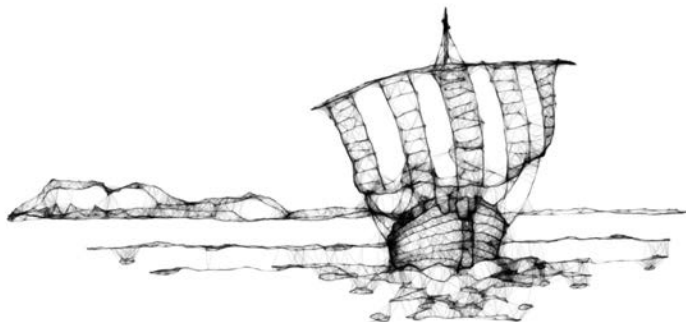


Paul's Third Trip to Share the Good News



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 18:24–28; Acts 19; Acts 20:7–12, 15–27; 2 Corinthians 4:8–14; Acts 21:1–15.

MEMORY VERSE: “I do not think of my life as worth much, but I do want to finish the work the Lord Jesus gave me to do. My work is to preach the Good News of God's loving-favor” (Acts 20:24, NLV).

LUKE does not announce to his readers that he is going to start a new story about Paul. Luke just starts telling us about Paul's third trip to share the Good News. The book of Acts says that Paul spends some time in Antioch. Then Luke tells us that Paul is going on another trip. Paul “traveled all over Galatia and Phrygia. He gave strength to all the believers there” (Acts 18:23, NlrV). So, the first 1,500 miles Paul travels are explained in only one verse!

Why did Luke not say much about Paul's trip? Because the next city he traveled to, Ephesus, was more important than what happened on the way to that city. Paul traveled to many places. But he spent the most time in Ephesus. His trip to Ephesus was a big success. “Every Jew and Greek in Asia heard the Word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10, ICB). During this same time, one of Paul's coworkers may have started the churches in Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea.

This trip is Paul's last, or the last one in Acts, that Luke tells us about. Paul starts this trip as a free man. Later, Luke tells us about one more trip Paul makes. But during that trip, Paul travels to Rome as a prisoner.



Paul “traveled all over Galatia and Phrygia. He gave strength to all the believers there” (Acts 18:23, NlrV).

PAUL'S TRIP TO EPHESUS: PART 1 (Acts 19:1–7)

Acts 18:24–28 tells us that Paul traveled to Ephesus. On his way there, a Jewish believer named Apollos came to that city too. Apollos was a man who was very good with words. He knew the Bible well too. We can see that Apollos was a follower of Jesus from the way that Luke writes about Apollos. Luke says: “He [Apollos] had been taught about the Lord and was always excited to talk to people about Jesus. What he taught was right” (Acts 18:25, ERV). But Apollos knew only about the baptism that John talked about. Apollos learned from John the Baptist himself. So, Apollos learned about Jesus during the time that Jesus was on earth. But then Apollos must have moved away from Jerusalem before God poured His Holy Spirit on the first believers.

That helps explain why Aquila and Priscilla needed to teach Apollos more about Jesus. Apollos knew how to use the Hebrew Bible to show people that Jesus was the Savior that God promised to send to His people. But at the same time, Apollos needed to learn the most up-to-date information and news about Jesus' work. Aquila and Priscilla and the other believers in Ephesus gave Apollos a special letter. This letter was written to the churches in Achaia (Acts 18:27), telling them to accept Apollos and the work he was sent to do. This letter allowed Apollos to work with much success in Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:4–6; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 16:12).



The believers in Ephesus gave Apollos a special letter. This letter was written to the churches in Achaia (Acts 18:27), telling them to accept Apollos and the work he was sent to do.

Read Acts 19:1–7. As these verses show us, what happens to Paul when he arrives in Ephesus?

“Paul arrived in Ephesus. There he met 12 men who had followed John the Baptist. These men also learned something about the work of Jesus, the same as Apollos had. These 12 men were not as wise or as skilled as Apollos. But they had the same faith in Jesus that Apollos had. They also had the same desire to tell people about Jesus.” —Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 282, adapted.

The 12 men are baptized. God gives these 12 men the Holy Spirit. Then they begin to speak different languages. That fact shows us that they are Christian workers, the same as Apollos was. God gives them the gift of speaking in different languages so they can explain the Good News to everyone anywhere they go.

PAUL'S TRIP TO EPHESUS: PART 2 (Acts 19:23–41)

In Ephesus, Paul did the same thing he almost always did when he arrived in a city. First, he preached in the synagogue. A synagogue is a Jewish “church” or place of worship. But many Jews quickly turned against Paul’s message. So, Paul and the new believers moved to a place where a man named Tyrannus owned a school. Paul preached there every day for two years (Acts 19:8–10). All Ephesus heard the Good News about Jesus because of Paul’s work there (Acts 19:10, 26).

In Acts 19:11–20, Luke adds a few more stories about miracles. These miracles show how God’s power wins against magic. Ephesus was a city where magic was everywhere. God used Paul to do many healing miracles. One example may seem strange to us: people took aprons and handkerchiefs that touched Paul’s skin or that Paul touched. Then these people gave the pieces of cloth to sick persons. It seems these pieces of cloth were able to heal people (Acts 19:12)! This miracle helps us remember how Jesus healed the woman who bled for 12 years (Luke 8:44). God used very strange and special miracles to show the Ephesians that His power was stronger than any magic (Acts 19:11). These examples show us how God meets the needs of people where they are.

Then Paul decided to go to Jerusalem after he finished working in Ephesus (Acts 19:21). Luke does not say why. But we know from Paul’s own writing that he wanted to bring the money he collected for the poor to the Jerusalem church (Romans 15:25–27; 1 Corinthians 16:1–3). There was a food shortage during the time Claudius ruled in Rome. Many people were hungry. That hard time made the believers in Jerusalem very poor. Plus, many believers gave the things they owned to people who were poor. So, Paul wanted to help them (Galatians 2:10). Paul wanted his gift to build their trust in him as a leader and to bring peace to God’s church.

Read Acts 19:23–41. In these verses, what is the real reason for the attacks against Paul that start in Ephesus at the end of his stay there?

Demetrius’s fight with Paul was about worshiping false gods. But the real reason for Demetrius’s anger was money. Do you see how Demetrius behaved as if he cared about religion? But all Demetrius wanted was to get more money.



People took aprons and handkerchiefs that touched Paul’s skin or that Paul touched. Then these people gave the pieces of cloth to sick persons. It seems these pieces of cloth were able to heal people (Acts 19:12)! Maybe God did very strange and special miracles for the Ephesians because of their strong belief in magic (Acts 19:11). These examples show us how God meets the needs of people where they are.

PAUL VISITS TROAS (Acts 20:7–12)

Paul decided to leave the city of Ephesus after the trouble with Demetrius (Acts 19:23–41). So, Paul went to Macedonia and Achaia first before going to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1–3). Members from some of the non-Jewish churches went with him on this trip to Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 20:4).

Read Acts 20:7–12. Many people often use these verses to prove that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. What is wrong with this thinking?

At the end of Paul’s visit to Troas, he went to a church meeting “on the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7, NLV). Everyone gathered “to eat the Lord’s Supper” (Acts 20:7, NLV). So, some Bible thinkers say that this verse proves that in Paul’s time the non-Jewish churches had already started to worship on Sunday instead of Sabbath.

But before we say that this idea is true, we have to make sure we understand the exact day that the meeting happened. We also need to know what the meeting was about. So, let us look more closely at the story. The verses say that lights were used for the meeting (Acts 20:8). The verses also tell us that Paul’s sermon lasted until midnight (Acts 20:7), and then it went on until the sun came up (Acts 20:11). The verses also tell us that Eutychus fell into a deep sleep during the meeting (Acts 20:9). All these things show us that the meeting happened at night.

But the next question we need to ask is: Did the meeting happen before Sunday or the night after Sunday? The answer depends on how Luke counts time. The Jews said a day started at one sundown and ended at the next sundown. But the Romans did not count time in the same way as the Jews. The Romans said a day started on midnight and ended the next midnight. So, if we count time using the Jewish rule for counting, then the meeting happened on Saturday night. But if we use the Roman rule for counting, then the meeting happened Sunday night. Either way, Acts 20:7–12 shows us that the meeting was a special one because Paul was leaving the following morning. Everyone got together to hear what Paul had to say. So, it is hard to see how anyone could use this story to say that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday.

How does the Bible teaching about the Sabbath help make our faith stronger?



Eutychus fell into a deep sleep during Paul’s sermon. This fact tells us that Paul’s meeting happened at night.

PAUL'S TRIP TO MILETUS (Acts 20:15–27)

Paul made one more stop on his way to Jerusalem. He went to Miletus. There he preached a goodbye sermon to the Ephesian church leaders.

Read Acts 20:15–27. What does Paul talk about at the beginning of his sermon?

Paul believes he will never come back again to Asia. He already has plans for a new trip. He plans to go to Rome and Spain (Romans 15:22–29). So, Paul starts his sermon by talking about the years he stayed in Ephesus. Paul tells the church leaders about what happened when he lived with the Ephesians. But he also talks about what he worries may happen to him in Jerusalem in the future.

Paul had a good reason to be afraid. The Jerusalem church felt a little angry at Paul. That was because of Paul's fight against Christians in the past. The church also worried about Paul's message. Paul preached the Good News that Jesus saves us only by faith. So, many Jewish leaders felt Paul was not loyal to Jewish life and the Jewish faith (Acts 23:1, 2). By the middle of the first century (years 1–100), the people of Judea were tired of the Roman government. This feeling was found in all parts of Jewish life. Maybe the church felt this way too. So, it is easy to see that Paul's work with the non-Jews did not make him very popular with the Jews (Acts 21:27–36).

Paul had other things to worry about too. In Acts 20:28–31, Paul talked about what church leaders in Ephesus should do about false teachers. Paul said false teachers were the same as wolves who tried to lead the flock the wrong way and to destroy them. The danger of false teachers was real even in Paul's day. Long before Paul's time, Solomon said: "There is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9, NLV). A history about the Christian church shows that false teachers hurt the church very much. The problem caused by false teachers will continue in the church until the end of time (2 Timothy 4:3).

Yes, Paul had many things to make him worry. But he never stopped believing in God.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8–14. What is Paul saying in these verses that we need to remember and follow when troubles come? Where did Paul put his hope?



Paul said false teachers were the same as wolves who tried to lead the flock the wrong way and cause them to sin.

PAUL VISITS TYRE AND CAESAREA (Acts 21:10–14)

Luke tells us about what happens to Paul on his way to Jerusalem. After Paul goes to Miletus, he spends a week in the city of Tyre in Phoenicia (Acts 21:1–6). But while Paul is there, the Holy Spirit leads believers in Tyre to warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem. The church’s warning does not go against God’s command to Paul to go to Jerusalem. How do we know? We know by looking at the Greek wording found in Acts 19:21 for “made plans to go” (ERV). The Greek wording really means: “the Holy Spirit led Paul to make plans.” What the words in Acts 21:4 tells us is that Paul does not make this decision by himself. Maybe the Holy Spirit shows the Christians in Tyre the dangers that Paul will experience. So, these Christians warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem right away. Paul himself does not know what will happen to him when he arrives in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22, 23). We see from Paul’s experience that God does not always make everything clear to us all at one time.

Read Acts 21:10–14. In these verses, a man named Agabus gives Paul a special warning in Caesarea. How does Agabus’s warning show Paul the trouble that waits for him in Jerusalem?



Agabus acts out his message to show that Paul will be arrested when he arrives in Jerusalem.

Agabus was a prophet. A prophet is a special messenger that God sends to His people. We already met Agabus earlier in Acts 11:27–30. In Acts 11, Agabus warns the church about the food shortage. In Acts 21, Agabus does what many Old Testament prophets did. He acts out his message to show that Paul will be arrested when he arrives in Jerusalem. Then Paul’s enemies will give him to the Romans.

The Christians who are with Paul take Agabus’s message as a warning. They tell Paul to not go to Jerusalem. Paul’s heart is touched by their worry for him. But he makes up his mind to finish his work, even if he dies. For Paul, the Good News and peace in the church are more important than his own safety.

“Paul never came near Jerusalem before with his heart so sad as now. He knows that he will find few friends and many enemies. He nears the city that had turned away from Jesus and killed the Son of God. God was very angry with the city.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, pages 397, 398, adapted.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “The Jews were very angry at the Christians who preached the Good News. The Christians had a lot of success. Their new teaching helped Jews let go of the false idea that they must follow rules and laws to be saved. This teaching also said that non-Jews were the same as the Jews. Both Jews and non-Jews were the children of Abraham. Paul himself said: ‘There is no difference in men in this new life. Greeks and Jews are the same. The man who has gone through [experienced] the religious act of becoming a Jew and the one who has not are the same’ [Colossians 3:11, NLV]. The Jews felt that the words Paul spoke were a crime against God. So, they decided to stop Paul forever.”—*The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 390, adapted.

“Paul could not trust in his own brothers in the faith to support him and have mercy on him. The Jews who did not believe in Jesus followed Paul closely. They were quick to spread ugly lies about Paul in Jerusalem. They wrote ugly letters about Paul and his work. Some leaders in the Christian church read these letters and believed them. These leaders did nothing to stop these lies or to support Paul.”—Page 398, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Paul met some Christians in Ephesus who were followers of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1–7). Some Adventists use these verses to say that Christians from other churches need to become baptized again when they join the Adventist Church. Is that idea correct? If yes, why? Did you see that Apollos was not baptized again? What does that also teach us?
- ② Many Jews who did not believe in Jesus turned against Paul. Many Jews who believed in Jesus also turned against Paul. They accused Paul of changing God’s law. Many people who worshiped false gods hated the message that Paul preached. But Paul continued to do the work God gave him anyway. What can we learn from Paul’s story about not giving up?
- ③ Think about some of the verses and ideas that people use to say that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. How do we prove that these ideas are false? How do we also show that keeping the Sabbath is not about trying to be saved by obeying the law?



Some leaders in the Christian church read the letters that told lies about Paul and believed them.