

Acts 083
Pauline Chronology
Acts 14:27-28
October 15, 2025
Dr. Andy Woods

Let us take our Bibles and open them to Acts 14:27. We are continuing to work our way through the Book of Acts. Here is the outline of the book, where Jesus said to the disciples just before His ascension, and in the process He gives the three parts of the Book of Acts:

"...and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Structure (Acts 1:8)

- Jerusalem (Acts 1–7)
- Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12)
- **Remotest part of the earth (Acts 13–28)**
 - 1st missionary journey (Acts 13–14)
 - Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-35)
 - 2nd missionary journey (Acts 15:36 –18:22)
 - 3rd missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:17)
 - Trip to Rome (Acts 21:18–28:31)



The church's Jerusalem ministry is in Acts 1-7. Then they were pushed out of Jerusalem through persecution, which is how God moves us on many times. They were pushed out into Judea and Samaria, and had a ministry there. Then God raised up Paul, who is going to be the key guy to go to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13-28). We are in that third part of the Book of Acts, and by this evening we will have made it halfway through the book.

- VII. Return to Syrian Antioch (Acts 14:21b-28)
- A. Return route (21b)
 - B. Ministries in revisited cities (22-23)
 - C. Route to Antioch (24-26)
 - D. Report to Antioch Church (27-28)
 - 1. Missionary report (27)
 - 2. Transitional statement (28)

The first part of that section, "the remotest part of the earth," is his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14), which he has just wrapped up. We have studied in detail his first

missionary journey (Acts 13-14). He has now returned, along with Barnabas, two and a half years later to the church that sent him out, which was the church at Antioch.

He gets back to Antioch. He gives his report, if you will, to the church at Antioch. His report has two parts. There is a missionary report (Acts 14:27) and then there is a transitional statement (Acts 14:28). Notice, if you will, Acts 14:27:

"When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all the things that God had done with them" (Acts 14:27).

The word "report" there is "anangelo." What it literally means is to tell a long story. At our church we have missions moments. This is probably the first missions moment in the history of Christianity that we know of. Paul and Barnabas get back to Syrian Antioch, and they tell a long story of everything that happened to them in Acts 13-14 over the prior two and a half years.

You will notice the authority structure when it comes to missionaries. It is the local church—in this case Antioch of Syria—that sent Paul and Barnabas out. They are the ones that prayed for them, laid hands on them, supported them, the best we can tell. Since that was the church that sent them out, they are accountable to that church. They are not lone rangers doing things on their own.

You run into people like that in missions work and ministry. You say, "What organization are you with? What group are you with?" They give you some answer like, "We just respond to the Holy Spirit," or something. My answer to that is, "Then you are not accountable to anybody." "We are accountable to God." I am thinking, "We are all accountable to God."

When God lays His hands on someone and sends them out as a missionary, it is not some kind of lone-ranger activity. There is a local church that sends them, and now the missionaries are accountable to that local church. They come back to the local church here, and they give their report to the local church, because that is their sending body and that is who they are accountable to.

You look at the second part of Acts 14:27 and it gives the content of their missions report. This is what Paul and Barnabas explained to the church at Syrian Antioch:

"...and how He [God] had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

That is classic Paul. Paul, over and over again in his letters—which have not even been written yet—talked all the time about how he waited on God to open doors. He always gave credit to God for opening doors of ministry opportunity.

Here are the places in Paul's writings where he does this. He says this in 1 Corinthians 16:9:

"For a wide door for effective service has been opened to me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9).

Just because God opens the door does not mean you will not have any problems. He is acknowledging that God opened a door for him, and he had adversaries from the moment he walked in the door—this doorway of opportunity. Sometimes we think that if God opens the door, there are not going to be any problems. Paul, obviously, never taught that.

He uses this metaphor of a door for opportunity in 2 Corinthians 2:12:

"Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord" (2 Corinthians 2:12).

Then he uses the metaphor a third time in Colossians 4:3:

"Praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned" (Colossians 4:3).

In his ministry, he totally acknowledged that he was dependent upon God to open doorways of opportunity for him. That is how he summarizes his two and a half years in southern Galatia on missionary journey number one.

Do you remember what Jesus said to the struggling church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7-8?

God is described as holding a key. Jesus is described as holding a key. What do you do with a key? You open a door.

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name'" (Revelation 3:7-8).

Why did this group get a door opened for them? Because they did not have any power, and God knew that they would have to depend upon Him to walk through the door of opportunity.

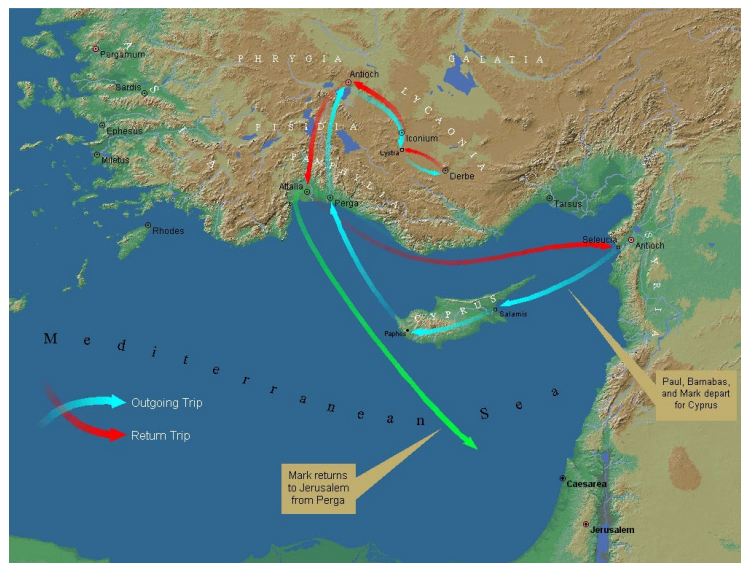
It is interesting to me that the only church in Asia Minor (Revelation 2-3) that we have any record of a door opened to them is the church that seems to be struggling the most. People like that can be trusted with a doorway of opportunity, because they are not

going to depend upon their natural resources to fulfill the opportunity. They are going to depend upon the Lord.

You will notice that if the Lord opens the door, no one can shut it. If God shuts the door, no one can open it. I cannot tell you how many times in my life I have spent my time banging my head against a wall, trying to go through doors that are not open. I want this opportunity over here so bad, and I am trying to get in and I am not getting anywhere because the Lord did not open the door. He has a different door for me.

We have to become sensitive to this idea that whatever opportunities you have in ministry, it is God who opens the door, and God who closes the door. What God opens, Satan can intimidate you all he wants, but he cannot shut the door once it is open. If the door is closed, you can bang your head against the door till the cows come home and the door is not going to open unless it is God's will for it to open. This is a great way to know whether you are in God's will and the timing of God's will, because He opens doors, He closes doors, and you do not want to go through a door that is not for you. You want to go through the door that He has for you in whatever opportunity it is.

This is Paul as he is giving his missions report to the church at Syrian Antioch. He talks about how this door had been opened. What had happened is that he was responsible for bringing faith to the Gentiles, which is unheard of. The whole early church up until the conversion of Cornelius was either Jewish, half-breed Samaritan, or they were proselytes, like the Ethiopian eunuch. Whoever thought that the gospel would go outside the borders of Israel? Now it has happened.



Even Jesus Himself never left the borders of Israel. He spent His whole ministry within Israel's borders. He never went outside, never went on a missions trip outside the borders of Israel. Here God, in His timing, raises up Paul and Barnabas and opens the door. This church at Antioch sends them and they go through the door. As they have been going through these different cities in southern Galatia, they have reaped a tremendous harvest amongst the Gentiles.

To remind you, here is the map of where they went. That is the door that was open to him for two and a half years. What did he bring to the Gentiles? It is right there in Acts 14:27: "...how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

He did not preach the gospel of works. He did not tell the Gentiles, "You need to get right with God by doing X, Y, and Z." He taught them that salvation is by faith alone. That is not a unique doctrine. Lewis Sperry Chafer, in his *Systematic Theology*, says:

"Upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only (cf. John 3:16; Acts 16:31)."¹

We try to work hard to keep the gospel simple. It sounds like an oxymoron, does it not? We try, we labor to keep the gospel simple because it is hard to keep things simple in this day and age. What everybody in evangelicalism tells you is that you are saved by grace through faith, but then they give you five works that you have to do. You have to repent of your sins; you have to fill out a card; you have to raise your hand; you have to pray a prayer; you have to confess; you have to do this and that.

They confuse growth in Christ with birth in Christ. When you start studying this, it is so obvious, it is amazing how we have messed it up. The Bible is so crystal clear that you are saved through fulfilling a single condition, which is to believe or to trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ. It is so simple that religious people stumble over it constantly because they do not think it could be that easy. Yet there it is again. This door was opened, and he brought faith to the Gentiles.

You go down to Acts 14:28, and you have a transitional statement:

"And they [Paul and Barnabas] spent a long time with the disciples" (Acts 14:28).

You might remember as far back as Acts 11:26, where we first learned of this church at Antioch and how it was growing, how that church becomes very important. It is on the southern tip of Israel, and it is becoming the center of Christian authority. We could say the church at Jerusalem is no longer the key mother church anymore. The pattern and program of God has moved up north to Antioch. In fact, if you remember in Acts 11, it was Antioch that took up an offering to bail out Jerusalem because of a famine that was coming as revealed through the prophetic utterances of Agabus.

As you see all this happening, God is moving His operation up north to Antioch. It is at Antioch that the believers there are first called Christians. Believers in Jesus or Yeshua—the Hebrew word for Jesus—were not even called by that name, Christian till you get to Acts 11. We throw it around all the time, but that name is not even used till you get to Acts 11.

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

They called them Christians because the people there were so Christ-like in their behavior, that the only name you could give them would be Christians, which means "little Christs." This is not in the New Age sense, where people think they are becoming gods, but in the moral, ethical, and lifestyle sense. They talked like Jesus; they behaved like Jesus; so they are little Christs. "Let us call them Christians."

That is where the church really starts to grow numerically up north there. It says in Acts 11:26:

"And when he had found him [Saul], he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

This church is a big deal, because all three missionary journeys that Paul will go on—including the one he just finished in southern Galatia—are going to be launched from Antioch of Syria. That is why it mentions these disciples, because it was a growing church. This is preparatory for what is coming in Acts 15, which is the Jerusalem Council.

It is not the first Jerusalem Council, contrary to popular opinion. It will be the second Jerusalem Council. The first Jerusalem Council is in Acts 11. After the conversion of Cornelius, the leadership which was still in Jerusalem was trying to figure out if a Gentile can really get saved. They had never heard of such a thing. Cornelius had been saved, so Peter and those involved in sharing the gospel with Cornelius in Acts 10 had to go back to Jerusalem—the original sending church—to explain to these leaders that, "Yes, a Gentile really got saved." They had the first Jerusalem Council there in Acts 11. It is completely possible for a Gentile to get saved. They accepted that and they rejoiced.

Now we have a second Jerusalem Council, and this one is not dealing with the issue of can a Gentile get saved. They already had that figured out (Acts 11). This one is trying to figure out: "Paul, you went on this first missionary journey. All of these Gentiles are getting saved like crazy. What do we do with these people? Do we put them under the Law of Moses to be part of the church?"

You could see why a Jew would think that way, because if you go back to the Law of Moses, which had been in existence for 1,500 years since Mount Sinai, and Gentiles like Ruth who was from Moab, who wanted to walk with the Lord—they are called proselytes—were always put under the Mosaic Law. The early church was thinking, "That is how it is going to work in the Church Age. You have to take all of these Gentiles and put them under the Mosaic Law."

They have a big pow wow about it in Acts 15, which is the second Jerusalem Council. They are not trying to figure out if a Gentile can get saved. They already knew that (Acts 11). They are trying to figure out, "Do Gentiles that are saved have to come under the

Law of Moses to join the church?" In a book where the voice of God and visions and things like that are very common, there is no voice from God telling them what to do. They have to reason from the Scriptures in Acts 15.

James is going to speak up; Peter is going to speak up; and I believe Paul is going to speak up. They are debating this. They are going to the Old Testament. They are going to quote the Book of Amos and some other passages. Their conclusion in the whole thing is that a Gentile, if he or she is a believer in Christ, does not have to go under the Law of Moses to be part of the church. That is the conclusion, which makes sense because here we are 2,000 years later predominantly as Gentile Christians.

We are not under the Law of Moses. Obviously, someone made a decision, and that is coming in Acts 15. That is why it talks about these disciples. The church at Antioch was already growing. Now there is even more growth amongst the Gentiles because of the first missionary journey. What is happening there in Acts 14:28 is preparatory—it is transitional, if you will—for a big decision that is coming later in Acts 15.

It is at this point that Paul is going to write his first letter called the Book of Galatians. He is going to write it before the Jerusalem Council. We largely believe that, because if he had written it after the Jerusalem Council, given what he talks about in the Book of Galatians, he probably would have cited the Jerusalem Council as authority, which he does not. Most believe that he wrote it before the Jerusalem Council. That first book that he is going to write is the Book of Galatians.

This evening, I am going to do for you guys what I wish someone had done for me when I was a new Christian, struggling with how to understand my Bible. I am going to take Paul's 13 letters and put them in order for you, and give you a very simple way to understand the chronology of Paul's letters. The way our New Testament is organized, it is extremely confusing to know what letters come first, because the first letter by Paul is Romans. Your average Christian thinks, "That is the first letter Paul wrote." That, in fact, is not true. It is his sixth letter.

There is an obvious chronology that your average Christian does not understand, because they have never really had anybody explain it to them. It is the same with the prophets. If you go to the Old Testament, and if you go and study the prophets, you would think that Isaiah is the first prophet. No, a little guy named Obadiah is the first prophet, even though Isaiah is mentioned first. Why is Isaiah mentioned first? Because his book is one of the biggest, and it had the most impact, so Isaiah was the first prophet. When you study it chronologically, Isaiah was not the first prophet, Obadiah was the first prophet. Who wants to start with Obadiah? Let us read Isaiah first.

People think Isaiah was the first chronological prophet, and it is the same way with Paul's letters. People think Romans is the first one. The reason Romans is first in your Protestant New Testament organization is because Romans has had the biggest impact in church history. Romans was not the first letter written. Romans was the sixth letter written. Your average Christian really has no understanding of the chronology of Paul's

letters, any more than they have much of an understanding of the chronology of the writing prophets.

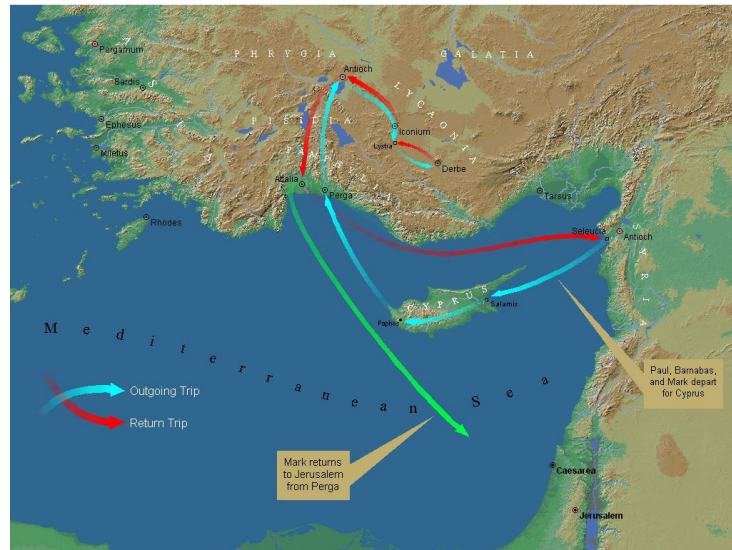
We are going to put Paul's letters in order. I have been wanting to do this for a while, and I have been waiting until we got to his first letter so I could give you an overview of how to understand the chronology of Paul's letters. I taught this over and over again when I was at the College of Biblical Studies. When I go on my cruises, to the Bible lands and I get a chance to speak in the ship, I usually give this talk, on the grounds that we are going to go to these places that Paul went.

Paul's Ministry Chronology				
# OF BOOKS	JOURNEY	ACTS	DATE	BOOKS
1	1	13-14	48-49	Gal
2	2	15:36-18:22	50-52	1-2 Thess
3	3	18:23-21:17	53-57	1-2 Cor, Rom
4	4	28:16-31	60-62	Eph, Col, Phlm, Phlp
2	Between Imprisonments	Post Acts	62-66	1 Tim, Titus
1	2 nd Imprisonment	Post Acts	67	2 Tim

Here is how to put Paul's letters in proper order. It is a very simple mnemonic device. It goes one, two, three, four, two, one. On his first missionary journey, he writes one book; second missionary journey, two books; third missionary journey, three books; fourth missionary journey, four books; between imprisonments, two books; thrown in prison one more time, one book.

The first book that he wrote is the Book of Galatians, at the end of his first missionary journey. The first missionary journey is in Acts 13-14. The date of Galatians would be AD 48 to 49, and he gets back to Syrian Antioch. We are in this transitional phase, moving into Jerusalem to the second Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, and he writes the Book of Galatians.

The Book of Galatians was written from Syrian Antioch. It was written to all of the churches that he planted for the last two and a half years—all the ones we have read about, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. Why in the world is he writing to them? Because he got wind, or learned that they had succumbed to legalism. Here is another map of where Paul was in Antioch, and the churches that he was writing to in the Book of Galatians:



The key to the Book of Galatians is Galatians 3:3, where he says:

"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).

When Paul was gone, a whole bunch of people—Pharisees—came into those churches and seduced them into thinking that "you are saved by faith alone, but you have to grow as a Christian by going under the Law of Moses and trying to keep it through human power." He writes the whole Book of Galatians to rebuke them for believing that.

That is where he says things like, "Who has bewitched you?" (Galatians 3:1). And all of those kinds of things come from. "If any man comes preaching a different gospel, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9). All of those strong statements are written to these brand new believers that he won to Christ under God's power on the first missionary journey in southern Galatia, who now think that in order to grow as a Christian is something different than faith alone through the power of the Holy Spirit. They think it is through human effort in an attempt to keep the Law of Moses.

They were hit by the Pharisees, these Christians in southern Galatia. In the Bible there are three types of Pharisees. A Pharisee is always someone who is trying to mix law plus faith. There were the justification Pharisees that tried to mix law plus faith to get justified before God. That group was overthrown by Jesus in Matthew 5:20.

"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven"
(Matthew 5:20).

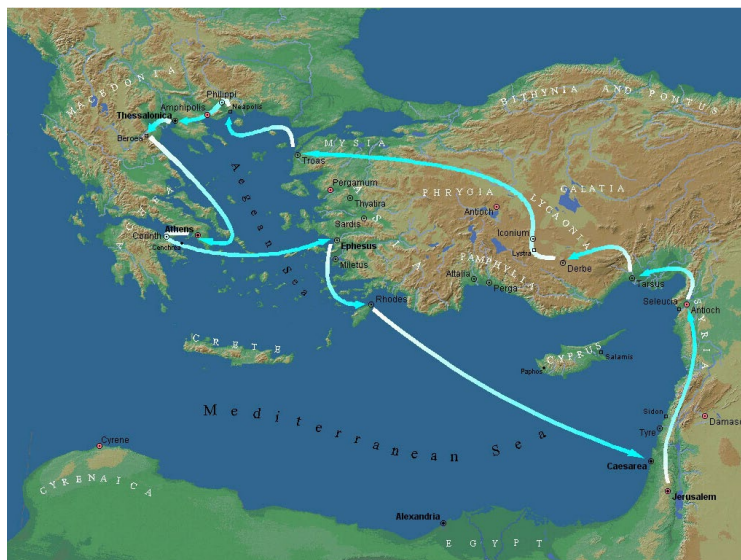
The second group is what we are dealing with in the Book of Galatians. They are trying to mix law plus faith to grow, and they are overthrown or refuted in Galatians 3:3.

"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).

It is like a Christian that is authentically saved, but then they go under a bunch of rules through human power to try to grow as a Christian. He is not questioning whether they are saved or not; he is questioning the fact that they do not understand that this whole thing is a grace operation from beginning to end. You grow as a Christian the exact same way you were saved, by faith alone through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The third group of Pharisees is the ecclesiological Pharisees that are saying that you have to go under the Law to join the church. That crowd is going to be refuted in Acts 15.

On the second missionary journey, Paul writes two books. You see in the Book of Acts where that second missionary journey is found, it will take place after the Jerusalem Council and go all the way towards the end of Acts 18. The date of the second missionary journey would be about AD 50 to 52. Here is the map on where he is going to go:



He is going to retrace a little bit of his steps in southern Galatia, but he is going to get a call from the Macedonian man in a vision or a dream, "Come over and help us." That is

when the gospel is going to leave modern-day Turkey and make its way into Europe, which is this whole deal up here in Philippi and Thessalonica.

That is the second missionary journey, and on the second missionary journey, he is going to write two books. Those books are 1 and 2 Thessalonians. They will both be written from Corinth to Thessalonica. Paul will plant the church in Thessalonica. He will be driven out by the unbelieving Jews. He will make his way down to Corinth, and he will write to that group two letters.

The first letter he writes to them deals with their lack of understanding concerning their deceased loved ones in Christ. Will they participate in the Rapture? He taught them about the Rapture, but since he had left, some of their loved ones had died and they wanted to know, "When the Rapture happens, what is going to happen to them?" That is where he explains to them that the Rapture will begin with the dead in Christ. They will rise first. That group is coming down in resurrected bodies, and then we who are alive are caught up and the two groups meet in the sky and there is a forever reunion. It is to that group, he says:

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them—" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

That is our Rapture, if this happens in our lifetime. If the Rapture does not happen in our lifetime, we are that group coming down because absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

"Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).

Paul says to the Thessalonians, "You are going to see your deceased loved ones in Christ again at the point of the Rapture."

Not long after that they got a forged letter, those Thessalonians—babies in Christ—teaching them that they had missed the Rapture and they were in the Tribulation period. "Why not just go home and read your Bible, y'all? Because you do not have a Bible yet." The only one they could get an answer from was Paul. He explains to them, "The letter you got, saying that you are in the Tribulation, is a forgery. If you were in the Tribulation

period, you would see four things: the departure, the Antichrist, the removal of the Restrainer, and the destruction of the Antichrist and of his followers. You have not seen any of it, so calm down," is what he is telling them to do. "You are not in the Tribulation period. Go back to what I taught you earlier, that you will be removed from the earth before the Tribulation period starts."

That basically is what is happening on missionary journey two. What is the next number here? Three. On the third missionary journey, he is going to write how many books? Three. There you see, in the Book of Acts where the third missionary journey transpires, it will take place between AD 53 to 57. On that journey he is going to write three books: 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans. Romans is number six, yet your average Christian thinks Romans is number one because the way we have organized our Bibles confuses people.



This is what missionary journey three looks like. It will end in Jerusalem, even though all three missionary journeys are going to be launched from Syrian Antioch. It is on that journey that he writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus to Corinth. There he learns that the church at Corinth—the church that he helped establish and planted—is becoming immoral.

The reason they are becoming immoral is because they are located near this isthmus where sailors, instead of going around the bend—and you could lose your life doing that—would put their ships on rollers and drag them across the land bridge. Why is Corinth becoming immoral? If you have sailors dragging their ships across and they are in town for a night, you have no reputation to protect because you are going to be gone the next day. What do you think the Corinthians got involved in? All kinds of immorality.

In fact, the word for immorality in Greco-Roman times was Corinthians, named after that church or that area. It is like using the word Vegas. "What happens in Vegas stays in

Vegas." Las Vegas is notorious for all kinds of things. That is what Corinth was known for. Paul is going to write from Ephesus to Corinth to tell them to stop being immoral because the spirit of the world had invaded the church.

Then Paul is going to make his way up to Macedonia, where he is going to write 2 Corinthians to the same church, because based on that letter and other lost letters Paul had written, the majority of the church had repented, believe it or not, but there was a group there that was challenging Paul's authority, claiming to be apostles. Paul sarcastically refers to them as the super apostles. He writes 2 Corinthians to rebuke the super apostles and to reassert his own apostolic authority, because if Paul is not an apostle, he cannot correct them. That is where 2 Corinthians comes from.

Then the third one that he wrote on the third missionary journey was Romans, written from Corinth to the church at Rome. Once you understand that, you understand why Romans reads the way it does about all this immorality in Romans 1—homosexuality and all that stuff. It is almost like Paul looked out his window and saw one of those gay rights deals go by, and he got in a bad mood and wrote Romans 1, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of course.

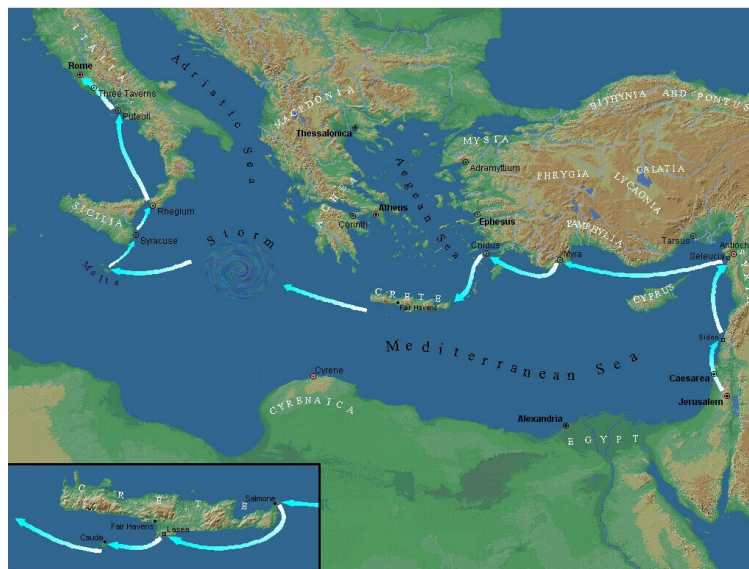
Why is he writing to the church at Rome? He is writing to the church at Rome because the church at Rome was one of the churches that was started without the help of an apostle. The church at Rome got its start because there were proselytes in Jerusalem (Acts 2) to celebrate the Day of Pentecost, that heard Peter preach. They got saved and they went home and they started a church. Rome was not started with the help of an apostle. Yet Rome is a big deal because all roads lead to Rome. What is going on at Rome is going to affect the known world in terms of Christianity.

When you read Romans 15, Paul wants to use Rome as a beachhead to go further west to Spain. He has to make sure that Rome is on the right footing. How do you know if a church that started without an apostle has the right theology? That explains why he writes to Rome from Corinth. That is why Romans reads the way it reads. It is the most logically airtight book we have in our whole Bible explaining theology.

You have a salutation, a greeting. Then you have the doctrine of sin, then the doctrine of salvation. How are you saved? Then how do you grow? Sanctification. What about Israel? Has God cut the cord with Israel? If God can cut the cord with Israel, He can cut the cord with any other promise He has made. So Paul explains that in Romans 9-11.

Then there is the service section. What do you do with your Christian faith? How do you serve the Lord? Then there is a summation. We might call it sayonara, so long. He is saying, "Greet everybody." There are a lot of women too, by the way, so anybody that thinks women have no place in ministry should read Romans 15-16. "Greet this person, greet that person, say hello to this person." That is the Book of Romans, and that is why it came into existence. It came into existence in missionary journey three.

One, two, three. What is the next number? Four. On the fourth missionary journey, he is going to write four books. That missionary journey is described in Acts 27-28. It is his journey to Rome, where he will be a prisoner under house arrest for two years from AD 60 to 62. When he is there, he is going to write four books. We call these the prison epistles because he wrote them from prison. In order, they are: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. We organize them that way, because as you move through those books, he seems to be getting more optimistic that he is going to be released soon from his Roman imprisonment. There is not a lot of optimism in Ephesians and Colossians, but by the time you get to Philemon and Philippians, he is like, "I am getting my 'Get out of jail free' card pretty soon here."



Here is what the fourth missionary journey looks like. Most people do not organize this as a missionary journey, but I do because Paul knew exactly what he was doing. By this time he was under arrest, and he keeps saying, "I am a Roman citizen." He will start saying that in Acts 16. "I am a Roman citizen." That is a big deal, because if you are a Roman citizen, it gives you a right to a trial before Caesar, who is in Rome. He kept insisting on his rights, knowing that it would carry him eventually to Rome.

Once he hits Rome, the Book of Acts stops, because the assumption is that the gospel is going to go everywhere because all roads lead to Rome. Paul used the legal system to advance the cause of the gospel, which we can do in the United States. It is not all of these godless forces that have legal rights. You have them too. You can use those skillfully to advance the cause of the gospel. He is going to be in prison in Rome for two years. You will see it in Acts 28:16-30, from AD 60 to 62.

He is going to write four books. Number one, that is going to be written from Rome, is to the church at Ephesus. He writes to them first because they are probably closer than Colossae, which is number two. What he is going to explain to the church at Ephesus is, "You are rich."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

If you want to know how rich you are as a Christian, spiritually speaking, the Book of Ephesians is for you. There are no commands in Ephesians 1-3. It just talks about your blessings, individually and corporately. Then you will get to Ephesians 4:1 where you will see the word "therefore." When you see the word "therefore" in Paul's writings, you ask, "What is the word 'therefore' there for?" Typically what it does is it swings us from doctrine to practice. Ephesians 1-3, doctrine: "You are rich." Ephesians 4-6: "Here is how you live it out." There are no commands in Ephesians 1-3, but there are 38 in Ephesians 4-6.

That is a different way of preaching. Today your typical preaching is that the preacher wants to give you an immediate application. Paul never did that. He never told people to live out what they did not understand, but once they understood who they were, then he gives them application. Ephesians 1-3 relationship, Ephesians 4-6 responsibility; the first part of the book doctrine, the second part of the book deed; first part of the book orthodoxy, correct doctrine, second part of the book orthopraxy, correct practice; first part of the book knowledge, second part of the book, wisdom which is knowledge applied; first part of the book belief, second part of the book behavior; first part of the book position, second part of the book practice; first part of the book privileges; second part of the book responsibility.

EPHESIANS: WHAT IS INSIDE?	
1-3	4-6
Relationship	Responsibility
Doctrine	Deed
Orthodoxy	Orthopraxy
Knowledge	Wisdom
Belief	Behavior
Position	Practice
Privileges	Responsibility

He will say things like this in Ephesians 4: "These kinds of sins are improper for God's holy people," but you discover that you are part of the royal family priesthood of God in the first part of the book. Now that you know that, act according to your position.

Then he is going to write two books from his imprisonment in Rome to a place called Colossae. He is going to write book number two from prison, the second prison letter called the Book of Colossians. The Book of Ephesians is about the body of Christ. The Book of Colossians is about the head of the body, Jesus Christ. The Colossians got sucked into a heresy called the Colossian heresy, where they started to think that Jesus was just an angel, very similar to what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach, that He was just a created being. Paul straightens them out in the little book of Colossians.

Then he writes Philemon also to Colossae. There is a runaway slave named Onesimus who ditched his slave owner named Philemon, who was a believer that Paul won to Christ. Onesimus heard about Rome and made it all the way to Rome as a runaway slave, probably because Onesimus heard about Paul through Philemon, who was won to Christ through Paul. Paul leads Onesimus to Christ, and then he sends Onesimus back home to Colossae to be under Philemon.

He says to Philemon, "This guy left as a slave, but now he is a believer. You need to treat him like that. By the way, Philemon, you owe me one because I won you to Christ. Onesimus has been with me under house arrest." Under house arrest, I will explain in a second, you could receive visitors and things like that. "He has been helpful to me, and I am sending him back to you. You need to act accordingly. Treat him as a brother in Christ." That is a one-chapter book in your Bible called Philemon dealing with that issue, how the gospel works its way out in relationships like that.

I think what he is saying in Philemon is, "You should let this guy go. You should emancipate him." There are hints of that toward the end of the book. Slavery was a very sad reality in Greco-Roman times. How do you, as a Christian, interact with that institution? Philemon is a great testimony to it. It is just one chapter.

The last book he writes from Rome—because he looks like he is going to get out of jail soon—was to Philippi, which is the book of joy. How do you walk? What is joy? How do you walk with God and maintain joy as a Christian? There is a four point outline to Philippians.

Philippians Outline

- CHAPTER 1**
 - God can use negative circumstances to bring about positive results
- CHAPTER 2**
 - Christ's example of servanthood
- CHAPTER 3**
 - Avoiding legalism
- CHAPTER 4**
 - Reliance upon Christ's strength for daily life



God can use negative circumstances to bring about positive results. Paul gives four examples there. One of them is his own imprisonment. He says, "I am chained to the pretorian guard, but do you know what? I am not chained to him, he is chained to me. I have a captive audience. I can preach to this guy around the clock, and he ain't going anywhere." He took a negative and turned it into a positive. He does that four times in Philippians 1. This stuff about positive thinking, the New Age thinks they have a corner on the market, but positive thinking, properly understood, is all over the Bible.

Philippians 2 is the way to be a servant. To have joy is to walk as a servant, Jesus being your ultimate example of servanthood who left heaven and came to earth to help us. The way to spell joy is: Jesus, Others, and Yourself—joy. When you get the order backwards, it does not spell joy anymore. You cannot walk in joy unless you have the order right.

Philippians 3 is to avoid legalism, and then Philippians 4 is to rely upon divine resources for daily life. If you are trying to cope with daily life through your own power, joy is going to be destroyed in your life. Those are the four prison letters.

Now we are back to two—one, two, three, four, two, one. This is post Acts. Acts does not help us anymore with these last three. These are things that took place after the Book of Acts because he got out of prison, just like he thought. He was free for four years, AD 62 to 66. During that time he writes 1 Timothy and Titus. Then he is going to be thrown back in jail again. He will write 2 Timothy.

These three letters—1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy—are all written to pastors. We call them the pastoral letters. There is a reason we call the prison letters prison letters. The last three we call the pastoral letters because they are written to pastors. When he was out of jail, he was in Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3), he writes another letter to Ephesus, because there is a guy there that he just put in a position of authority named Timothy, who is trying to pastor one of the most influential churches of the first century that Paul helped plant. He is young and he is sickly and he is afraid. Paul is teaching Timothy in that letter how to put the church in order.

Then he continues moving, and he gets to a place called Nicopolis, and he writes his second letter to a guy on the island of Crete. I have been to Crete. There isn't much going on over there. He writes this letter to this pastor who is trying to put these house churches in order, because there are all of these false teachers running around.

In that letter, Paul says, "Cretans are gluttonous liars" (Titus 1:12). How would you like to pastor that group? He is trying to teach him how to put these house churches in order. That is where the Book of Titus comes from. It is to Titus that he talks about the blessed hope, which is that any moment the appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will come in the Rapture. Why does Titus get that word about hope? Because if you are stuck on a desert island, you need hope.

Then Paul gets thrown back into prison. This imprisonment is not like the first one. The first one was house arrest—Club Fed, as I call it. It was kind of light. This one is different. He is in a dungeon; he is alone, virtually; he knows he is going to die. He says,

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I fought the good fight, I finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Now we are back. We went from two back to one, which is 2 Timothy, written in his second Roman imprisonment, post Acts, AD 70. This is his swan song. This is the end for him. He is writing from his Roman imprisonment to Ephesus, to Timothy, who is still trying to pastor in Ephesus. Timothy is thinking he might just bail out. It is too tough. If Timothy bails out, everything Paul has done in his life almost gets subtracted. What good is a movement if it is not handed off to the next generation? That becomes the tenor and the tone of 2 Timothy. That is why he says the things he says in 2 Timothy.

During his first imprisonment in Acts 28, he wrote the prison epistles. In the second imprisonment, he wrote 2 Timothy. First imprisonment he is up on religious charges, but now it is different. In 2 Timothy and his second imprisonment, he is up on political charges. The persecutions that Christians were under in his first imprisonment were local and sporadic. This is different. Nero is on the throne, who burned Rome and blamed it on Christians. He would light Christians on fire to subsidize his garden parties. He would travel through Rome in his chariot with his underaged homosexual lover and laugh at the Christians on fire, "They claim to be the light of the world. Look at them now," kind of thing.

In the first imprisonment he is under house arrest, decent conditions. During the second imprisonment it is not the same at all. These are poor conditions. He is in a dungeon. In the first imprisonment anybody could come and talk to him—a lot of people did, at the end of Acts 28. During the second imprisonment, except for a handful of people, he is basically by himself, and he is cold. I noticed some of you are a little cold with our air on. That is what Paul was in this dungeon. That is why he says, "Bring the cloak. Bring the parchments" (2 Timothy 4:13). He needed something to read.

In the first imprisonment he had a lot of evangelistic journalistic opportunities, not in the second imprisonment. In the first imprisonment, he thought he was getting out soon, but the second imprisonment he knew he was ready to die. That becomes 2 Timothy, his swan song. It was the last thing Paul wrote before he left planet earth and went to heaven.

You really know what is important to people when they are getting ready to die. They kind of spill. That is what Paul was doing in 2 Timothy. He is spilling his guts. It is one of the most powerful books you will ever read. We have taught it here.

Those are Paul's letters. Galatians is first, on the first missionary journey. Then would come the second missionary journey, two books—1 and 2 Thessalonians. Then would come the third missionary journey, where we have 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans. Then would come the fourth missionary journey, so-called, where he used legal procedure to get a hearing before Caesar and in Club Fed he writes the four prison letters—Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians.

He is let out of jail for about five years. He writes to Timothy and Titus—Timothy in Ephesus, Titus on Crete—to teach them how to be pastors. Then he gets thrown in jail a second time, AD 67. Just before he dies, he writes 2 Timothy.

We are at the first letter. He has finished the first missionary journey. He is at this point writing his first letter to get his flock away from what I call Sanctification Pharisees. Next week, Lord willing, we will start Acts 15. I hope you found this helpful. Sometimes you need someone to kind of put the thing together for you, because the way the Bible is organized is confusing.