

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Part Nine in a Series of Ten



9. From Ephesus To Rome

THE GOSPEL CAN CHANGE PEOPLE

'caring for PEOPLE for PEOPLE matter to God' Romans 5:8

APOLLOS COMBINED HUMILITY WITH THE REST OF HIS VIRTUES

FROM CORINTH TO EPHESUS

1. Paul's success in Corinth stirred up the jealous Jews who brought him before Galio the Roman proconsul (18:12-17). Galio dismissed the accusations as trivial and Paul, after enjoying that vindication for a while, headed for Ephesus with two dear friends (18:18-21). He took a ship from Cenchrea (ten miles from Corinth) and arrived in one of the most important cities in Asia.

THE TWO VISITS TO EPHESUS

2. When he arrived from Cenchrea he immediately headed to the synagogue where he stirred up interest in the Christ (18:19-20). Then he sailed to Caesarea, saluted the church there and moved on to Antioch (18:21-22). He was there a while and returned to Ephesus by the long way, through Galatia and Phrygia.

3. While Paul was absent from Ephesus a remarkable disciple paid a visit there – Apollos (18:24-28). He was a brilliant speaker, a fervent believer, a great Bible student who combined humility with the rest of his virtues. He only knew of John's baptism, which was valid until the Christ was exalted as Lord. After that, baptism could only be administered **in the name of Jesus Christ** (see Acts 2:38; 10:48 and 19:3,5). He humbly took correction from Paul's two friends. He then moved off to Corinth and Paul arrived back at Ephesus (19:1) where he spent about two years.

THE NEW TESTAMENT DOESN'T CONTEMPLATE UNBAPTISED CHRISTIANS

4. The early beginnings of the Ephesian church are recorded here in Acts 19. Paul meets about a dozen men whom he takes to be Christians. He asks if they had yet received the Holy Spirit. (I take it he was meaning the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit since all Christians received the Holy Spirit as a token of sonship – Galatians 4:6; Acts 2:38-39; 5:32 and Romans 8:9). They confessed they hadn't and admitted complete ignorance about the Spirit. How could this be, Paul must have wondered, if they had heard the full gospel about Jesus' exaltation and his sending of the Spirit? So he asked them 'unto what were you baptised?' (19:3). It never occurred to him that they wouldn't be baptised, he just wanted to know unto (or into) what they had been baptised.

(F.F. Bruce is right when he comments on this passage that the New Testament just doesn't contemplate unbaptised Christians.) They were baptised with John's baptism. Paul explains that John's message and baptism was in anticipation of the coming Christ. It was valid in its time but, since Christ had died, resurrected and been glorified, John's baptism was no longer valid. He then baptised them again in the name of Jesus Christ (19:5). He laid his hands on them and the Spirit imparted miraculous power to them.

5. (I've heard some sincere people make light of baptism, as though it were something one could take or leave. In doing so they've quoted Ephesians 2:6-9 which speaks of salvation by grace. It didn't seem to cross their minds that the man who wrote the verses (Acts 22:16). And here we have the same apostle baptising the foundation members of the Ephesian church a **second time!** In the Ephesian letter he mentions baptism as he spoke of some foundational truths that all Christians were agreed on (Ephesians 4:4-6). In light of this it's hard to see how baptism can undermine God's grace or be optional.)

ALEXANDER THE GREAT WANTED HIS NAME WRITTEN ON ONE OF THE PILLARS

EPHESUS: CITY OF IDOLATRY AND MAGIC

6. Paul stayed in Ephesus over two years (19:8, 10). Not only was the gospel turning people to Christ (19:20), God was working mighty signs to confirm the message Paul proclaimed about Christ (19:12). The power of Christ, acknowledged even by evil spirits focused attention on the gospel (19:13-17). More and more people turned to God and away from astrology, magic arts and the like (19:18-20). It was about this time that the gospel came into conflict with the shrine-makers and Paul was in trouble again. These men began to lose money (19:23-25).

7. The temple of Artemis (Diana) had been one of the world's wonders. About 300 years earlier, Alexander the Great wanted his name written on one of the pillars. He offered to under-write all the expenses connected with the temple's repair and upkeep but the city fathers turned him down. The 'mightiest man in the world' could not get his name on a marble pillar of a heathen goddess.

Paul will write to slaves, clerks, merchants and the like at Ephesus and tell them they **are** the temple of the living God (Ephesians 2:22). The ugly idol of Artemis might sit in a stone building but the living Lord dwelled in these his People. The honour God gave these Ephesian Christians outshone all that heathenism could offer its devotees or deny to its conquerors.

NOW HE SHOWS WARMTH AND HOSPITALITY TO AN OLD ENEMY

8. A riot broke out but Paul and his companions were saved by a level-headed town clerk (19:29-41). Paul left Ephesus, passed through Macedonia on his way to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost (20:1-16), and spoke to the Ephesian elders in Miletus (20:17). He then sailed for Syria, arrived at Tyre and went on to Caesarea where he spent several days with Philip (21:8). Here was one of the men Saul (Paul) had persecuted.

This was a man with an open heart. He was the first to open the door to the 'half-breeds and heretics' known as Samaritans. He was the one who preached to a eunuch! Now we have him showing warmth and hospitality to an old enemy. It is wonderful what God can do to and in men!

FROM JERUSALEM ON TO ROME

9. He arrived in Jerusalem and gladly forfeited his rights in order to remove a needless offense to the gospel. He takes on the financial responsibilities of some men who have undertaken vows and now need to offer sacrifice to end them (21:22-26). Unbelieving Jews, refusing to accept his manifest respect for the law and the temple, turn it into an accusation (21:27-31). He is rescued by a Roman tribune and allowed to make his speech (21:33,40).

Paul tells his story (and will do so again in chapter 26 – see Lesson 5). Further unrest follows and the tribune holds Paul (whom he now knows to be a Roman citizen – 22:25-29) until the Sanhedrin can convene. Paul addresses the council (23:1-8) but an uproar ensues and the soldier takes Paul into protective custody.

LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, HE WAS AN IMMORAL AND GREEDY GANGSTER

FELIX, FESTUS AND AGRIPPA I I

10. Felix and Agrippa were brothers-in-law (Drusilla was Agrippa's sister). Felix was a Roman governor and like so many others, he was an immoral and greedy gangster. Of him, the embittered Tacitus said 'with savagery and lust he exercised the powers of a king with the disposition of a slave'. Jews hated him. He wanted Paul to bribe him (24:26). What he wanted was money, what he got was a message on self-control and coming judgment. He kept a man a prisoner for two years knowing full well he was innocent (24:27).

11. Felix was recalled to Rome to face charges and Festus took his place. Festus was a decent man but if he had given Paul justice, Paul would never have had to go to Rome for the emperor's personal decision (25:9-11). Festus was glad when Agrippa II arrived to greet the new governor. Agrippa was known to be well versed in Jewish matters and Festus was wanting help here. The one thing that did get through to Festus was that Paul's central message was about Jesus, who had been dead and whom Paul said was alive again (25:19).

IT WASN'T THE WANDERING PREACHER WHO WAS ON TRIAL HERE

12. The king arrived with his sister, Bernice. Bernice, at thirteen, married her uncle (which was probably a second marriage). She then had a passionate affair with her brother before moving on to a Cilician king. She deserted him and then returned to Agrippa. She would later become mistress to Vespasian and Titus. This couple arrived at Caesarea in splendour (25:23) and it was arranged for Paul to tell his story. He defends himself, of course, but in the process he proclaims, not his story, but the story of the Christ! So here before a governor and a king, one of Christ's apostles fulfilled the word of Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:18,19). The truth is, it wasn't the wandering preacher who was on trial here!

THE JOURNEY TO ROME

13. The trip must have been a nightmare. The storms, the 266 people in cramped conditions, the more than three months at sea, the shipwreck, the cold, the confusion, the sailors wanting to desert the ship, the plan to kill the prisoners – and more. Through it all there was Paul's assurance that he would preach Christ at Rome (Acts 23:11). They made it and as soon as Paul is settled he begins to teach the gospel about Jesus Christ (28:17-23). The gospel, conceived in eternity, first preached in Jerusalem was reinforced at the hub of the world by the arrival of one driven by love of Christ!

FROM EPHESUS TO ROME

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED IN PART NINE

- The gospel can so change men that they can show warmth and hospitality to someone who has persecuted them in times past.
 - A person can occupy a place of honour and power without being honourable and an honourable man can be in chains.
- Paul who had formerly been a tireless persecutor of God's People became a tireless servant of God and his People.
- Even high-ranking diplomats can be made to tremble at the thought of coming judgement.

EVALUATION SHEET

Please go ahead and fill in the evaluation sheet attached.

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: info@the-scriptures.co.uk

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EVALUATION SHEET

Acts LESSON 9

(Please type or write your answers within the lines provided)

Name:

Home Address or Email address:

GIVE THE NAME

- 1. Roman governor who judged Paul: _____
- 2. Another Roman governor who judged Paul: _____
- 3. A proconsul who dismissed Jewish complaints as trivial matters: _____
- 4. An Alexandrian preacher: _____
- 5. One who tried to get his name on a marble pillar: _____
- 6. Showed hospitality to an old enemy: _____
- 7. A king before whom Paul spoke: _____
- 8. A sister of that king: _____
- 9. Another sister of that king: _____
- 10. A brother-in-law of that king: _____

COMPLETE THIS STATEMENT: (As found in the booklet.)

- 1. It was valid in its time but, _____
- 2. Of him, the embittered Tacitus said, _____
- 3. The ugly idol of Artemis _____
- 4. The truth is, it wasn't _____
- 5. What he wanted was money, _____

PUT A TICK NEXT TO THE SCRIPTURE WHEN YOU'VE READ THEM

- 1. Acts 19:1-5 _____ 2. Ephesians 2:6-9 and 4:4-6 _____ 3. Acts chapters 24-28 _____
- 4. Galatians 4:6-9 and Romans 8:9 _____ 5. Acts 18:12-17 _____

TRUE OR FALSE? (If the statement is true write T, if false write F.)

1. Felix was a just and decent man! _____
2. Being baptised to have one's sins washed away doesn't undermine the grace of God! _____
3. One thing Festus knew for sure was this: Paul preached about some Jesus whom he said had risen from the dead! _____
4. Paul taught in Ephesus for about two years! _____
5. Agrippa was a Roman governor! _____
6. Galio was a ruler of a synagogue! _____
7. God revealed to Paul he would preach in Rome! _____
8. Calling on people to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ undermines the grace of God! _____
9. In Ephesus, Paul was saved by a level-headed town clerk! _____
10. Salvation is by grace and not by works! _____

WHAT QUALITY IN PAUL DO YOU ADMIRE MOST & WHY?

SENDING YOUR ANSWERS

Once we have received your evaluation sheet we will send you the next study in this series.

Please return your completed evaluation sheet as an email attachment to info@the-scriptures.co.uk