

## Acts 105

### Divine Protection

Acts 18:9-12

May 6, 2026

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Let us take our Bibles this evening and open them to Acts 18:9. We are continuing our verse-by-verse look at the Book of Acts. As you well know, we are in the third section of the book, Acts 13-28, where it records the church's witness to the remote parts of the earth. We are about ready to finish up the second missionary journey. I don't think we can quite do it tonight, but it will be almost over.

### Structure (Acts 1:8)

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



### Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

- I. Corinthian Ministry (18:1-18)
  - A. Arrival (1-4)
  - B. Ministry (5-11)
    1. Silas and Timothy's report (5a)
    2. Jewish evangelism (5b)
    3. Jewish opposition (6)
    4. Ministry results (7-8)
    5. Divine revelation (9-10)
      - a) Timing (9a)
      - b) Content (9b)
      - c) Reason (10)
    6. Ministry duration (11)
  - C. Paul Before Gallio (12-17)
  - D. Paul's Departure (18)

Here is what the second missionary journey looks like. Here are all of the places that Paul traveled on his second missionary journey.



The last time we were together, we were talking about his Corinthian ministry (Acts 18:1-8). We have seen his arrival in Corinth (Acts 18:1-4) and his ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:5-11). It is a typical situation. When I used to teach Acts in the local Bible college, college of Biblical Studies, I would just tell the students how to answer if they were ever asked on the test, "What did Paul do in such and such a city?"

I told them to say this, because the same thing repeats over and over again: Paul goes into a new city, he goes to the synagogue, he tries to reason from Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah; they reject the message, so he leaves the synagogue and goes to the Gentiles; he preaches the same message, and people start getting saved like crazy; the unbelieving Jews get jealous of his success amongst the Gentiles, so they stir up a crowd of malcontents against him; he is persecuted, and then he leaves that city and is pushed on to the next one.

I told my students to write that down on the test, and they would have about a 95% chance of getting it right, because that is what happens almost every place he goes on these missionary journeys. But do not answer that if I ask what happened in Philippi, because there was no synagogue in Philippi and he did not go to the synagogue first. There are a few variations, but there is this general pattern. This pattern is repeating itself here in Corinth.

As his ministry results are very effective, and as people oppose him, as only the Lord can do, the Lord gives him a divine revelation and comforts him (Acts 18:9-10).

What is this divine revelation? There is timing, there is content, and then there is the reason for the revelation. Take a look at Acts 18:9. This is in the height of ministry and opposition:

*"And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision—" (Acts 18:9).*

There is one vision that has happened already to Paul. Do you remember the vision of the Macedonian man? Paul was in Troas and he had this night vision of a man saying, "Come on over here and help us." That is how the gospel penetrated Europe. That vision happened to Paul at night. Do you realize that the prophet Zechariah had eight visions in one night? (You can go back into our sermon archives. We have done verse-by-verse teachings on Zechariah.) I am thinking, "That is quite a night—eight visions!"

Paul had a night vision. It says:

*"A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'" (Acts 16:9).*

That is how the gospel made it into Europe, and Christianity had a great run in Europe. You go to visit there and you see all of the architecture. Unfortunately, Christianity is kind of done in Europe. Less than 1% of the population is now Christian, but in its heyday it was the cradle of the Protestant Reformation and everything else. You might wonder, "How did Christianity get into that area?" It is because of this vision of the Macedonian man.

God gave Paul visions. In fact, in the Book of Acts, He gave Paul four visions. The first one was in Acts 9:4, which says:

*"and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" (Acts 9:4).*

The second one was the vision of the Macedonian man. The third one was the one we are looking at here—God's word of comfort to Paul in Corinth. Then the fourth one is going to show up in Acts 22:17-18, which says:

*"It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me'" (Acts 22:17-18).*

By my count, this is one of four times, it looks like it is the third time that he has received some kind of direct vision from God. This one, like the vision of the Macedonian man, came at night. What was the content of this vision?

I am reading out of the New American Standard Bible. It has the words of Christ in red, and these are in red in my English translation. This is something that the resurrected and ascended Jesus spoke to Paul:

*"And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent'" (Acts 18:9).*

These are words of comfort; God is comforting Paul. He is comforting him by telling him to take courage. You look at Paul, and you would think he would be a naturally courageous person, but apparently he was not. He had the same fears the rest of us had, and he needed to be constantly encouraged by the Lord.

The Lord wants us to understand that we are not to be afraid. It is so easy to be afraid of things—afraid of people, afraid of circumstances. But if the Bible is clear about anything, it is "Do not be afraid." Paul would write to young Timothy, a sickly young man who was trying to pastor the church at Ephesus, and he would later write to him these words in 2 Timothy 1:7:

*"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).*

I know that when I am afraid of something, I am not operating in the Holy Spirit because God does not want us to be afraid. Do you remember what the Lord said to Joshua as he was getting ready to enter Canaan and do the impossible and subdue the Canaanites? Those were giants in the land that had caused the prior generation to fall into fear in the days of Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13-14). But now Joshua is about to enter that same land with the second generation coming out of Egypt. This is what God said to Joshua, and this is not a bad thing to say to your kids and your grandkids as they are being sent off to school or work or wherever it is they are going. This is a great verse to remind them:

*"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7).*

Revelation 21:8 describes unbelievers in the lake of fire. As it is making that description, it gives the characteristics of unsaved people. What are unsaved people like? Revelation 21:8 says:

*"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake of fire that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).*

He describes unsaved people. What are they like? These are pretty big sins here: abominable, murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars. Those are huge sins, but even before they get to those sins, Revelation 21:8 says that they are cowardly and unbelieving. If you are unbelieving, it makes you a coward; you have trusted in yourself rather than God.

Even before this description of these heinous sins—murder, that is a biggie, right? Sorcerer. Idolater. Liar—even before it gets to those, it says they are cowardly. They are unafraid. One of the proverbs says, using antithetical parallelism where the second line says something opposite from the first line:

*"The wicked flee when no one is pursuing,  
But the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1).*

The wicked are afraid of their own shadow, but not so God's people. We are bold as a lion. Of course we don't do that by our own power, we do it through His power. Paul is told to not be afraid.

*"Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent"  
(Acts 18:9).*

Now, why would it say that? Because it was his speaking that kept getting him into trouble with everybody. But God says, "Don't be afraid. Keep on speaking and do not be silent." Then, in this vision that came to him at night, you are given the reason why he is not to be afraid. If you look at Acts 18:10, it says, *"For I am with you."*

When you think about it, if God is with you wherever you go, what is there to really be afraid of? John 14:16-18 says that the Holy Spirit is inside of us forever. Everywhere I go, God is with me, and God is with me wherever I go. There is really not much to be afraid of. Everywhere you go, God is with you.

Jesus told us that in Matthew 28:20 when He gave us our assignment as members of the Church Age to fulfill the Great Commission. He said:

*"teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you  
always, even unto the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).*

*"Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being  
content with what you have; for He Himself said, 'I will never desert you,  
nor will I ever forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).*

I do not have to always be afraid of running out of money. I can learn to be content with what God has given me. I do not always have to be stockpiling like the world is. Saving money, being frugal, and all of that is good, but I do not have to do it out of fear because

God tells me He will never leave me nor forsake me. That sure takes the fear out of things.

*"A man of too many friends comes to ruin" (Proverbs 18:24).*

Keep that in mind when you are on social media and you see everybody trying to gin up their friends list. The Bible says:

*"A man of too many friends comes to ruin,  
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).*

Then you have Daniel 3:24-25. You think of those three Hebrew youths: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, called by their Babylonian names given to them by Nebuchadnezzar, but whose Hebrew names were Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael. They were teenagers taking a stand against the known power of the day, Babylon. They wouldn't worship the image that Nebuchadnezzar had erected in Daniel 3, and they were going to get thrown into the fire as a result.

Look at these three teenagers in that predicament. Daniel 3:24-25 says:

*"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to the high officials, 'Was it not three men cast bound into the midst of the fire?'" (Daniel 3:24).*

He was speaking to his servants. By the way, when they threw those three youths into that fire, a lot of his servants died because the fire was so intense. Just putting them in there killed several of his servants (Daniel 3). Nebuchadnezzar said to heat the fire up seven times hotter.

*"They replied to the king, 'Certainly, O king' He [Nebuchadnezzar] said, 'Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like the son of the gods!'" (Daniel 3:24-25).*

Nebuchadnezzar is a pagan. He is a polytheist. But this is his interpretation of what he saw: *"the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"* (Daniel 3:25). "I thought we threw three in there. I see four." Who is that fourth man? It is Jesus, and if it is not Jesus, maybe it is Michael the archangel whom Jesus dispatched. Whatever view you want to take on it is fine, but it is a story of the faithfulness of God.

You take these three teenagers before they were thrown into the fire and they probably could have passed a doctrinal test. Is God faithful? What are God's attributes? They would have said He is faithful. Check. It is intellect, but then they are actually in the fire, and they experience the protection of the fourth man in the fire. Then they come out on

the other side of the fire. Now it is not doctrinal anymore, it is experiential, which is completely different from doctrinal.

It is one thing to know that God is faithful. It is a totally different matter to walk through a valley and sense God with you wherever you go. Now God just took you to the next level. It is beyond intellect. It is something experiential. It is a marvelous teaching in the Bible about the faithfulness of God.

When they were thrown into that fire they had no idea if they were going to be incinerated. They said to Nebuchadnezzar, "If you throw us into this fire, God can rescue us. But even if He does not, we are still not going to bow down and worship this thing, this idol" (Daniel 3:16-18). They had no guarantee that they would be protected. They just trusted God's character, and in that particular case, God showed up.

I took a course on the Book of Daniel through one of the greats: J. Dwight Pentecost. He pointed out, as we were studying the Book of Daniel, that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego probably had Isaiah 43:2 in their minds, which had been written earlier. It says:

*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,  
Nor will the flame burn you" (Isaiah 43:2).*

It is a tremendous teaching that we have on the faithfulness of God.

*"Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).*

"Paul, you just keep right on speaking. Do not be afraid, because I am with you." No doubt Paul needed to hear that at this point in his ministry.

Then in this night vision, God says something else to him:

*"for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you—"  
(Acts 18:10).*

When you go through the Book of Acts and there is a bounty on Paul's life. There are many times he had to change course and all of these kinds of things because people were trying to kill him. Here, God makes him a promise: "You are in Corinth here doing your ministry, and you do not need to worry about that. No one's going to touch you. No one's going to harm you." As the saying goes, "The servant of God is essentially immortal." I am not sure who came up with this saying, but it is a good one. The servant of God, his life or her life is immortal until his work on earth is done. As long as God has something for you to do, He protects you.

Billy Graham, in his book on angels, which is a tremendous book on angels, telling you everything you want to know about angels. In that book, he talks about some missionaries. You may have heard the story, and I wish I had brought it in to read to you. I have to paraphrase. The people that these missionaries were trying to reach in this foreign country were going to kill them that night. Over the course of time, those people that were going to kill these missionaries were reached by the missionaries.

When this people group came to know Christ, they asked the missionaries this question: "When you first got here, one night we were going to come in and we were going to murder all of you. There was this army that was surrounding your camp. Who were those people?" The missionaries were shocked. "We do not have an army with us. What are you talking about?"

Billy Graham uses that as an example in his book on angels of a protective, angelic army which was protecting these missionaries. God was not going to allow them to be killed until they had finished their assignment, which was to reach this people group.

Another really good example of this is over in 2 Kings. You probably have heard this one too. Sometimes we do not need to hear something new, we just need to be reminded of what God has already promised. Amen.

*"Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots were circling the city. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?'" (2 Kings 6:15).*

In other words, we are being surrounded by the enemy. What are we going to do? This is Elisha speaking to the servant.

*"So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them'" (2 Kings 6:16).*

This army is encircling God's people, and they look like they are outnumbered. They go to the man of God, Elisha. "What are we going to do?" Elisha says to the servant, "You do not need to worry. Those that are with us are more than those that are with them." It probably mystified the servant. "What are you talking about?"

*"Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).*

So there was an army of an invisible caliber/quality protecting God's people from the physical army that they could see. These are all tremendous verses on how you do not need to be afraid if you are doing what God wants you to do. Satan would like nothing better than to neutralize us through fear, because when we are afraid we really cannot

be that effective for the Lord. I have been told that the Bible says, "Do not fear" 365 times. Jesus said it over and over again: "Fear not. Do not be afraid."

If that number 365 is right (and I have heard people challenge the numbers, I have not added them all up myself), but if that number is right, then every day of the year God is telling us not to be fearful. "Paul, do not be afraid. You just keep right on preaching because I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you" (Acts 18:10).

A great verse on this is Isaiah 54:17, which says:

*"No weapon that is formed against you will prosper;  
And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn" (Isaiah 54:17).*

I used to say that is just for Israel, it is not for us. But then I kept reading:

*"This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord,  
And their vindication is from Me," declares the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17).*

That is just amazing! People all the time form weapons against you. Not to get political, but look at our president. How many weapons that we know of have been formed against him to take his life? How many weapons can be formed against a person to gossip against them, to tear them down, to cause dissension? Innumerable weapons. You have this promise in the Word of God that as these weapons against you are formed, no weapon will prosper unless God allows it.

If all of that is true, what is there to be afraid of? The reason we are afraid is we really do not believe what it says. Sometimes we are not even aware of what it says, but some of us are aware of it and forget it or we do not believe it. So Paul needed that little reminder.

Then this vision goes on and it says:

*"for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10).*

I am not totally sure what that means: *"I have many people in this city."* Does that mean, "I have many people to help you"? That is a possible interpretation. It could mean, "I have many people to protect you." That is a possible interpretation. Or maybe it means this: "I have many people that you need to reach. There are people in this city I need you to reach. Because you are functioning according to My divine plan, I am going to protect you so these people can be reached with your ministry."

Maybe that is what it means because God wants people to be reached.

*"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).*

"I have to keep you alive, Paul, because I need these people to be reached. They have not heard the good news yet"

We know that in the age of the church there is a fullness of the Gentiles that has to come in. I do not know what the number is because the Bible does not say, but it looks to me like in this age there are certain groups, certain people, certain numbers that are supposed to be reached, and God will not rapture the church to heaven until the bride has been made complete in that sense.

Paul would later write in Romans 11:25:

*"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in" (Romans 11:25).*

Israel is hardened, but it is partial. It is a partial hardening that has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

*"and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,  
'The Deliverer will come from Zion,  
He will remove ungodliness from Jacob'" (Romans 11:26).*

God has Israel under a national temporary hardening. It is not that individual Jews do not get saved, because they do, but the nation as a whole is in a state of unbelief. It is not permanent because of this wonderful word here "partial." The hardening that Israel is currently experiencing is of a partial variety.

A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. What happens when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in? God takes the church to heaven through the Rapture, and He puts His hand right back on Israel. All Israel will be saved, and her partial hardening ends. But that cannot happen until, in this age, the complete number of the bride of Christ from the Gentiles has been reached with the gospel message.

That is a different way of looking at evangelism. Why is evangelism such a struggle? Because Satan knows that the more you evangelize, the more the potential for the fullness is met. When that is met, God will start to work with Israel again in the events of the Tribulation Period, which means the devil's days just got shorter. He tries to keep everything in hiatus as long as he can by preventing the church from reaching the Gentiles, because he does not want the whole eschatological time frame to be sped up.

Attacks on personal evangelism are spiritual in nature. They come from the fallen angelic realm. That is why, when the Holy Spirit prompts you to share your faith with somebody, every conceivable doubt comes into your mind just like that. At some point, you have to ask yourself, "Why is that?" It is spiritual in nature. It is part of the angelic conflict. "Paul, you just go right on preaching, because I have many people in this city that need to be reached." What a word he got from the Lord there in Acts 18:9-10.

What does Paul do? We see in Acts 18:11 that he keeps on ministering:

*"And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11).*

What does that mean that he settled amongst them for a year and six months? That means he was there with them for a year and six months. Every time you see "year" or "years" with a number attached to it in the Bible in the New Testament, it is always literal. That is how you know that the 1,000 years (the Millennial Kingdom) mentioned in Revelation 20 is literal also. It is an ironclad rule: a number plus "year" or "years" is always literal.

That is why God created the world in six days. That is literal, too. It is the same formula in the Old Testament. It is just that it is Hebrew "yom" plus a numerical. In this case it is called a numerical ordinal modifier. Everywhere it is used it is always a literal time period and you cannot read into it some vast age as people try to do.

Paul was there ministering for one year and six months. Look at the second part of Acts 18:11. What was he doing? This is his priority. It says: *"teaching the word of God among them."* One of the things that Paul the Apostle is all about is teaching the Bible, teaching the Word of God. What was he teaching? Hebrew Bible, and probably whatever New Testament books had come into existence at that point, not a lot.

That is the focus of the life of the church. It is teaching the Word of God. People go to church for all kinds of reasons. They go to church for social contacts. They go to church for encouragement. They go to church for relationships. None of those things are really wrong in and of themselves, but the goal is to keep the main thing the main thing. What is the main thing? It is biblical instruction. If you are in a church that does not do that, it really is not a church. It is more like the Rotary Club or a TED talk and a light show. But it is not church because church is about the Bible.

In Acts 2:42 is the first church meeting:

*"They were continually [not just when it was convenient] devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).*

The first thing on the list is the Word of God, because the Word of God teaches you how to do everything else on the list. How do you know how to pray? How do you know how to do communion? It is the Word of God that helps you with that.

In 1 Timothy 4:13, Paul, writing to Timothy, says:

*"Until I come, give attention to public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching" (1 Timothy 4:13).*

"Timothy, that is what you are to focus on in my absence."

"All Scripture is inspired by God—"

God-breathed. That is a "hapax legomena." It means "once spoken word." It is a word used only here ("theopneustos" [θεόπνευστος]). It literally is "Theo-breathed" or "God-breathed." What is the Scripture in its original manuscripts? It is breathed by the very saliva of God.

*"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

The Scripture ("graphē" [γραφή]) equips me for every good work. Every good work that God wants to do in and through my life and your life, you can be prepared for through the perpetual reading and intake of the Word of God. Dan Wallace writes in his study of 2 Timothy, where Paul is teaching Timothy how to be a pastor:

"By my count, there are twenty-seven explicit commands given in the body of this letter. In 27 words Paul tells pastors what to focus on. You have to be blind to miss the thrust of Paul's instructions here, because eighteen of those commands—fully two-thirds—have to do with the ministry of the Word."<sup>1</sup>

"But Pastor, we do other things here. We do plays. We do VBS. We do all kinds of other things. We have a men's group. We have this, and we have that." That is all good, praise God. But those are what we would call ancillary ministries. They are not the main thing. They are important. A women's luncheon, times of prayer, a missions moment are all wonderful ministries, but they are ancillary. In other words, you start with the Word and these other things develop in and around the Word.

It seems kind of basic, but I cannot tell you how many churches are neglecting this. You go to a church today and it is like the old Wendy's commercial: Where is the beef? You

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Wallace, "Crisis of the Word: A Message to Pastors or Would-be Pastors," *Conservative Theological Journal* 1, no. 2 (August 1997): 108.

have a whole show—song and dance and lights. Someone comes up and does an emotional talk and they have all these support groups and this and that. But where is the Word of God? Where is the sermon? Where is the exposition of the truth of God's Word?

At some point the tail started wagging the dog in evangelicalism. These other things started to supplant the Word of God. I am not against all those other things, either. I just think there is an orbit in God. God has an orbit. He starts everything with His Word. Isn't that how everything started in the universe? "Then God said." Everything else in the universe—light, food, procreation—all came into existence because of the Word of God.

That, by the way, is why deacons were raised up. Everybody came to the apostles, who were functioning as elders at the church at Jerusalem, the first church, and tried to get them involved in a service project. The apostles said, "If we do that, we are going to lose our priorities." So they raised up deacons to fulfill the service projects while the apostles, functioning as elders, devoted themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). The focus of the first elders that we had was prayer and the Word.

What about all these other things that are well-intentioned? We can raise up a different office for that. As we raise up a different office for that, you are not sidetracked into something that is going to dissipate your energy.

There is Paul in Corinth, right after being encouraged, and he spends another one year and six months there. He is teaching the Word of God over and over again. Something big happens here (Acts 18:12-17). He gets a hearing before a guy named Gallio. This is massive in terms of the growth of the church, as I will try to show you.

We have opposition (Acts 18:12-13); Gallio's decision (Acts 18:14-15); and the judgment's results (Acts 18:16-17). Why was Paul hauled in before this guy Gallio? We have some circumstances there:

"But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat" (Acts 18:12).

These unbelieving Jews that kicked Paul out of the synagogue were the culprits here. They did not like Paul. They did not like his success amongst the Gentiles. They started a whispering campaign against him, working behind the scenes, and they brought him before the judgment seat.

Do you see the word "judgment seat" there in Acts 18:12? That is a translation of the Greek word "bēma" (βῆμα). Does that sound familiar? Look at Acts 18:16:

*"And he drove them away from the judgment seat" (Acts 18:16).*

It is a translation of the Greek word "bēma" (βῆμα).

Look at Acts 18:17:

*"And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat" (Acts 18:17).*

That is a translation of the Greek word "bēma" (βῆμα). So three times there you will see the word in Greek "bēma" (βῆμα). It is from this word that we get our teaching of the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ. It is from Corinth, in which was an actual judgment seat. It was a place kind of like a city council, where magistrates handled disputes and things like that, like a court.

I have actually had the privilege of traveling to Corinth. I think I have been there three times. This was taken in 2014, somewhere in there. I am a little bit more lean and mean there than I am today, I guess. But there I am in front of the actual place that Paul was referencing, and that has been preserved archeologically in Corinth. You kind of go up to the top and there is a rock and so forth set up. There is a Greek translation from 2 Corinthians 4:17:

*"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17).*

You go to the top and someone inscribed that in Greek into the rock. It is a preservation of this judgment seat. Paul uses that place of geography to expound upon the judgment seat of Christ, where he tells the Corinthians, "Be careful how you are building, because you are going to stand before the Lord at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ, and you want to be using the right materials. The materials will be revealed by fire to ascertain their quality."

When this judgment is finished you are not put through a fire, but your works as a Christian are put through a fire. What remains after the fire finishes burning is like gold, silver, and costly stones, and not like wood, hay, and stubble. Wood, hay, and stubble are combustible; gold, silver, and costly stones are noncombustible. The only thing a fire can do is purify them; it cannot destroy them. But whatever remains after the fire finishes burning is some kind of reward that you will receive above and beyond salvation.

Paul unfolds this doctrine of future rewards to the most carnal church of the first century that we have a record of: the Corinthians. These are people that needed to hear this message. They were saved, but they were not submitted to Christ's lordship at all. Paul says, "Consider your ways carefully, because you want to be fully rewarded at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ."

When he uses the expression Bema Seat Judgment of Christ, he is using a place of prominence that they all knew about. It is where Gallio made rulings. It is interesting how the Bible does not just talk about things that are nebulous. It uses real-world things

that they would understand as a platform to reveal a future reality of the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ.

This is where it comes from. Paul would later write to the Corinthians and he would say:

*"According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).*

These people are saved, but be careful how you are living your Christian life. That is what he is saying. The issue is not salvation; the issue is being fully rewarded.

*"Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If anyone's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward" (1 Corinthians 3:12-14).*

The Calvinists do not know what to do with this verse because they think all Christians persevere, and Acts 18:15 says that they do not. I was arguing with a five-point Calvinist, and I showed him this verse. It was as if he had never seen it before. It is as if it was the invisible verse in his Bible. I said, "Not all Christians persevere." He said, "Yes, they do." I said, "No, they do not." "Yes, they do." "No, they do not." "All right, look at this verse here." He just stared at it.

*"If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15).*

You are in heaven, but you can still smell the smoke on your garments. This is the warning that Paul has given to this Corinthian church and their carnality.

I say, "Lord, I do not want to be that way. I want to get there, and getting there is enough, believe me. I know I am going to get there because I have the assurance of my salvation. But I do not want to be like this guy that suffers loss because of what you could have done through my life, and yet I have fought you the whole time as a Christian."

Later, Paul will say in the same book:

*"Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will bring to light the things hidden in darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts..." (1 Corinthians 4:5).*

That scares me, because I know that my heart is deceitfully wicked, who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9). I can do the right thing with the wrong motive. Only God knows the motive of my heart. That is going to be revealed. That is part of the rewarding or non rewarding process. It is not part of the heaven or hell issue that is fixed the moment we trust in Christ (John 5:24).

*"and then each man's praise will come to him from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5).*

He says in the second book to this same crowd, the Corinthians (and you cannot opt out of this one, you cannot get a doctor's excuse):

*"For we must all appear before the judgment seat ("bēma" [βῆμα]) of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10).*

That is the same word found in Acts 18:12, 16, and 17. As he is writing to them, they are saying, "We know all about that place. That is where Gallio sits.

*"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).*

He writes to the same crowd in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, saying:

*"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).*

Some of your English translations say "disqualified from the prize" and people think the prize is salvation. Is the prize salvation? If the prize is salvation, then he contradicted everything he ever taught, because he always said that salvation is by grace. The prize is not salvation. The prize is some sort of additional reward, just like an Olympian, above and beyond salvation. It is a wreath that does not perish.

When I was in high school, we had a tournament in my senior year at Laguna Beach. I made the all-tournament team and at that time (1984, I think this was), that was the most important thing in the world to me. I still have the trophy. When you look at the trophy, you cannot even tell it is me. It is so faded. The plaque is faded, and the wood is faded. It is like, "Why am I keeping this stupid piece of wood around?" At the time it was the biggest deal, but in retrospect, here it is 2026, and it is like, who cares? Why was I

so emotionally invested into something that is this dumb—a piece of wood that is fading and you do not even know it is me there?

We are so excited about promotions or titles, and Paul says they are perishing—they are fading. Why don't you throw yourself into something that is going to last? That is what the Bema Seat Judgment is about.

At the Bema Seat Judgment there are going to be five crowns given or not given.

| Scripture's Five Crowns<br>(Rev 4:10; 3:11; 2 John 8) |               |                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| SCRIPTURE                                             | CROWN         | PURPOSE                        |
| 1 Cor. 9:24-27                                        | Incorruptible | Gaining mastery over the flesh |
| 1 Thess. 2:19-20                                      | Rejoicing     | Soul winning                   |
| Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10                                  | Life          | Enduring trials                |
| 1 Pet. 5:2-4                                          | Glory         | Shepherding God's people       |
| 2 Tim. 4:8                                            | Righteousness | Longing for His appearing      |

There is the incorruptible crown for gaining mastery over the flesh (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). This is not for a believer who is sinless, but one who is sinning less under God's power. I am certainly not the man I should be, but thank God I am not the man I used to be. Amen. There is the crown of rejoicing given to the soul-winner (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). I like this one: the crown of life for the believer that endures trials and does not get bitter through trials, but gets better (James 1:12).

There is the crown of glory for the believer that shepherds God's people (1 Peter 5:24). I used to think that was just for the pastors, but I do not think so anymore. Any type of shepherding you do—your children, Sunday school, discipling, counseling somebody—God takes a note of that and wants to reward you for it. Then there is the crown of righteousness for longing for His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). That is for the believer that is not so comfortable in this world that they are not really looking forward to the Second Coming anymore.

A lot of young people do not really talk a lot about the Second Coming. You talk to young people and they say, "I hope Jesus does not come back this year, this month, this decade, or in the next five years." I say, "Why not?" "Because I want to get married. I want to have children." Then about six months into marriage and they say, "What was that you were talking about the Second Coming?" Because marriage is not easy.

There are four judgments in the Bible.

| SCRIPTURE'S FOUR JUDGMENTS |                                |                              |                          |                                  |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| NAME                       | SHEEP AND GOAT                 | JUDGMENT OF THE JEWS         | BEMA SEAT                | GREAT WHITE THRONE               |
| SCRIPTURE                  | Matt 25:31-46                  | Ezek 20:33-44                | 1 Cor 3:10-15            | Rev 20:11-15                     |
| PLACE                      | Earth, Jerusalem               | Earth, wilderness            | Heaven                   | Earth                            |
| AUDIENCE                   | Gentile Tribulation survivors  | Jewish Tribulation survivors | Church Age believers     | All unsaved                      |
| WHEN                       | After Tribulation              | After Tribulation            | After rapture            | After Millennium                 |
| PURPOSE                    | Saved Gentiles enter kingdom   | Saved Jews enter kingdom     | Reward believers         | Degree of punishment in hell     |
| EVALUATION                 | Treatment of Christ's brethren | Passing under shepherd's rod | Works taken through fire | Not in the book; judged by books |

There are the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) and the Judgment of the Jews (Ezekiel 20:33-44). Those are for Tribulation survivors. There is the Great White Throne Judgment, which is for unsaved people only (Revelation 20:11-15). Then there is that one there in purple: the Bema Seat Judgment, which Paul is talking about (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). That happens in heaven following the Rapture of the church.

You might be saying, "Where did Paul get this whole concept of the Bema Seat Judgment? Why is he talking so aggressively to the Corinthians about it?" Your answer is right here in Acts 18. It is the place where Gallio sat and made official judgments for the city. Paul, using that as kind of a beachhead, says, "There is something similar coming in your future, the Bema Seat." They would have all known what he was referencing.

Gallio must be a fictional character, right? No he is not. His existence is testified inside the Bible and outside the Bible. The Bible does this all of the time. We will pick it up there right in the middle of Acts 18:12 next time.