

An open Bible is shown from a high angle, resting on a dark wooden surface. A pair of thin-framed glasses lies on the left page, and a dark pen is at the bottom. A red ribbon bookmark is visible in the center. The Bible's pages contain text in two columns, with some words in all caps. The background is dark and out of focus.

Paul's Third Missionary Journey Resolve --- "I Must Go to Jerusalem!"

Paul's Conversion at Damascus, Escape to Jerusalem, Escape to Cilicia, and Eventual Relocation to Antioch Syria Church



Paul's conversion and calling at Damascus, being taught directly by Christ, escape to Jerusalem, then escape to Cilicia, and eventual relocation to Antioch Syria Church

- **Acts 9:17-25** Shortly after Paul's conversion, he was directly taught by Christ (who undoubtedly explained in more detail the commission He had given Paul to do) --- and also spent time in Damascus preaching Christ's message in synagogues. Then after three years, **a plot was discovered to kill him**, so the disciples took him by night and let him down the Damascus city wall in a large basket, and he escaped to Jerusalem.
- **Acts 9:28-30; Acts 22:17-21; Acts 11:25-26** While in Jerusalem, Paul spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus --- but **Hellenist Jews attempted to kill him**. In a vision Christ told Paul to leave Jerusalem immediately --- so brethren enabled him to escape north to Cilicia and Syria in Asia Minor. Barnabas eventually found Paul and brought him to join the vibrant and zealous Antioch Syria congregation. This congregation sponsored Paul's First Missionary Journey.

Paul's First Missionary Journey



First Missionary Journey Highlights

- **Antioch Pisidia per Acts 13:14-52** Paul preached in synagogue and many began to respond. “But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, **raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.**”
- **Iconium per Acts 14:1-6** “Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But **the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.** But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when **a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them,** they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe,”
- **Lystra per Acts 14:19-20** “Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, **they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.** However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. “
- **Derbe per Acts 14:21-22** “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, **"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."**

Paul's Second Missionary Journey



Second Missionary Journey Highlights

- **Philippi of Macedonia per Acts 16:10-26** “ a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi,” [When Paul healed a slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination, her masters were angered, when then stirred up the multitude against them.] “and **the magistrates commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison**, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight **Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God,**” [God then miraculously freed them.]
- **Thessalonica per Acts 17:1-10** “ they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in and reasoned with them from the Scriptures” A great multitude of devout Greeks and leading women joined Paul and Silas. But the Jews who were not persuaded,” [became envious and had evil men stir up a mob and set the city in an uproar. “Then **the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.**”
- **Berea per Acts 17:10-15** “ when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. 14 Then **immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea**”

Paul's Third Missionary Journey



Paul's Third Missionary Journey Overview

- **Total journey lasted 4 years** (54 to 58 A. D.).
- **Luke wrote of this journey in Acts 18:23 through 21:16.**
- **The journey began by revisiting the churches of the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia of Asia Minor:** Paul departed from Antioch Syria and journeyed by land into Asia Minor (to revisit the congregations he had raised up during his First Missionary Journey (including Lystra where he had been stoned and dragged out as if dead). Scholars generally feel that **Paul walked** --- which would have been a very challenging and grueling task).
- **Establishment of large church in Ephesus.** Paul finally arrived in **Ephesus** where he would set up his base of operations for 3 years. This was probably in the most productive period of Paul's entire ministry --- and included the raising up of at least 20 nearby congregations in Asia Minor (including the churches mentioned in Revelation 2 & 3 plus Colossae) --- plus the strengthening of existing congregations in Greece (Macedonia and Corinth in Achaia), etc. --- plus the writing of the epistle "1 Corinthians".
- **Paul's return trip from Ephesus to Jerusalem:** Despite many obstacles, much opposition and a knowledge given to him by a prophet of the consequences awaiting him upon his return.

A Few Facts about Ephesus

- Ephesus was the capital and governmental center of Asia Minor. It was a major terminus with a harbor for handling ships with goods, services and travel going between east (Asia) and west (Europe).
- It had a long history going back to the Grecian Empire.
- Its estimated population at the time of Paul was more than 200,000 --- many of whom were Greeks who had migrated there after death of Alexander the Great. There was also a Jewish presence.
- Two major characteristics of the people of Ephesus were:
 - The worship of the Roman goddess Diana (equivalent to Greek Artemis) and
 - The practice of magic.

The Huge Impact of Paul and the Ephesian Church

- **Acts 19:1-7** People began to be baptized --- 12 men formed initial core of the church.
- **Acts 19:8-10** “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”
 - Preached for 3 months in the synagogue --- before having to leave.
 - Rented a hall (the School of Tyrannus) where he trained many disciples --- who spread the word of God in Asia Minor and started other congregations.
- **Acts 19:11-18** Many miraculous healings and exorcisms of demons. “..... This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.”

Two Major Characteristics of the People of Ephesus

- **Two major characteristics of the people of Ephesus: It is during this interval, that one of the two characteristics of the people of Ephesus comes prominently into view. This city was renowned throughout the world for the worship of Diana** [Roman “Diana” equivalent to Greek “Artemis”], and the practice of magic. Though it was a Greek city, like Athens or Corinth, the manners of its inhabitants were half Oriental. The image of the tutelary [i.e., protecting guardian] goddess resembled an Indian idol rather than the beautiful forms which crowded the Acropolis of Athens: and the enemy which St. Paul had to oppose was not a vaunting philosophy, as at Corinth, but a dark and Asiatic superstition. **The worship of Diana and the practice of magic were closely connected together.** Eustathius says, that the mysterious symbols, called 'Ephesian Letters,' were engraved on the crown, the girdle, and the feet of the goddess. These Ephesian letters or monograms have been compared by a Swedish writer to the Runic characters of the North. When pronounced, they were regarded as a charm; and were directed to be used, especially by those who were in the power of evil spirits. When written, they were carried about as amulets. Curious stories are told of their influence. Croesus is related to have repeated the mystic syllables when on his funeral pile; and an Ephesian wrestler is said to have always struggled successfully against an antagonist from Miletus until he lost the scroll which before had been like a talisman. **The study of these symbols was an elaborate science: and books, both numerous and costly, were compiled by its professors.** [“The Life and Epistles of St. Paul” by Conybeare and Howson]

The Huge Impact of Paul and Ephesian Church --- continued

- **Acts 19:18-20** “Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled **fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.**”
 - The church was now having a huge impact on Ephesus and surrounding region!
 - To paraphrase excerpts of Mr. McNeely’s ABC “Acts of the Apostles” Lecture 37:
One piece of silver in that day was a year's wage --- so the value of 50,000 pieces of silver was enormous! By burning a magic book, it was felt that the spell or chant within it would be broken. So burning the book was more than just symbolic --- it was breaking the magic spells on them or their ability to influence. So burning those books was not only a symbolic parting, but a seeking to break its power. And they were not just breaking from magic, but from paganism as well.
These nighttime bonfires were public spectacles. Not everyone watching would have been pleased with what was being done --- because those burning those books were not just turning from magic --- but were turning from all other forms of paganism as well.

The Huge Impact of Paul and Ephesian Church --- continued

- It is hard to comprehend the hold and depth of paganism in the ancient world. Paganism impacted everything. There was no idea of Christian ethics or morality. It was the cult of Artemis, and every other god and goddess who had a temple --- and sometimes it was a god-man like Augustus Caesar. And it was a hard and unforgiving paganism that commanded conformity in order to hold a job, to buy or to sell. And by the public declaration of the disciples, the people knew who was not conforming. And the local community or city fathers would go looking for them or put pressure on them. These were the things that Church members had to contend with.

Verse 20. The word “prevailed” is the same word used in Matthew 16:18. It is not a defensive word --- but a word that describes the church as being aggressively on the offense. For the church, there was to be “No surrender No retreat.”



Acts of the Apostles: 37 - Acts 19:17-24



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Huge Impact of Paul and Ephesian Church --- continued

- **Demetrius the silversmith excites an uproar against Paul per Acts 19:22-41** “..... So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"” **Finally, the city clerk was able to quiet the mob and Paul was freed.**
- **Paul then departed from Ephesus to Macedonia, then to Corinth. His plan was to then sail to Syria on the way to Jerusalem --- but “when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return [by land] through Macedonia per Acts 20:1-3.**

Paul Is Convinced It Is God's Will for Him to Go to Jerusalem!

Right after the public burning of magic books in Ephesus, Acts 19:21 records the following:

Paul Plans To Go Through Macedonia and Achaia, Then To Jerusalem and Rome

Acts 19:21

When these things were accomplished, **Paul** **purposed in the Spirit**, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, **to go to Jerusalem**, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome⁷."

1 Cor. 16:3-7

And when I come, **whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.** Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.

God had firmly planted into Paul's mind the desire to go to Jerusalem despite the obstacles for three reasons: (1) To fulfill a vow (probably Nazarite) at the Jerusalem temple: (2) To distribute money collected from Greek brethren to the poor brethren in Jerusalem; and (3) ?

Paul Plans to Go Through Macedonia and Achaia, then to Jerusalem and then to Rome

Acts 20:1-3

Act 20:1-3 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself*, embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia. **2** Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece **3** and stayed three months. **And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return [i.e., to Jerusalem] through Macedonia.**

To Ptolemais and Caesarea. Agabus' Prophecy.

Paul's Fifth Visit to Jerusalem

Acts 21:7-15

Act 21:7-8 And when **we** had finished *our* voyage from Tyre, **we** came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. **8** On the next *day* **we who were Paul's companions** departed and came to **Caesarea**, and entered the house of **Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven**, and stayed with him.

Act 21:9-10 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. **10** And as we stayed many days, **a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.**

Act 21:11-12 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his *own* hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, '**So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.**' " **12** Now **when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.**

Act 21:13 Then Paul answered, "**What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.**"

Act 21:14 So when he would not be persuaded, **we ceased**, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

Act 21:15 **And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem.**

NOTE: The "we" in Acts 21 included Luke (the writer of Acts) plus Paul's other traveling companions. So even they were trying to stop Paul from going to Jerusalem!

Paul's Fifth Visit to Jerusalem [After Conversion]

Paul's [Possibly Nazarite?] Vow

Acts 21:17-26

Acts 24:17

Act 21:17-18 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. **18** On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

Act 24:17 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation

Act 21:19 When he had greeted them, he told **in detail** those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Act 21:20-21 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; **21** but **they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs.**

Act 21:22 What then? The assembly [*i.e., the Jewish Sanhedrin*] must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.

Act 21:23-25 Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken **a vow**. **24** **Take them and be purified with them**, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. **25** But concerning the Gentiles who believe, **we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.**"

Act 21:26 Then **Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification**, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

The Seizure of Paul in the Temple by the Jews. His rescue.

Acts 21:27-39

Act 21:27 Now when **the seven days** [*to complete the vow*] were almost ended, **the Jews from Asia** [*i.e., Ephesus in Asia Minor*], **seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,**

Act 21:28-29 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! **This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."** 29 **(For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)**

Act 21:30 And **all the city was disturbed;** and **the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple;** and **immediately the doors were shut.**

Act 21:31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

Act 21:32-33 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, **they stopped beating Paul.** 33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done.

Act 21:34-36 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, **he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.** 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

Act 21:37-39 Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek? 38 Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" 39 But **Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."**

Acts 26:19-21

Act 26:19-21 "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. 21 **For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*.**

Applying Paul's Example to Us Individually and Collectively

Personal Application

Each of us has been given a personal calling and a job (commission) to do by Jesus Christ --- which is a vital individual part in the work of the true Church of God.

Collective UCG Application

In addition, all of us collectively in UCG have been given a calling and commission by Jesus Christ --- the head of the Church. We are performing a vital part in the work of the end-time Church of God community of sister churches. Let us in UCG resolve to fulfill the commission Christ has given us to do --- which is expressed in our official mission statement (*"to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples in all nations and care for those disciples"*) for as long as Christ gives us the ability --- as the days of Christ's return approach --- in spite of satanic attempts to censor and "cancel" us). And all the while --- we are fully aware of the prophesied Amos 8:11 "famine of hearing the words of the LORD". It will take wisdom from God to properly juxtapose our commission to preach the truth to the world --- with our knowledge of the prophesied "famine of the word". In the face of such opposition, we must never diminish our unwavering resolve --- using the apostle Paul as our sterling example.

Conclusion

Paul was spectacularly called and given a unique apostolic commission during the early NT Church. After approximately 18 years of overcoming many obstacles and much opposition --- he was ready to face what was to come during his Third Missionary Journey. Throughout it all --- he continued to be an unwavering example of resolve to do the work Christ had given him to do. During the Third Missionary Journey --- his resolve to fulfil Christ's commission was unwavering --- as exemplified by his resolve to end the journey in Jerusalem.

As we consider Paul's example of unwavering resolve during his Third Missionary Journey --- let us strive to apply the same unwavering "I must go to Jerusalem!" resolve that Paul had:

- In each of our personal lives. Each of us has been called and given a specific job (commission) to do as a vitally necessary member of the Church of God; and
- All of us collectively in UCG. We in UCG have also been called and given a collective job (i.e., commission) to do as a vital organization within the present end-time Church of God community that is preparing the way for Jesus Christ's return at the close of this age.

Let us follow Paul's example and keep that "No Surrender No Retreat" unwavering **"I must go to Jerusalem!" resolve** to do the work that Christ has given us (both individually and collectively) to do.