jealous", that they might be saved. So be it. Amen!*

NEXT TIME: But Grace Reigns Apart from Signs and Works of the Law: