

THE BOOK OF ACTS

“On Mission: The Providence of God and the Purpose of Grace”

(Acts 18:12-28)

The Book of Acts must have a theological bearing on how we are to conduct ourselves in life and on mission with God.

The Book of Acts must have a practical bearing on how we are to carry out the will of God and His mission.

The Book of Acts will also have a motivational bearing to encourage us as we obey God and gain strength for the mission.

“God Willing!”

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”(James 4:13-16)

We need to nurture this conviction, and as we do, these benefits will come:

Peace when things seem to be falling apart all around us;

Perseverance when disappointments tempt us to quit;

Humility when blessings and success abound;

Gratitude rather than grumbling as we recognize God’s wise ordering of history,

Optimism despite our own failures;

Spiritual maturity as we wrestle with our responsibility to respond in the face of providence; and

Encouragement through faith as we labor in the Great Commission

❖ **A United Attack: On A Life On a Mission** (Acts 18:12-17)

“But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, 13 saying, ‘This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.’ 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. 15 But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.’ 16 And he drove them from the tribunal. 17 And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.” (Acts 18:12-17)

- Why was Paul Attacked by the Jews? Persuading People to Worship God Contrary to the Law
- What was Paul’s Argument before the Judge? Paul’s Pause from Words Garnered Criticism of the Legalists
 - Silence of the Servant
 - Sosthenes of the Synagogue

❖ **An Uncomfortable Assignment: Normal Life in the Ministry**

Verse 18 tells us that even after this difficulty with the Jews, Paul stayed around for a while. It says, *“After this, Paul stayed many days longer ...”*

- After This: Faithful to the Assignment
- Acceptable Time: Furlough to Antioch

“Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him.” (v. 18)

❖ An Unusual Ask: Acquiring Favor for the Future

“And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. 21 But on taking leave of them he said, “I must, by all means, keep this feast that comes to Jerusalem: but I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus.” (Vs. 19-21)

- Uncompromising Freedom Exercised
 - A Nazarite Vow

A Nazarite vow was a willing vow that involved three elements.

- The one who made it was required to abstain entirely from any fruit of the vine.
- He was to keep away from any dead body. And,
- He was also to let his hair grow for the duration of the vow. When the time set for the vow was complete, the man was required to shave his hair. This was a visible token that his vow had run its course.

- A Willing Sacrifice

In this vow, the cut hair was burnt on the altar along with a sacrifice. John MacArthur notes,

“When he wanted to show his deep thanks for God’s marvelous encouragement during the difficult times in Corinth, he naturally thought of a typically Jewish way of doing so ... In Paul’s day, provision was made for those away from Jerusalem at the termination of their vow to shave their heads, as Paul did, then within thirty days present the hair at the Temple (cf. Josephus Wars, 2.15.1).”

- A Successful Journey

“And he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, to strengthen all the disciples. (Vers 19 -23

- Unique Follower in Ephesus

“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” (Acts 18:19-26)

- Scripturally Eloquent
- Synagogue Evangelism

Now, what can we learn here about God’s providence?

- First, in the providence of God, Apollos was incomplete in his understanding. But God had placed people in his path to help him.
- Second, God in His providence gives gifting and educational opportunities to some that He does not give to others.
- Third, God will always accomplish what He sets out to accomplish no matter what He has to do to achieve it.
- Fourth, great things can happen even when we are not around! Because God is sovereign, He builds His church even without an apostle Paul.

Conclusion:

Finally, we read of God's providence in Achaia.

"And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus." (Acts 18:27-28)