

Acts 104
Divine Encouragement
Acts 18:1-8
April 29, 2026
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Let us take our Bibles this evening and open them to Acts 18, which means we are finished with Acts 17.

Let us go to Acts 18. We are continuing our Wednesday evening verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of Acts. We are in that third section of the book where Jesus told the disciples: *"...and you shall be My witnesses...even to the remotest part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

Luke is using that statement of Christ as an outline of the book. We are in that third part: the witness of the church to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13-28).

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)



It started with Paul's first missionary journey into southern Galatia, then the Jerusalem Council, as we have studied. Then the part of it we are in now is the second missionary journey. We are almost finished with the second missionary journey. We are going to start the Corinthian ministry tonight. Then we just have the Ephesian ministry and the return to Antioch. Then, as you can see, that section of the book will be completed.

If you are wondering where Paul went on his third missionary journey, here is a map that shows you where he went.



He has been in Athens, and now he is moving over into Corinth. We know a little bit about the Corinthians from the Corinthian letters, but how did the Corinthian church get started in the first place? We wouldn't know without Acts 18 in our Bible.

You can take the Corinthian ministry and divide it into four parts: there is Paul's arrival in Corinth (Acts 18:1-4); his ministry there (Acts 18:5-11); there is a legal ruling before a man named Gallio (Acts 18:12-17). This is a huge ruling because, as you are going to see, they were trying to argue that Paul was violating Roman law by teaching a new religion. The Jews who brought this charge thought that because Paul was pointing towards Yeshua, which Judaism had not done—pointing to Jesus.

In Rome, one people group gets one religion, you do not get two. So they try to argue in front of Gallio that Paul is teaching a new religion and it needs to be illegal. Gallio said, "No. It is just an offshoot of Judaism." That is huge once that happens, because that guarantees Christianity freedom of religion for a while, and it could travel freely. That is why Luke records that. All of this took place at a place called the Bema Seat. Does that sound familiar? It is there in Acts 18:12-17. Finally, Paul will depart from Corinth (Acts 18:18).

That is the big picture of what the Corinthian ministry looks like. Let us look here and we are going to try to, Lord willing, cover Acts 18:1-11 today. What does the arrival look like? We have the arrival in Corinth (Act 18:1-4). It starts off with a journey. We pick it up there in Acts 18:1: "After these things—" After what things? The ministry in Athens, which was described in Acts 17.

"After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth" (Acts 18:1).

Athens and Corinth are not too far from each other. The two were separated by what is called the Isthmian land bridge. You are all familiar with the concept of an isthmus. It is a narrow land bridge. What they did was they took their boats and put them on wheels and dragged them across this Isthmian

land bridge you do not have to make this trip around the horn. We know from Greco-Roman literature that a lot of people lost their lives going around like that.

Right there on the Isthmian land bridge was Corinth. There developed a word in the Greco-Roman world for corruption. Tell me if you recognize this word: "korinthiazomai."¹ In other words, this meant "corruption." It is named after Corinth.

Corinth, which we are reading about here, was notorious for total hedonism and corruption. Think about it for a minute. If you are a sailor and you are going to be in town for a very short period of time, because all you are doing is dragging your boat across the Isthmian land bridge, then no one is there for long periods of time. No one is there to monitor your reputation, so you say, "Que sera, sera."

So you go into the Corinthian temple there—pagan temple, which was known for its sexual immorality. That is how they practiced religion in Corinth. They had sex with prostitutes in pagan temples. "I am only going to be in town for a short period of time, and no one is here to monitor my behavior." With all of these sailors coming through, Corinth became known as a place of corruption. It is kind of like how we use the word Vegas today. "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." What happened in Corinth stayed in Corinth. There was actually a word for corruption that developed out of that city.

This is where Paul is going on his second missionary journey. He leaves Athens and he comes to Corinth. He meets two very important people that are going to play a huge role in his ministry. In fact, they are going to play a huge role at the end of this chapter. In Ephesus they are going to disciple a young, very eloquent man named Apollos. He was a believer, but he did not know anything about the death of Christ, the burial of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, or the ascension of Christ. He only knew about Christ up to the point of John the Baptist—when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus in early the early Gospels and said:

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Apollos was a believer because he was a disciple of John the Baptist, and John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. That is all Apollos knew. He was really effective with what he knew, but Priscilla and Aquila are going to take him aside and give him the whole picture of who Jesus is not just up to the point of John the Baptist, but everything He did—His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. My point is, Priscilla and Aquila have a big role to play with Apollos and later on in Paul's ministry.

¹ "korinthiazomai" source: David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, New Testament Edition*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, (Colorado Springs, CO: ChariotVictor Publishing, 1983), page 505.

Paul meets them in Acts 18:2-3. They are Jews. What are these Jews doing in Corinth? They got kicked out of Rome. It says there in Acts 18:2:

"And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy [Rome] with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius [the Roman emperor] had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them" (Acts 18:2).

Claudius said, "Get these Jews out of here." He kicked them out of Rome, and when they got kicked out of Rome, they providentially ended up in Corinth.

They got kicked out of Rome because they were Jewish, and they ended up here in Corinth. That is where they meet Paul. It is a strategic meeting because, as I said before, they are going to play a big role in his ministry. Why did Claudius kick the Jews out of Rome? Arnold Fruchtenbaum has this comment:

"Aquila and Priscilla were now in Corinth because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. This edict of the Jews' expulsion from Rome was issued in A.D. 49. According to the Roman historian Suetonius, Emperor Claudius had issued an edict because the 'Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus,' which was probably a misreading of the term Christos, meaning 'Christ.'"²

Every time Christ was preached by the church, the Jews went crazy over it, to the point where they were causing disturbances. (These are the unbelieving Jews I am talking about.) This got so bad that Claudius said, "Enough with these people," and he kicked them out of Rome. This is how Priscilla and Aquila ended up there in Corinth.

"Apparently, a riot broke out within the Jewish community in Rome over the Messiah. The Romans, not knowing what the issues were—" ³

All the Romans knew—which you will see with Gallio's ruling (Acts 18:12-17)—is a bunch of fighting and squabbling within Judaism. The Romans looked at this as people look at a Christian denomination that is at war with itself. "Are we going to immerse, or are we going to sprinkle with baptism?" These are the kinds of things that churches get riled up over and sometimes split over.

The civil authorities say, "We are not going to get involved with stuff like that. Those are internal matters." Here the problem is between the unbelieving Jews and the believing Jews. It got to the point of riots. So Claudius says, "Kick the Jews out of Rome."

² Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 374-75.

³ Ibid.

"The Romans, not knowing what the issues were, expelled the entire Jewish community from the city. Later, however, the Jews did return to Rome (Rom. 16:3)."⁴

Eventually that edict was lifted because Paul will write from Corinth to the church at Rome. In Romans 16:3 he mentions Priscilla and Aquila, so we think that Priscilla and Aquila eventually made their way back to Rome. At any rate, these two—husband and wife team—are really important to Paul's ministry.

Paul took a liking to them right away, and they took a liking to him right away because they shared the same vocation. It is like how two engineers have something to talk about; how two lawyers when they are not fighting with each other have something to talk about or how two doctors have something to talk about. That is what happened with Paul and his gravitation towards Priscilla and Aquila, because they were all tentmakers. You see that in Acts 18:3:

"And because he was one of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers" (Acts 18:3).

"Tent-makers," what does that really mean? The Greek actually does not say "tent-makers." I know that is disappointing because I have always thought they were tent-makers. They were tent-makers, but they did something broader than just make tents. They did something broader, which included tentmaking. The Greek actually reads that they were leather workers—workers of leather—which would include a lot of different things, including making tents. This is how Paul supported himself in his ministry, and this is how Priscilla and Aquila supported themselves.

The Jews, of course, have a saying: "If you do not teach your child a profession or an occupation, you will teach him to be a criminal." The Bible, particularly as it comes out of Judaism, is really big on manual labor, having some kind of skill or trade with which you can support yourself, support your family, and then be generous towards other people who may not be as fortunate.

This idea that you go around and try to gather a following and to get people to give money to support what you are preaching is really not the Jewish model. That is more of the Greek philosophical model, but The Jews were really big into having some kind of skill. What you will see in the Bible is that it is very blue-collar. The characters of the Bible knew what it was like to eke out a living.

The ultimate example of this is Jesus Himself. What was Christ's occupation? He was a carpenter.

⁴ Ibid.

*"Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and
Joses and Judas and Simon?" (Mark 6:3).*

Most of the disciples were fishermen. Luke, who wrote Acts and Luke, was a physician. God, as part of the Fall, tells us that we have to work with our hands to survive. Did they work before the Fall? Yes, they did. Adam was tilling the garden even before the Fall. Adam was a worker, but the Fall changed things where people could no longer work for enjoyment, as they could pre-Fall. Now they had to work to survive; labor becomes more difficult as the ground rebels against our forebears.

You see this articulated in a lot of different places.

*"Then to Adam He [God] said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of
your wife, and you have eaten from the tree about which I commanded
you, saying, "You shall not eat from it";
Cursed is the ground because of you—""*

God says, "If you rebel against Me, then the ground is going to rebel against you." The sarcasm of God.

*"Cursed is the ground because of you;
In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.
Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the plants of the field;
By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread..." (Genesis 3:17-19).*

"You survive now through labor, through toiling. Paul reiterates this to the Thessalonians, who confused imminency with immediacy. Paul taught them that Jesus can come back at any time, which is called imminency. There is no sign that has to happen before the Rapture can occur, and they confuse that with immediacy. Oh, he is coming back next month. He is coming back next week. So if you think Jesus is coming back next week, then why would you want to pay off your credit card bills? Right? It is a waste of time. Why hold down a job? Why save for retirement? Why try to put your kids through college? Paul has to write second Thessalonians to explain to them.

I never said immediacy. I said imminency. Those are two totally different things. We teach imminency here. Jesus can come back at any moment. He can come back before this Bible study is over. Some of you could be praying for that to happen, for all I know, but it does not mean He will come back before this Bible study is over.

They got confused between imminency and immediacy and they quit their jobs. So Paul, in the process, tells them in 2 Thessalonians 3:10:

"...if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Because you are in rebellion against what God established at the dawn of human history with the Fall. You see Paul talking this way in 1 Timothy 5:8:

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

The Scripture is very blue-collar; it has a very manual labor emphasis. That is who Paul was as he was traveling as a worker in leather, and that is who Priscilla and Aquila were. It is why they had a lot in common, and it is why they got together.

Then Paul goes into his ministry pattern, and it is there in Acts 18:4 it says:

"And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4).

Why was he in the synagogue only on the Sabbath? Because every other day of the week he was working with his trade in tentmaking, leather making, etc. This is what Paul always does. He always goes to the synagogue first, and he tries to preach Jesus to the Jewish individuals.

You will notice at the end of Acts 18:4 it says, "Jews and Greeks." The Greeks would be proselytes—Gentile converts to Judaism that wanted to walk with Yahweh. Those are the typical people that you find in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Paul always goes there first because he has common ground with those folks. They believe Hebrew Bible, what we call Old Testament, just like he does. In almost every city, he goes to the synagogue first. The only exceptions would be cities where there was not a synagogue built, like Philippi, for example.

He always goes to the synagogue first, and he tries to show them from their own Scripture that their own Scripture—what we call Old Testament—points to Jesus, whom they would call Yeshua. Paul lays out this principle in Romans 1:16:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

The nation of Israel is God's chosen nation, and they are always given the first opportunity to respond to the Savior by way of faith. Typically what happens is Paul does not fare so well with them. They end up getting mad at him and kicking him out of the synagogue after hearing him. Then he goes amongst the Gentiles, and he bears a great crop amongst the Gentiles who do want to hear the message. The unbelieving

Jews get jealous of him because he is so successful amongst the Gentiles, whereas they are not. Then they stir up other people to cause a riot and cause problems to get him kicked out of that city; and that is actually God's providence because it moves him on to the next city.

This is what Paul did in Thessalonica. You will remember it says:

"Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom [his habit], he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures [the Old Testament], explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ'" (Acts 17:1-3).

It is what Paul did in Berea, the next town after Thessalonica. It says in Acts 17:10-11:

"The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:10-11).

Why are they examining the Scriptures? Because Paul is using the Scriptures to point towards Jesus, showing that Hebrew Bible prophetically points towards Jesus.

Here is Paul in Corinth doing the exact same thing. Then you go down to Acts 18:5-11 and we read about his ministry there in Corinth. A lot of things happen in this ministry. First of all, Silas and Timothy report back to Paul from Thessalonica. Paul had left Silas and Timothy in Thessalonica to pastor that church that was started there a little earlier.

Now, Silas and Timothy have left that church and joined Paul in Corinth. They give Paul a report on how things are going in Thessalonica. There is a reference to this in 1 Thessalonians 3:6:

"But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you" (1 Thessalonians 3:6).

In a book that he is about to write, he acknowledges that Silas and Timothy had come from Thessalonica to Corinth to join Paul and to report on the progress of the Thessalonian Christians.

Timothy and Silas had made that trip from Thessalonica to Corinth. This is the trajectory of Timothy and Silas as they came to visit Paul. It is at this point that Paul will pen two

letters called 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Why is he penning those two letters now? Because he just got a report on the Thessalonian church from Silas and Timothy. What better time to write to them than right now?

ORDER OF PAUL'S LETTERS		
1.	Galatians	A.D. 49
2.	1–2 Thessalonians	A.D. 51
3.	1–2 Corinthians	A.D. 56
4.	Romans	A.D. 57
5.	Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians	A.D. 60–62
6.	1 Timothy, Titus	A.D. 62–66
7.	2 Timothy	A.D. 67

You will notice on this chart here that the only other book that Paul had written up to this point in time was Galatians. He wrote that at the end of his first missionary journey from Antioch, the very place from which he launched on missionary journey number one.

He got back from missionary journey number one and he wrote to the churches that he had built—evangelized, and started—on missionary journey number one. He wrote to them because they were being steeped in legalism. A bunch of Pharisees came into their midst and said, "You cannot really grow as a Christian unless you white-knuckle it under the Mosaic Law." That is what they were teaching them, legalism.

Paul wrote the book of Galatians to tell them, "No, you grow as a Christian the same way you got saved: by faith alone under the power of the Holy Spirit alone. Stay with that trajectory and you will grow as a Christian. Do not believe what these legalists are trying to teach you." Legalists are always people that are trying to put others back under the Mosaic Law—judaizers, typically unbelieving Jewish people who were doing that to Paul's brand new Christians. That is why he wrote the Book of Galatians at the end of missionary journey number one.

Now we are on missionary journey number two. He hits Corinth, he gets a report from Silas and Timothy about the progress of the church he established in Thessalonica, and based on that report, he writes two letters to them, close in proximity, back to back in about A.D. 51. Galatians was written in A.D. 49. The two Thessalonian letters were written in A.D. 51, and he is dealing with questions that they had.

The way to memorize this is the mnemonic device 1-2-3-4-2-1. On the first missionary journey, one book (Galatians in A.D. 49). He wrote to try to tell the Galatians that the churches in Galatia not to wander into legalism. On the second missionary journey,

which we are studying here, two books. Do you see a pattern? One missionary journey, one book; second missionary journey, two books. Those are the Thessalonian letters written about A.D. 50-52.

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, Philp
2	Between Imprisonments	Post Acts	62-66	1 Tim, Titus
1	2 nd Imprisonment	Post Acts	67	2 Tim

On the third missionary journey, which we have not studied yet, three books—the two Corinthian letters and Romans. On the fourth missionary journey, four books. You say, "Wait a minute. I thought there were only three missionary journeys." There is really a fourth one because he is in custody.

He is arrested under Roman authority and he keeps demanding a trial before Caesar, which was his right as a Roman citizen. It is a legal device that he is using. He knows that if he keeps insisting on this they have to take him to Caesar in Rome. There he will be imprisoned for two years from A.D. 60-62.

That is where the Book of Acts ends, as Paul is awaiting his trial before Caesar. But during that time period, which I am calling a fourth missionary journey, he writes four books. Those are called the prison letters: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians.

The Book of Acts does not record this, but we know he got out of prison from A.D. 62-66. Now we are back down to two, and he writes two books. These are the pastoral letters written to pastors: 1 Timothy and Titus. Now we are back to one because he gets thrown in jail a second time in Rome, which is totally different. The first time he was thrown in jail was what I call "Club Fed." It was pretty light and he knew he was getting out soon. He could receive visitors, house guests, and things like that. He was under house arrest.

But when he gets thrown in jail the last time, he says, "This is it. The time of my departure is at hand. I am being poured out as a drink offering" (2 Timothy 4:6). He knows he is going to die, and it is in that final imprisonment in Rome that he writes his

swan song to young Timothy, trying to get him to endure in the ministry. That is called 2 Timothy.

First missionary journey, one book: Galatians. Second missionary journey, two books: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. That is where we are here. Third missionary journey, three books: 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans. Romans is number six, yet, as you are reading your Bible, as Protestants we have organized the New Testament so that Romans is the first of Paul's books that you find. Yet chronologically, it is actually number six.

That is why the order that the Protestants have put everything in is confusing. It reveals to you nothing of this chronology. The reason we have done it that way is because Romans is the most important book in church history. So let us put that first. Then the Corinthian books are pretty big, so we will put those next. But in reality, Galatians is the first book, and the two Thessalonian books are numbers two and three.

By the way, your Old Testament is about as messed up as the New Testament in terms of order. You go into your Old Testament and the first prophet you run into is Isaiah. Why is Isaiah first? He is the biggest guy, and he wrote the biggest book, so let us put his book first in the prophets section. But in reality, the earliest writing prophet that we have is a little tiny, one-chapter book called Obadiah. You would never know that by how the Protestants have organized the old Old Testament. It is just like how, based on the Protestant organization, you would never know that Romans is chronologically number six.

We really are very confused today. We do not know what to believe. We do not know who is first. We do not have any knowledge of chronology. A lot of the confusion comes from how we have organized the Bible. I may do a series at some point teaching you how to put everything in chronological order. If you want the Pauline letters in chronological order with more details, check out the study from the end of Acts 14 that we did in this class. You will catch all of that.

My point is that we are on the second missionary journey, and there are two books that he wrote: the two Thessalonian letters. He wrote them from Corinth to Thessalonica, and he wrote them because of what we are reading about right here, that Silas and Timothy came from Thessalonica, joined Paul in Corinth to give him a report on the status of the Thessalonian church (Acts 18:5).

It is here that Paul learns about the hang-ups of the Thessalonian church. They had a lot of hang-ups. One of their hang-ups was the Rapture. Paul had taught them about the Rapture, but after Paul left, the unbelieving Jews persecuted the new Thessalonian Gentile Christians. Some of their brethren had died in this persecution, so they wanted to know, "Paul, you taught us about the Rapture, but what about our deceased loved ones in Christ? When the Rapture happens, what is going to happen to them?"

Paul cannot say, "Why don't you just go home and read your Bible?" Because there is no Bible. There is no New Testament other than a few books that I have already mentioned: Galatians, and maybe Matthew and James had been written by this time. Other than that, we do not have a completed New Testament canon. So Paul cannot just say, "If you want to know about the Rapture and you want to know about how your deceased loved ones participate in the Rapture, then go home and read your Bible. Why don't you just enroll in a Bible class to get the information?"

There is no such thing as a Bible class. If Paul had said Bible class, they were like, "What is that New Testament? What is that Bible college? What is that seminary? What is that?" The only way they are going to get an answer on this question is they have to go to their apostle, who is a direct conduit of divine revelation to them. He has been kicked out, so what do they do now? They are going to send Silas and Timothy to get this question answered.

Once you understand that, then you understand why Paul puts into 1 Thessalonians this teaching on the Rapture. He is filling out their lack of understanding. It is not that they were dumb, it is that they did not have all the information. They were uninformed. He says:

"For we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as the rest who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

He does not say, "Do not ever grieve." What he says is, "Do not grieve as if you are never going to see them again." That is what he says. When a loved one in Christ dies, we always grieve. But you do not grieve as though you are never going to see them again. Paul says, "You are going to see them again at the point of the Rapture."

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

That is Grandma and Grandpa, your youth pastor, and everyone that you loved in Christ who is now dead. Paul says, "When the Rapture happens, you are going to see them again."

"Fallen asleep" is a euphemism—a polite way of saying something—meaning that they are dead. He does not say, "They croaked" or "They kicked the bucket." That would be impolite language. He just says they "fell asleep."

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord—" (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

What does that mean? It means that Jesus already talked about the Rapture (John 14:1-3). This teaching is not new with Paul. Paul is reiterating what was common knowledge of a statement that Jesus made in the Upper Room:

"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

That is the first teaching of the Rapture anywhere in the Bible. Paul is just repeating what Jesus already said, but he is explaining how the doctrine impacts their deceased loved ones in Christ.

"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 the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-16).

Who would those be? The first time I read "the dead in Christ," I was an Episcopalian at the time. I said, "That is the Episcopalians—the dead in Christ. No, it is the Methodists. No, it is the Presbyterians." No, the dead in Christ are people that died as Christians before the Rapture.

"...to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

When the Rapture happens, that crowd that is in heaven starts to come down. They are placed in resurrected bodies and they are coming down. That is where you see them again.

"Then we who are alive and remain [those of us living on the earth when the Rapture happens] will be caught up [harpazō (ἁρπάζω), translated "Rapture"] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

In other words, they are coming down and we are caught up. The two groups meet in the sky, and Christ's feet never touch the earth. We all go back into the Father's house together. When the Rapture happens it is like going to a reunion of some kind. Have you ever gone to a family reunion? If you have a big family and suddenly you are around people you have not seen in a long time, maybe five years, or ten years. Or it could be a class reunion, and it is a shock to the system because you are seeing all these people all at once. That is what the Rapture is.

"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" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Christ's feet never touch the earth. This is not the Second Advent at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period. This is an event that will precede all of that.

Therefore what? Be scared out of your mind. No.

"Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

Meaning, you are going to see your deceased loved ones again at the point of the Rapture. That is why Paul writes 1 Thessalonians from Corinth; it is to deal with that issue and other issues that he had learned about from Timothy and Silas that they were wrestling with.

Not long after that he learned that they got a forged letter from him, claiming that the day of the Lord, the Tribulation Period had started. If that is true, it throws out everything Paul had taught them that they would escape the Tribulation Period. They thought they were in it.

Part of the problem was that they were being persecuted by the unbelieving Jews. The same group that persecuted Paul turned on this flock when Paul left. They thought they were in the Tribulation Period, which would mean that everything Paul taught them on the Rapture was wrong. If he is wrong there, he could be wrong anywhere.

You will read in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 that they were shaken. The Greek word for "shaken" is the same word used for an earthquake. Remember the Philippian jailer and the earthquake? That is the same word used here, except it was a theological earthquake. These people were shaken to the core of their beings.

When Paul learns about that, he says, "You are not in the Tribulation Period, because if you were in the Tribulation Period, you would see five things which you are not seeing. Yes, you are being persecuted, but it is not these five things. Number one, there has been no departure, meaning that you are still here. You have not departed yet. Number two, you have not seen the Antichrist desecrating the temple. They were pulled into that one because there was still a functioning temple. The temple would not be destroyed for another 20 years."

"Number three, the Restrainer (who is the Holy Spirit in us) has not been taken away. Number four, you have not seen the Antichrist destroyed by the breath of his mouth and the splendor of his coming. Number five, you have not seen the destruction of the Antichrist's followers. Until you see these five things, you cannot say you are in the Tribulation Period."

These are five good things to know, because there are all these people today telling us we are in the Tribulation Period, that the events of the Book of Revelation are happening.

Paul is saying, "You ain't seen nothing yet. These are just birth pangs, but you are not in the Tribulation Period. That letter that you got, allegedly coming from me, was not from me. It was a forgery."

That is why when he is in Corinth he writes these two letters. In the first letter he is trying to fix their understanding of the relationship of their deceased loved ones to the Rapture, which they needed more information on because he had never covered that issue with them. They were asking about it because now they had deceased loved ones that were martyrs. The second issue that he learned about is that they thought they were in the Tribulation Period because they had gotten a letter, allegedly from him, saying that the Tribulation Period had started. This is where you put the two Corinthian letters right here in Acts 18:5.

Then from there, Paul moves into Jewish evangelism. Look at Acts 18:5.

Macedonia is up in that Thessalonian area. Macedonia is this big area here. Thessalonica is a city within. It is like a city within a county, I guess, to put it in modern-day vernacular.

"But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:5).

All of a sudden he was not going to this synagogue on Sabbath, he was showing up all the time. What about his job as a tentmaker, leather worker? He got alleviated from his menial responsibilities because when Silas and Timothy came, they brought him a financial gift which says, "I have my bills paid. I do not have to hold down this job to pay my bills, so I can devote myself completely and totally to the work of teaching the Word around the clock to these Jews in the synagogue."

There is a reference to this financial gift in 2 Corinthians 11:9. He says:

"...for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need..." (2 Corinthians 11:9).

There is a reference to these financial gifts beginning when he was in Thessalonica. In a letter to the Philippians, a church that he helped found a little earlier, he wrote:

"For even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs" (Philippians 4:16).

"My needs are met. Holding down the job is unnecessary for me at this point. Now I do not have to show up at the synagogue on the Sabbath. I can show up all the time, and I give myself completely and wholly and totally to the Word of God."

This becomes the blessing of being in full time ministry, because as people support your ministry, it frees you up to do things that you probably could not do otherwise because you are so busy working. It frees you up to study, to preach, to prepare, and all of these kinds of things. Being supported in ministry, as we are here—our staff—is a huge blessing. Without the financial support of God's people, I guess I could try to do this kind of ministry. I doubt I could do it three times a week, and I doubt I could preach and teach as long as I do.

Some of you might be saying, "You preach too long anyway, so we are going to hold back money this month." That is between you and the Lord, but I could not study, I could not preach, I could not teach, I could not prepare the PowerPoints that Pastor Jim dutifully helps me prepare. All of those things would be impossible if I was anchored to another job, if this was not my job and I had another job.

Is there anything wrong with having another job? Of course not. Paul himself role-modeled manual labor, as did Christ, but these financial gifts that he got allowed him to do something that he could wholly give himself to. That is what you see happening here.

Of course, he is in the synagogue because his principle is to the Jew first. He is giving them the first opportunity to receive the gospel. Then Jewish opposition. Not everybody is happy that he is doing this. That is in Acts 18:6:

"But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles'" (Acts 18:6).

The first thing that happened is that the Jews he was trying to minister to blasphemed. What does that mean? It means they rejected the One that Hebrew Bible points to: Yeshua, Jesus. This is described here as blasphemy. You are rejecting the true God.

What does Paul do? Does he keep pleading and begging them to come to Christ? He does not do that. It says that he shook out his garments. That is a Jewish expression that was very physical, visible, tangible, and real where you were physically saying, "I am done ministering to you. You do not want the truth. I am done."

You see Paul doing this on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:50):

"But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium" (Acts 13:50-51).

You are literally taking your sandal and shaking the dust off of it, and you are shaking it in the direction of the city that rejected your message. Jesus taught the disciples to do

this in Matthew 10:14. They were sent out to preach and Jesus gave them this instruction:

"Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet" (Matthew 10:14).

We use this as a metaphor, but I think what is happening is a little bit more physical, a little bit more real.

Then he says something really strong against the unbelieving Jews:

"Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean" (Acts 18:6).

Now, a lot of people say that Paul launched some kind of curse against the unbelieving Jews, and that is not what he is doing. He is not cursing them. He is going to explain in Romans 11 that although they are currently enemies, they are beloved on behalf of the patriarchs because of the Abrahamic Covenant. He is not cursing them the way many people will grab that—the Candace Owens mentality that you see today, or the Tucker Carlson mentality where people are claiming the name of Christ, but they are saying that God hates the Jews.

They will quote a verse like that and make it sound as if Paul cursed the Jewish nation. He did not curse the Jewish nation. It is not a curse, but a disclaimer of a responsibility. "I am no longer responsible because you have been given the opportunity to believe. Your blood is on your head." That is a disclaimer of responsibility. It is not a curse on the Jewish people.

Also in Acts 18:6, it says:

"From now on, I will go to the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6).

Now, that is a local proclamation. It is not a dispensational change. It is not saying that from this point on, as you evangelize, do not go to the Jewish people first. Every time he gets into the next city, he goes to the synagogue first. What he is saying here is: "It is only in Corinth that things have changed. This is a local change. I am not ministering in the synagogue anymore because you rejected the message. I am going to go to the Gentiles."

When you drop down to Acts 18:7-8 you see his ministry results. You have the conversion of someone named Titius Justus there in Acts 18:7:

"Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue" (Acts 18:7).

He was the next-door neighbor of the synagogue that had rejected Paul's message, so Paul just went next door. Then he ministers to a guy named Crispus. Who is Crispus? Crispus is the leader of the synagogue. Crispus is the guy that organized the services in the synagogue. Paul reaches out to him.

"Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household" (Acts 18:8).

Crispus, the leader of the synagogue in Paul's ministry, gets saved. How did he get saved? What did he have to do? There is one verb there: he believed. Faith is only as good as the object it is placed in. He believed in the Lord. He placed his faith for his salvation in Christ alone, and he got saved. That is the leader of the synagogue.

Lewis Sperry Chafer says:

"...because upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only..."⁵

We see evidence of it here in these passages that teach that salvation is by faith alone. Some of the famous ones: John 3:16; Genesis 15:6; Acts 16:31).

By the way, when it says, "He believed with all his household," that is speaking not of the fact that God had grandchildren, but as the male leader of the home, particularly in the Greco-Roman world, the man had great authority. When he believes in Jesus, everybody else in the family says, "I think it is okay for us to believe in Jesus, too." The barrier is removed, and the kids come to Christ, and the wife comes to Christ, and the brothers and the sisters come to Christ, and the uncles and aunts come to Christ, and Grandma and grandpa come to Christ, because this guy must have been a leader in his family as well as the leader of the synagogue. He got saved here. His name is Crispus.

The same thing was said of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30-31):

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" [Paul and Silas] said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household'" (Acts 16:30-31).

That is the influence of the father in Greco-Roman times, and the same thing is happening with Crispus.

One other group gets saved and that is other Corinthians. This is how the Corinthian church, which we read about later on in the New Testament, started.

⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *vol. 7, Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

"....and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized" (Acts 18:8).

Notice that it says, "When they heard." Paul is doing oratory teaching the Word of God, and they heard. Doesn't that ring a bell with Romans 10:17?

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

That is what is happening right here. By the way, look at the look at the end of Acts 18:8. Do you see where it says "baptized"? In the order of the sentence, does "baptize" come before believing or after? In the Book of Acts, baptism always comes after believing. What saves someone is believing in Christ. Baptism does not save anyone. It is an outward confession of an inward reality.

I have given you all these verses before, but you can jot these down: Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:34-39; Acts 10:42-45; Acts 16:14-15; Acts 16:30-34; Acts 18:8. Every single time when someone is baptized, they have believed first. It is never to get baptized first, then believe. It is never, "Let us baptize you as an infant, and then you get saved." There is no such doctrine.

With all of that being said, what do you do with hyper dispensationalism? What is that? These are people that believe that Paul started his own church, not a local church. They think the church started with Paul. What was happening before? "That is the Jewish church," they say. One of the things they teach is that you do not have to be baptized to join Paul's church. Yes, you have to take communion, but you do not have to be baptized.

We have had people come here and want to join our church, and they say, "We do not like the fact that you, as a requirement for membership, require baptism or we do not like the fact that you say baptism and communion are your two ordinances. We only believe in one ordinance. We believe in communion because that is for Paul's church. We do not believe in baptism because that is the Jewish church." This is mid-Acts Dispensationalism.

We had a guy come here and say that, and I did not really understand why this was such an issue to him until I figured out a little bit more about this hyper-dispensationalism. According to them, the church did not start in Acts 2, the way we teach it. They say that the church started with Paul and everything else beforehand is some kind of Jewish church that does not exist anymore. They baptized, but Paul's church did not baptize; Paul's church took communion.

"There should only be one ordinance, not two. You guys are enforcing two." Have you heard of this? If it is true that Paul's church does not emphasize baptism, then what in the world is he doing in Acts 18:8? Isn't he baptizing people? You question them about

this, and they say, "Paul was growing into his understanding." I am thinking, "How long did it take him to grow? He is an apostle. Of course, he baptized people. In the churches that he planted they took communion together. Then he gets a divine revelation.