

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on March 14, 2021:**

**"Transformation of the Early Church Series on
The Book of Acts – Paul in Corinth and Ephesus
(Acts 18:1-19:41) (Part 19)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman on Zoom shows us that Paul in his missionary journey to Ephesus and Corinth gave us insights of how can share the gospel with others.]

Introduction:

- The reason we are going through the book of Acts is to see the transformation that the early apostles, disciples and the early church went through.
- We, too, are going through transformation by the Holy Spirit sanctifying us.
- It's a transformation of the truth of our being into the way of our being.
- And the truth of our being reflects God's being.

- It's interesting to see that the early church went through a lot of struggles, but it was obvious God was with them.
- So, we are on journey with Paul as he goes on his missionary journeys.

Overview outline of today's message (Paul's 3rd missionary journey 53-57 AD):

1. Paul in Corinth (18:1-18)
 - a) Paul stays with Aquilla and Priscilla (verses 2-6)
 - b) Paul turns to the Gentiles (verses 7-11)
 - c) Paul is vindicated by Roman law (verses 12-18)
2. Paul in transit (verses 18-28)
 - a) Paul visits Ephesus, Jerusalem and Antioch (verses 18-22)
 - b) Heading out on 3rd missionary journey (verse 23)
 - c) Apollos visits Ephesus (verses 24-28)
3. Paul in Ephesus (19:1-41)
 - a) Paul interacts with John the Baptist's followers (19:1-7)
 - b) Synagogue and lecture hall (verses 8-10)
 - c) Power encounters (verses 11-20)
 - d) Paul's future plans (verses 21-22)
 - e) The riot in the city (verses 23-41)
4. Conclusion: Thoughts on Paul's strategy for witnessing cities

Poetic Preview of today's message – Pastor Craig's rhyming verses:

*Paul goes to Corinth and befriends two Jews,
Aquilla and Priscilla with positive Views.
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Testifying Jesus as Messiah and about his Way.*

*The Jews seemed to reject his impassioned Speech,
 "Your blood be on your own heads," Gentiles, I will now Reach.
 Many Corinthians believed and baptized it is Clear,
 God told Paul in a vision I have many people, do not Fear.*

*Paul taught in Corinth for a year and a Half,
 While Jews in Corinth sought Gallio to express their Wrath.
 Gallio dismissed their charges and drove them Off,
 This didn't stop them, they continued to Scoff.*

*Paul set sail for Ephesus on his 3rd missionary Trip,
 After cutting his hair in a vow, before boarding the Ship.
 In the Ephesian synagogue he reasoned with Jews,
 Then traveled to Antioch and the region sharing Good News.*

*Then a Jew named Apollos from Alexandria joins the Cast,
 He spoke with great fervor about Jesus' Past.
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 Discipling Apollos who was treated as Kin.*

*Paul encountered those in Ephesus who did Believe,
 Despite being baptized they still needed the Spirit to Receive.
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 About twelve in all that day who Awoke.*

*Paul continued to preach for over two Years,
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 Seven sons of Sceva tried to cast out a Demon,
 But the spirit didn't know them and they took quite a Reamin.'*

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 Causing Jesus' name to be honored and many drew Near.
 Paul moved on wanting to visit Rome,
 Idol trade disrupted where goddess Artemis called Home.*

*Great is Artemis of the Ephesians they all did Shout,
 They seized Paul's companions wanting to throw them Out.
 All the shouting led to a lot of Confusion,
 Most not even knowing why, in utter Delusion.*

*The city clerk tried to calm them all Down,
 Encouraging due process from the courts in Town.
 At this point it all bordered on Riot,
 Then the assembly dismissed, and the mob became Quiet.*

Acts 18:1 NIV), After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

- The Corinthians were a proud people.
- Their intellectual arrogance emerges clearly in Paul's correspondence with them.
- They were also proud of their city.

- They boasted of its wealth and culture, of the world-famous Isthmian games which it hosted every other year, and of its political prestige as the capital of provincial Achaia, taking precedence even over Athens.
- But the cross undermines all human pride.
- It insists that we sinners have absolutely nothing with which to buy, or indeed contribute to, our salvation.
- No wonder that not many wise, influential or upper-class Corinthians responded to the gospel (1 Cor. 1:26).
- Corinth was associated in everybody's mind with immorality.
- Behind the city, nearly 2,000 feet above sea level arose the rocky eminence called the Acrocorinth.
- On its flat summit stood the temple of Aphrodite or Venus, the goddess of love.
- A thousand female slaves served her and roamed the city's streets by night as prostitutes.
- But the gospel of Christ crucified summoned the Corinthians to repentance and holiness, and warned them that the sexually immoral would not inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9)

2) There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.

- Aquila and Priscilla had a very good income and their home was large enough for Paul to have his base of operation there.
- Their trade was tent making, which gave them a wealthy lifestyle.

2b) Paul went to see them, 3) and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. 4) Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

- Preaching at the synagogue was a practice of Paul, but that will change in the near future, as we'll see.

5) When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.

- Commentaries tell us that once Paul received a gift from the people of Macedonia, he was able to shift his time from tent making to exclusively preach the gospel.

6) But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

- In Athens, because of how the Jews badly mistreated him, Paul then changed his focus to preach the gospel primarily to the Gentiles.

7) Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God.

- Paul makes the change from preaching at a synagogue to a house church, so he can reach Gentiles.

8) Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized. 9) One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. 10) For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” 11) So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

- Paul was constantly living with harassment and faced death many times.
- He was fearful, but as we see, God provided comfort and support to Paul.
- We, too, can rely on God when we are experiencing difficult times.

12) While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment. 13) “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.” 14) Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, “If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. 15) But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law – settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.” 16) So he drove them off. 17) Then the crowd there turned on Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the proconsul; and Gallio showed no concern whatever.

- There was a lot of political unrest caused by the Jews, which is on-going in Paul’s missionary work.
- The Roman officials, in many instances, told the Jews that Paul had done nothing wrong, as far as they were concerned.

18) Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken.

- This was a Nazarite vow – Paul probably did this to be better received and welcomed in Jerusalem.

19) They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20) When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. 21) But as he left, he promised, “I will come back if it is God’s will.” Then he set sail from Ephesus. 22) When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

- There were groups of Jews that were open to receive the gospel and other groups that weren’t.
- It’s the same with us today – as we share the gospel or our testimony
- It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to seek people out and let us know who He is working with so we can share God’s peace, joy and love with them.
- So, it’s never our job to convert someone or figure out who we reach.
- God will provide us with divine appointments, so we don’t have to brow-beat people with the gospel.

23) After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

- Paul had established these churches in his prior journeys and is going back to strengthen and encourage the people in their spiritual journey.

24) Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25) He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.

- So Apollos caught the ear and eye of Priscilla and Aquila and they further disciple him, because he had some key skills in speaking out to people.

26) He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

- It's obvious that Priscilla and Aquila had a heart for helping out others gain a deeper understanding of the gospel message.

27) When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. 28) For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

- After spending time with Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos was able to reach out to the Jews.
- The gospel focus is the word of God, and the word of God is both Jesus, as the capital "W" for Word and scripture is the small "w" doe word.
- The other aspect of the gospel is that Jesus is the Messiah, who came to save everyon.

Acts 19:1 (NIV), While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2) and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3) So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. 4) Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5) On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6) When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7) There were about twelve men in all.

- It was another Pentecost happening here at Corinth, to those who had a heart for God.
- It was God's way of showing Paul that these were true believers when they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

8) Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. 9) But some of them became obstinate; they

refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

- Here's another strategy for witnessing the gospel.
- We understand that Tyrannus was a great teacher and philosopher.
- He would use this lecture hall to teach people until about 11 AM and then leave.
- And so Paul would then come in to share the gospel with the people, who were still there.
- So, we've seen Paul used the synagogue and house church as strategies to preach the gospel and now he's using a public lecture hall.

10) This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. 11) God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12) so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

- This is probably the example our denomination used in the past to send out anointed cloths to those in need.
- Now, there's no magic in them, but it was a means to demonstrate faith.

13) Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." 14) Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15) One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" 16) Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

- This is like a modern-day ghost buster story.
- Let's notice what this experience did for the people. It was a witness to them about the true gospel.

17) When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. 18) Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. 19) A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. 20) In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

- God always has an amazing way of letting His gospel, His word reach others.
- So, just because we had a negative experience with someone doesn't mean that we've failed, because of what we said might have an impact on them later.

21) After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." 22) He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

23) About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24) A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for

the craftsmen there. 25) He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business.

26) And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia.

- Artemis was a goddess universally worshipped throughout the Greek world – her Roman name was Diana.
- There was a whole business built around this goddess.

He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. 27) There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

- Paul is making an impact on their business, because of his gospel preaching.

28) When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29) Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. 30) Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. 31) Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

- These people knew Paul’s life was at stake.

32) The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. 33) The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. 34) But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

35) The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: “Fellow Ephesians, doesn’t all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? 36) Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash. 37) You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess.

38) If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. 39) If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. 40) As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.” 41) After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

- Once again, Paul is spared from the consequences of an angry mob.

Poetic Summary of last week’s and today’s message: (Let’s say this together):

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(Closing prayer)