



North Christian Church

www.nccdighton.org

Self-Guided Study

Topic

The Book of Acts – Chapters 19-21

Background

- See previous Self-Guided Study outlines for additional details
- Paul's "Third Missionary Journey": AD 53-57 (Acts 18:23-21:17) (see available diagrams)

Critical Thinking Questions (pre-reading)

- Why were missionaries typically sent out in twos, at least, and sometimes even more? (cp Ecc 4:12)
- How critical was the presence of encouragement in the early church? Who needed to be encouraged, and how? Was playing "second fiddle" a less honorable post?
- Who were consistently the main antagonists to the spreading of the Gospel? (cp Acts 14:2, 16:3, 17:5,13)
- How involved was money, and the loss of it, in creating attacks against Paul and his companions?
- How significant is it that Paul's third missionary journey took 2500+ miles (1190 by sea, 1325 by land), and 4+ years to complete? Can we sometimes forget about such context? If so, what are the negative repercussions?
- How did Paul choose his companions? How careful was he to not put stumbling blocks before the Jews?
- How did Paul decide where to travel, and where not? What/Who did God use to guide him, and even shut him down?
- How strong might the convictions of those leading the early church have been? How boldly did they preach? What was their consistent point of focus in debates?

Reading Outline

- Read chapters 19-21 in the Book of Acts
- Read more deliberately, but never stalling, than you would if you were reading the whole book for big-picture
- Don't lose sight of the overall purpose of the book, the "big-picture" themes, and any sweeping concepts
- Have FUN while reading and do not get frustrated...EVER!
- ALWAYS keep the Gospel reality at the forefront of your mind (eg: remember God's ultimate purpose for authoring the Bible – to reveal His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ)

Post-Reading Questions/Conclusions

- 18:23 - Paul once again "regroups" at Antioch, after his second missionary journey is complete. After some time there, he then heads out again to strengthen the churches. See the map of Paul's third missionary journey in your Bible to gain some perspective.
- 19:1-3 - Paul arrives at Ephesus a year or more later, even after Apollos was there previously. Some believers were still under John's baptism, which Apollos taught, and apparently wasn't able to correct for all the believers there (Act 18:24-26). What lessons can we learn from this series of events?
- 19:8-10 - Paul follows the same pattern by first going to the synagogue, directly to the Jews, and upon their rejection goes to the Gentiles in the hall of Tyrannus. The Jews could only "take" him for 3 months, then maligned him and the Way. The Gentiles listened daily to his teaching for 2 years. What does this show us, if anything??
- Paul previously planted the church in Ephesus, and now uses it as a hub to spread the Gospel from. How can we use this missionary strategy of Paul's to spread the Gospel in OUR lives/ministries? (we've all been given our own pulpits, remember)
- 19:11-16 - The Lord continues to validate this new message to the Jews, so as Paul represents Him, he's given power to perform miracles. Some Jews try to drive out demons, thinking they can copy Paul, but without being granted that power from the Lord Himself. What do the results teach us? Are heart issues involved here?
- 19:17-20 - See what the proper fear of the Lord produces! The people properly now REVERED the name of the Lord Jesus, so much that even believers were now being honest about their sins and sorcery, and willingly burned very valuable items. This is how

their hearts should have been to begin with, but it took the public shaming and discipline of the sons of Sceva to wake people up. What lessons can we take from this?

- Is how we view our money and valuables a sign of our faith, or where our heart is? If yes, how so? And how might this be a witness for the Lord (vs.20)?
- 19:23-27 - How does Demetrius use religion to sway people and save his business? Does that go on today?
- How might we avoid falling into such pitfalls ourselves?? Have you ever used God's Name to gain more business? Is that appropriate/good motivation?
- 19:28-29 - How do people use religion to spike people's emotions and cause irrational actions? Satan uses religion to control mobs; how can we be aware of that tactic?
- Is this something we have to deal with in our own spiritual walks? How about in other countries, or in missionary work?
- 19:32-34 - How irrational does religion make people?! What can we do as believers if caught in that type of situation?
- 19:35-41 - Does this passage make you appreciate good leadership in authority positions? Maybe this is one reason the Word tells us to pray for those in authority.
- 20:4 - Paul was accompanied by believers from all different places. Was this his "harvest" from his first missions? How can we use this as motivation in our own ministries/pulpits we've been assigned?
- 20:7 - The first day of the week is thought to be Sunday, and 'breaking bread' is thought to be a reference to the Lord's Supper. Do we have the attitude of the early church, who considered it a privilege to gather together for communion? How do we avoid becoming familiar with these things in our souls?
- 20:9 - Can anyone relate to Eutychus here? :) What's the grace perspective on this young man, that we should have towards him, and ourselves?
- 20:11 - Paul spoke to the people all night, 'til daylight! What's our attitude when our Pastor runs long in a message? How can we avoid setting up mental blocks/expectations, and instead be flexible to the Spirit's leading for the day?

- 20:17 - Paul calls the elders of Ephesus down to meet him (revisit the map for perspective). Paul then gives these leaders (a Pastors conference?) a lengthy message of truth and encouragement.
- 20:18-20 - Is Paul boasting here? Or is there a proper time to remind fellow believers of the evidence of your heart (humility in your life)?
- 20:21 - What do you think of this verse as a summary statement of how to preach the Gospel properly?
- How has your personal Gospel explanation changed?
- 20:24 - Do you consider your life worth nothing to you?
- What is your overall aim with your life? Does your big picture agree with Paul's?
- Notice what Paul's big picture task is... sound like the Great Commission?
- 20:26-27 - Can we say we are innocent of anyone else's blood in our periphery, because we haven't hesitated to be honest with others about the whole will of God (the whole of the Gospel)?! (No one's perfect, and there is divine timing in our relationships, as a balance statement. Remember, Paul was leaving them for the last time, and was now taking an accounting of his work for them)
- 20:28-31 - As Paul faces imminent death in going to Jerusalem, how would you describe his main concern for the elders of Ephesus?
- Does this sound like the Lord before He ascended into heaven? (John 21:16-17)
- 20:32-35 - What does a heart of grace reveal itself as?
- What results from a changed heart, as we've been learning?
- 20:36-38 -What a farewell! How would you describe such a bond? Is this evidence of unity in Christ/being in the family of God?
- 21:4 - How do we reconcile the Spirit guiding the disciples to warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem with Paul's conviction by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (20:22-23)?
- 21:5 - This is the second time Paul knelt and prayed with the disciples before departing (20:36). What should/can we take from this?
- 21:8-9 - Philip had 4 unmarried daughters who prophesied. It was unusual for a woman to be unmarried in that day, never mind 4 of them in one family. Was this to secure

undistracted devotion to the Lord? Maybe Paul had these 4 women in mind when he wrote 1Co 7:32-35. (let this be encouragement to single people, if you can bear it, Mat 19:10-12)

- Is it just a coincidence that Philip, the father of these unmarried daughters, had one of his first evangelistic encounters with a eunuch?! (Act 8:27-39)
- 21:10-14 - Once again, the Spirit tells a prophet to warn Paul of coming suffering in Jerusalem, and yet Paul accepts it as part of his plan. Is anyone out of line here, or being disobedient to the Spirit? What does the scripture give us?
- Was this possibly a test for Paul?
- 21:20-24 - The disciples in Jerusalem, including James, suggested Paul take a vow to encourage the thousands of Jews who had believed in Christ. Was this a compromise, or was this being "all things to all men" (1Co 9:22)?
- Paul had taken a vow before, and had Timothy circumcised in the past. Yet scripture doesn't express disagreement with what he did. Were these obediences to the Law fine, so long as it didn't violate Christian truths? Was it needed because it was such a dramatic transitional period for the Jews?
- 21:27-29 - Did Jews from Asia follow him all the way back to Jerusalem? If not, they at least heard of this man Paul previously disturbing their lands/people.
- Do we see more false accusations here against Paul? Or are they at least based on exaggerations and/or assumptions?
- 21:30-32 - Once again, God uses Gentile unbelievers and competent leadership to save the lives of believers. Should we ever be surprised at the mysterious ways God works? (We can never have God and His ways figured out, He has ENDLESS solutions to our problems in this life)
- 21:35 - Once again, religion spurs on uncontrollable violence and mobs. What examples of this do we see in our world today? (don't forget the religion of atheism)
- Do you look forward to the means God might use to spare your life in such a situation in the future? :)
- 21:39 - If we are alert, we will have opportunities within the attacks. Paul used the protection of the Roman guards as a chance to speak to the very people trying to kill him.

Are we ready to show grace to our enemies when given the opportunity? ("Father forgive them, they know not what they do" Luk 23:34)