

Bible Study: Acts

(Part 8- Chapters 16-17)

by Gary T. Panell

Chapter 16

(1) Paul was ever on the move, making disciples for Christ wherever he went. Timothy became one of Paul's disciples. Timothy had a good reputation as a result of the godly training he had received from his mother and grandmother. They are good examples to all mothers and grandmothers. Also, we see the potential for children, who have godly mothers, to turn out good, even if their fathers are not saved. Evidently Timothy's father, a Greek, was not a believer. Paul mentions Timothy's mother and grandmother in his letter: "...when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." (2 Timothy 1:5)

"Paul had approached Derbe on the first trip from the opposite direction, so the order of towns is reversed here. Since Paul addressed him as a young man some 15 years later (see 1 Timothy 4:12), he must have been in his teens at this time. Statements concerning his mother's faith (here and in 2 Timothy 1:15) and silence concerning any faith on his father's part suggest that the father was neither a convert to Judaism nor a believer in Christ." (*The NIV Study Bible*)

(2-3) Timothy became one of Paul's missionary companions because of the good reputation he had in the area of Lystra and Iconium. Later Paul would write two letters of the New Testament to Timothy, we know them as First and Second Timothy.

Timotheus [AV]. Timothy was probably a convert of Paul's from his previous missionary trip to Derbe and Lystra (1 Timothy 1:2). His mother and grandmother had trained him well in the Jewish Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15), and evidently all three had accepted Christ. Timothy was no doubt aware of Paul's miraculous restoration after his stoning (Acts 14:20), and was ready and willing to take Mark's place with Paul when asked. Since his father was a Greek (whether a Christian or not is never stated), he had never been circumcised, and Paul deemed it expedient (even though not required) to have this done before taking him into the synagogues, hoping to avoid giving unnecessary offense to the Jews." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"he circumcised him. As a matter of expediency, so that his work among the Jews might be more effective. This was different from Titus's case (see Gal. 2:3), where circumcision was refused because some were demanding it as necessary for salvation." (*The NIV Study Bible*)

Paul, the chief spokesman of salvation by grace alone, had the half-Jewish Timothy circumcised so that he could take him into the Jewish synagogues. This was not compromise; it was simple Christian courtesy. It was a mature recognition that social, cultural, and even religious differences should never become more important issues than the simple message of salvation in Christ. See 1 Corinthians 9:19-

23." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*) We need to remember this as we take the message of salvation to the lost! Hudson Taylor, missionary to China, dressed and wore his hair like the Chinese.

(4-6) Paul waited on the Lord for His direction, and so should we. Paul repeated what had been given to him to pass on to others. "they delivered to them the decrees to keep," which had been decided upon by the other apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. As a result "the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily." This is always the case when God's Word is believed and taught in the power of the Holy Spirit. So often today, pastors don't believe the Bible is really inspired and infallible, so they won't teach it. They substitute God's Word with the words of man. This will never work! We need to preach and teach God's Word with all our heart, and we can only do this if we truly believe every part of it is true! (Look at our article [Is There Even One Mistake in the Bible?](#))

These were the same decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. The things that had been decided upon like not having to be circumcised and not having to keep all the Jewish ceremonial laws. This is very similar to what we have given to Timothy, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2) We are not to add to the Word or take away from it Revelation 22:18-19.

So we need to keep to the blueprint! We shouldn't go making things up that are not in the Word of God. We need to teach and preach the Bible not other books. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man [woman] of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Some ministers today want to teach that the Bible is not really infallible, they want to teach that God really didn't create the heavens and the earth in six days. They say we know more now, science has taught us we have evolved. No, they are wrong, and they have deviated from the infallible Word of God, and they will be proven wrong in time. God's Word will be proven true! (See our [Christian World View Part Two](#))

We need to make sure that what we say is established on the sound Word of God. It is like Jesus spoke about how the foolish man built his house on the sand, but the wise man built his house on the rock. The Rock is Christ Himself, and He is the Living Word of God!

St. Paul said later in Acts concerning his ministry, (which should be the same for us) "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:26-30)

(6) "his companions. Silas and Timothy. Phrygia. The district was formerly the Hellenistic territory of Phrygia, but it had more recently been divided between the Roman provinces of Asia and Galatia. Iconium and Antioch were in Galatian Phrygia. Galatia. The name had been used to denote the Hellenistic kingdom, but in 25 B.C. it had been expanded considerably to become the Roman province of

that name. Asia. This, too, had been a smaller area formerly but now was a Roman province including the Hellenistic districts of Mysia, Lydia, Caria and parts of Phrygia.

(7) "Mysia. In the northwest part of the province of Asia. Luke uses these old Hellenistic names, but Paul preferred the provincial (Roman) names. Bithynia. A senatorial province formed after 74 B.C., it was east of Mysia. Spirit of Jesus. As the 'Holy Spirit' was used at times interchangeably with 'God' (see 5:3-4), so here 'Holy Spirit' is used interchangeably with 'Spirit of Jesus.' not allowed [did not permit, suffered them not]. The Spirit may have led in any of a number of ways: vision, circumstances, good sense or use of the prophetic gift.

(8) "Troas. Located ten miles from ancient Troy. Alexandria Troas (its full name) was a Roman colony and an important seaport for connections between Macedonia and Greece on the one hand and Asia Minor on the other. Paul returned to Troas following his work in Ephesus on his third journey (see 2 Corinthians 2:12). At some time-on Paul's second journey or on his third-a church was started there, for Paul ministered to believers in Troas when he returned from his third journey on his way to Jerusalem (20:5-12)." (*The NIV Study Bible*)

(9) "Macedonia is northern Greece, including the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica, to which Paul later addressed three of his epistles."(*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

"The Lord's calling may become evident in different ways. One key principle is indicated here in the calling of Paul to Macedonia in Greece. Paul was already active, trying to preach in the province of Asia, then in Bithynia; he was not waiting idly at home, hoping to receive a call.

The Holy Spirit in some very clear way closed the first two doors, but then opened another by this special vision. It is sobering to think that if Paul had not been redirected to Philippi and Greece, he might never have gone into Europe and Christianity might have remained primarily an Asian religion. But God had other purposes." (*The Defender's Study Bible*) Someone has said God directs moving objects. For example you can't steer a car or ship that is not moving. So too, we need to get moving for God if we want His direction for service!

"When a young person asks about the missionary call, he [she] usually means, 'How can I tell whether the Lord wants me on the foreign mission field?' We don't know how some of these ideas began, but they have been repeated so often and are so little challenged that people accept them almost as if they were axiomatic.

"First is the idea that we must have some special divine call to go beyond the borders of our own country as Christ's witnesses to the lost. That is, we may hear Christ's call to devote our life to Christian service, and so long as we don't leave the limits of the United States [or our own country] we may labor anywhere from Maine to California just as we see the need and find the opportunity. But let someone suggest to us that there is an even greater need, and perhaps an open door, just beyond the national boundary, and immediately we begin to talk about not having a 'call' to foreign missionary service.

"It is as if we thought that a special divine passport must be issued-or rather, that a special divine command must be given, before we dare cross over to the other side with the Gospel. We don't hesitate to move three thousand miles from Miami to Seattle at the invitation of a church; but to go a few hours across to [the West Indies] we must first have a special 'call'!

"Merely to bring such an idea under scrutiny is to refute it. For where can we find any basis to support it? Certainly not in the Scriptures. The Scriptures present the whole world as the field, with no division into 'home' and 'foreign' fields. Philip preached the Gospel in Samaria, and the refugees from Jerusalem planted the church in Gentile Antioch, with no thought of waiting for a special call to those regions.

"The refugees were fleeing from the first wave of persecution, and wherever they went they spoke of the Savior. The idea of a special divine call to minister beyond the borders of Judea and Galilee does not seem to have entered their heads. They were witnesses to everyone everywhere.

"Of course those who first established the church in Antioch were not what we would call today 'full-time' workers. It may be well to look at those who took the leadership there later and gave full time to a Christian ministry.

"First mentioned is Barnabas, who already had some prominence in the work in Jerusalem. It was the Jerusalem church that sent Barnabas to Antioch. They had heard of the work there and apparently believed that Barnabas would be just the man to look into the situation and establish the new believers in the faith. Barnabas went, found a need for his services, and decided to stay.

"But Barnabas saw that another man could be used there, too. He remembered Saul, whom he had first introduced to the believers in Jerusalem and who later had had to go home to Tarsus, in Asia Minor. We don't know what Saul was doing at the time, but Tarsus was not too far from Antioch. So Barnabas went there to get Saul and bring him to help out in the new church.

"We may well assume that both Barnabas and Saul waited on the Lord before agreeing to go to Antioch. But it is perfectly clear, and the Scriptures plainly state, that the initiative in both instances came from other men. The Jerusalem church 'sent' Barnabas, and Barnabas 'brought' Saul. Not a word, not even a hint is given that any special divine call, any unusual spiritual experience was needed to overcome their reluctance to leave their own land as ministers of Christ. True, Barnabas was a native of Cyprus and Saul of Cilicia, but Antioch was still a foreign field to them both.

"As for the other 'prophets and teachers' in Antioch, 'Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch,' it is evident that at least Lucius and Manaen were not from Antioch and so could be called foreign missionaries. But there is no indication of the way in which they had come into the work there. They may have been among the refugees. Or they may have been among the prophets mentioned in Acts 11:27 who came down from Jerusalem at the same time as Agabus. At any rate, the fact that they were ministering in a foreign field didn't call for any special comment.

"In all the New Testament account, there is only one instance when a national or geographic boundary seemed to require a special call before the missionaries would decide to pass it. That was on Paul's second missionary journey, when he and his companions reached Troas. There they got a remarkable revelation of God's will that they should go on over into Europe.

"This unusual experience, generally named the 'Macedonian call,' is often held to be the typical missionary call. Even some otherwise careful missionary writers and speakers have plainly called it such. They have tried to show how it applies to the situation young Christians face today, when they are confronted with the challenge of foreign missionary service.

"They encourage young people to look for some such experience as Paul had there at Troas, before applying for missionary service. And when the experience does not come, the young people are confused and discouraged.

"This is really the second of the false ideas that keeps us from a proper understanding of the missionary call. We need to realize that the 'Macedonian call' was positively not the missionary call! It wasn't even a typical call of any sort! It was an unusual experience, and all the more striking because it was so unusual. Perhaps it had to be striking to accomplish its purpose at that time and in the hearts of those men.

"It is not at all unreasonable to suppose that on other occasions, even today, God may make use of such unusual means to call men to one task or another. Yet in the New Testament this case was the exception rather than the rule. And in Christian experience today such occurrences are still exceptional.

"We have said that the 'Macedonian call' was not the missionary call. Even a superficial reading of the preceding chapters in the Acts should make this abundantly clear. Paul was already a missionary; he had been a missionary for some years. Actually this incident took place in the midst of his second great missionary tour. He was already in a foreign land when the vision came. And it came, not to call him and his companions to missionary service, but to call them to extend their operations beyond Asia Minor to Europe.

"If we can remove from our thinking the idea that this was a typical call to foreign missionary service, we shall clear the way for a better understanding of what such a call really is.

"A third misunderstanding that needs to be cleared up is the notion that the missionary call necessarily is associated with some definite field. Some young people are greatly perturbed because, while they are sure that the Lord wants them to go forth as foreign missionaries, they find it difficult to know precisely to what field they should go. Here again the common idea is inconsistent with the Scriptural examples.

"When Barnabas and Saul started out on their first missionary journey together, they knew the work they were to do, for the Spirit had said to the church, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.'

"But it is doubtful that they knew just in what places they were to carry on this work. Note carefully their itinerary. Cyprus was nearby, it was unevangelized, and it was the homeland of Barnabas. So it was natural that they should go there first. From western Cyprus the next logical step was the mainland of Asia Minor. Here the evangelization continued until they reached the border of Paul's own province of Cilicia. Presumably he had carried on work there before going to Antioch.

"To establish better the work they had done, they now retraced their steps and finally returned to Antioch with their mission completed. Maybe the trip had been planned ahead of time, but various details, such as Mark's leaving them when they entered Asia Minor, seem to show otherwise.

"But whether or not they knew just where they were going on that first trip, Paul certainly didn't know in advance the itinerary of his second journey. He started out to revisit the churches they had established before. But soon he was trying other doors. Finding some of them temporarily closed, he pushed on in the only forward direction that was open, until he reached Troas.

"From there, the Macedonian vision gave him a clear enough call to the next place. But Macedonia was only a stepping-stone, for without any other vision Paul moved on westward and southward into Greece until he came to the city of Corinth.

"On the return from Corinth, Paul visited the province of Asia. The Lord had forbidden him to preach there earlier on this same tour. He spent only a brief time there in the city of Ephesus, but later on he returned for a much more extended ministry.

"Paul's great trip to Rome was not the result of any vision or special revelation. In writing to the brethren there before he went, he said that he had desired for many years to make the trip and see them. Since his apostolic ministry had now been completed where he was, he would soon be ready to visit Rome on his way to Spain (Romans 15:23).

"So, as we review the career of the great missionary to the Gentiles, we see that he seldom enjoyed a special revelation to direct his movements. Only twice after his conversion do we hear of such an experience. Once was when the Lord told him to leave Jerusalem, since his mission was to be to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21).

"He was told to leave but wasn't told where to go. The other occasion was when he received the Macedonian vision. Here only the important initial step was revealed. In fact, he had only two alternatives-either to go on across to Europe or to go back along the road he had come. It was not a question of choice of field but a question of advance or consolidation. And the Lord directed advance.

"To sum up (1) a special divine call is not necessary to witness for Christ beyond the national border; (2) the striking vision that Paul received at Troas, the so-called 'Macedonian call,' was not his missionary call, nor is it typical of such a call; and (3) the call to missionary service is not necessarily associated with a definite field at home or abroad.

"It might seem from this that we have completely ruled out the idea of a call. But this is not so. We have merely tried to clear the ground in order to construct a more Scriptural and sound doctrine of the missionary call. The call is not lacking, in fact it is fundamental. No one should go to any mission field without a sense of call if he [she] expects to enjoy God's blessing on his [her] ministry. But to wait or look for an experience that at best is quite unusual is to open the way for disappointment and frustration.

"There are two aspects of the missionary call, one general and one particular. For clearness of thinking we usually do well to distinguish the two. We must recognize also that the first is fundamental to the second.

"The general missionary call is synonymous with [the 'great commission.'](#) It is expressed in various ways: 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Ye shall be witnesses unto me unto the uttermost parts of the earth.' But the message is the same. It is the call of Christ to those who follow Him to go out and witness for Him everywhere. It includes all of His disciples; not one is omitted from its scope. The Christian who fails to bear witness to his Savior is disobedient to this call, which is meant for him. [We are told that only about five percent of Christians ever really witness for Christ, we need revival! -comment by G. T. Panell]

"This call is general because it includes all Christians as prospective missionaries. But it is general also because it includes all unbelievers as the missionary field. [Someone has rightly said, "You are either a missionary or a mission field."] It is not a question of home missions or foreign missions, of city missions or missions on the frontier. This is a call to be Christ's ambassadors to lost sinners without regard to the places where they may be found. [God has placed us as Christians in every job imaginable so that we can be testimonies to Him there, we must not let Him down! This is one reason God has directed me to write this commentary on Acts. G. T. P.]

"There is no use trying to talk about a special call to the foreign mission field until the matter of this general missionary call is settled. It is just as useless as it would be to discuss the call to missionary service before the issue of putting one's faith in the Savior has been settled. It has been well said that a trip across the ocean doesn't make a missionary. But neither does failure to go abroad keep a man from being a missionary.

"Lest you should be tempted to discount the importance of this general missionary call, take time to observe how similar it is to your call to salvation. In fact, if you look carefully through the New Testament you will find that the word 'call' is most often used in connection with salvation rather than with service.

"Note that the call to salvation is a [general call issued to all sinners](#). It is a call to 'whosoever will.' Occasionally the Lord speaks to an individual and says, 'Follow'; but usually His invitation is 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden.' Wasn't that the kind of call you answered when you came to Christ to receive His salvation? Wasn't it a general invitation you accepted, but one that you realized was sincerely intended to include you? Did you wait for a special divine invitation, an audible voice to call out your name? Did you wait to be drafted?

"Clearly the general call to salvation is enough when the sinner hears it and realizes it is meant for him. But the call is not complete, is not effectual, until the sinner responds, 'Lord, I believe!' In the same way the general call to witness for Christ is enough when the believer hears it and realizes that it is meant for him [her]. But to make it effectual he [she] too must say, 'Here am I, Lord; send me!' When God calls and man responds, then the divine call is complete.

[I want to interject my own testimony here concerning the call of God on my life. I was saved when I was nine years old. (You can read more about my testimony by going to ['Testimony'](#) in the 'Home' section of this website.) But when I was ten years old, as we were attending the First Baptist Church (Conservative Baptist) of Moses Lake, Washington, there were some missionaries that came to our fellowship. They were the Schleners from Brazil, there is actually a 'town' named after them, it is called the Port of Two Brothers. They have also written a book called Port of Two Brothers.

"Paul and his wife, Jessie, spent 40 years in Amazonas, Brazil. For much of that time, they worked - literally - side by side with Paul's brother, John, and his wife, Fran. The Schleners built their homes at the edge of the Amazon River in a remote spot named for them: the Port of Two Brothers. The Schlener families worked among Ticuna Indians (indigenous people), seeing many come to saving faith in Christ.

The Schleners were often called upon to provide medical and dental aid to Ticunas and ethnic Brazilians from neighboring towns. "Paul Schlener was born in 1926. He grew up in Idaho, and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He and his wife, Jessie, moved to Amazonas, Brazil in 1951, reared their four

children along the Amazon River, and retired in 1991. They now [at this writing] live in Moses Lake, Washington."

(You may be interested in reading their book *Port of Two Brothers*)

Anyway, they came to our church and spoke on missions, but they also spoke about dedication of one's life to the Lord. So as a child of ten (I can still remember a little about it today.) I stood when they asked for those that would dedicate their lives to the Lord's service, wherever that might be, at home or abroad. I have tried to be true to this dedication, even though as I write this, it is about 50 years ago now.]

"Actually, for foreign missionary service as for any other, it is not essential to have any other call than this general call. Christ's missionaries are those who have a deep and compelling sense of their obligation to obey His command and make known His salvation to all men.

"Many missionaries are mentioned in the New Testament besides the apostles, some by name, as Titus and Apollos and Epaphras; and others anonymously, as the Thessalonian believers. But so far as we have information, the majority carried on their ministry in obedience to this general call. With the living Christ in their hearts, they were constrained to be His witnesses everywhere.

"Still, there is an individual aspect to the call, and in some cases a separate individual call. We have spoken of the response to Christ's general commission. This of course is an individual response. No one can answer for another, not even a father for his son, much as he may want to.

"It is in this response that we see clearly the hand of the Holy Spirit. He who opens the eyes of sinners to behold the Savior and moves them to accept His invitation to receive life in Him, is the same one who illumines the understanding of the saints and opens their ears to the call to make the Savior known in every land.

"The way in which He does this we may understand as little in the one case as in the other, but it is just as effectual. 'Whereas I was blind, now I see,' may be all the testimony we can give. But it is enough.

"It is in this individual aspect of the missionary call that we run into the question of fields of service. Shall it be the foreign field or the home field? If the foreign field, which one? Such questions are constantly asked and should be answered. Hardly ever are they answered with a vision or some other such striking experience. But we shouldn't think that this is impossible. Still the normal way is otherwise.

[In our case, we thought we were supposed to go to Brazil, but when we met with the mission board of Child Evangelism Fellowship they showed us a need in Trinidad, West Indies, and this is where we ended up going. It was confirmed to us, though, through an interesting 'miracle.' We were not able to get our work permits to go to Trinidad, so I asked Multnomah School of the Bible (now named Multnomah University) chapel service to put our family on their prayer request list. As far as I can tell, this was the very day in Trinidad our permit was granted, the day Multnomah prayed as a student body for our request. This confirmed for us the field we were to serve in for the time being.

We went on to spend three years and three months helping set up the work there in Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies (The work had been started, but we helped get papers from the government and train workers). We still receive mail and calls from our dear brothers and sisters in Christ there.]

"In this matter [of knowing God's call to a specific field] friends may counsel and preachers exhort, and missionary speakers may even resort to scolding. But the final decision is between you and God. Sometimes, in order to see the matter in its proper relationships, we might do well to drop the word 'call' and speak of this as a matter of guidance. There may be a special call, but more often the young Christian is simply waiting to be shown where he [she] is to serve.

"The general principles of guidance certainly apply here: a recognition of the need of guidance, a willingness to be led, a deliberate renunciation of self-interest, a close walk with God so as to be sensitive to His wishes, as well as a constant use of the Word of God and earnest prayer.

"Christ's own command to 'look on the fields' should lead us to contemplate their needs and feel the compassion that such needs should inspire. A careful study of the fields, such as William Carey made, may open the way for God's guidance. Listening to missionaries from various fields is helpful. At first it may seem confusing, because of the vastness of the task and the needs. But after a time it often happens that one of those fields begins to stand out in your consciousness as the place where God can use you to the greatest advantage.

"Consider carefully the question whether you should serve Christ in the home country or on some foreign field. To think that unless God calls you especially to some foreign land you ought to take up work at home is the worst possible attitude to take. There are too many Christian workers who have drifted into some position in the homeland simply because they have not been 'called' to anything else.

"How do you dare to stand in any pulpit as a minister of Christ without the clear conviction that He has called you there? The call of the pulpit committee or of the church is no substitute for Christ's call. What makes you think that it is any less necessary to feel an overpowering divine compulsion to give your life to a ministry in Middletown, U.S.A. [for example], than in a Congo forest? If a call is necessary for the one, it is just as necessary for the other.

"Too many of us take it for granted that full consecration necessarily means going into full-time Christian ministry. Such an idea tends in the same direction as the idea held in the Middle Ages that for a really devout life one had to withdraw from the world and enter some monastery.

"It may take out of the workaday world those very elements that are needed to keep it from ever increasing corruption. It fosters the all too commonly held notion that 'business and religion don't mix.' As a matter of fact, there is no good reason why a laborer or a businessman may not be as earnest a Christian witness and as truly spiritual as any minister. Many are.

"But even if you are sure that the Lord wants you in fulltime service, there is still another question to be answered. Are you ready to surrender your own will to His and gladly do whatever He wants you to do? Such surrender is not easy. Neither is it as complete oftentimes as we suppose at the moment.

"Yet is it right to expect God to lead you to the field of His choice, when you have already determined in your own heart where you want to go? If you really want His guidance you have to be ready to put yourself in His hands and gladly follow His directions, wherever He may lead.

"Does selfish ambition enter into your plans, the desire for recognition and praise from other Christians? It is better to please God than men; it is even more satisfying to your own soul. Are you afraid of privations, and do you shrink from a venture that means a radical change in your way of living and brings you into contact with strange, unfamiliar people and circumstances? Your Savior himself has promised to be with you all the days until the end-if you go! That promise is connected with the command to go!

"But it may be of help to know how at times He has led others. If the testimonies of those who have experienced salvation are honored of the Lord in leading others to an enjoyment of that same experience, then the testimonies of those whom the Lord has called and blessed in missionary service may be used in revealing God's ways of guidance to other puzzled young Christians.

David Livingstone

"The very name Livingstone spells Africa. No missionary is better known today. Very few ever captured the imagination of their own day to such an extent. Yet Livingstone did not at first intend to go to Africa. In fact, he didn't plan to be a missionary at all. Not that he was opposed to missions. He thought every Christian ought to be a soul-winner. It ought to be his chief desire and aim. But when it came to foreign missions, Livingstone's idea was that he would give money for it. He would give everything he earned above what he needed to live.

"But that wasn't God's idea. One day Livingstone read an item that changed his whole purpose. Dr. Karl Gützlaff, brilliant and devout missionary pioneer, had traveled up and down the coasts of East Asia all the way from Siam to Korea. Now he was pleading for missionaries for the great empire of China. And when Livingstone thought on those millions of Chinese without Christ, and on the lack of suitable workers to give them the Gospel, he decided to prepare and offer himself.

"For China, did we say? Then how did he get to Africa? The Opium War did it. Livingstone prepared to be a medical missionary in China, and the London Missionary Society accepted him. But before he could sail, the war closed the door. Now what should he do? They suggested the West Indies. But he didn't think his medical training would be so useful there.

"At this point Robert Moffat entered the picture. The great South Africa missionary was at home in Britain speaking about the work in that dark land.

"I had occasion to call for someone at Mrs. Sewell's, a boarding-house for young missionaries in Aldersgate Street, where Livingstone lived. I observed soon that this young man was interested in my story, that he would sometimes come quietly and ask me a question or two, and that he was always desirous to know where I was to speak in public, and attended on these occasions.

"By-and-by he asked me whether he would do for Africa. I said I believed he would, if he would not go to an old station, but would advance to unoccupied ground, specifying the vast plain to the north, where I had sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been.

"At last Livingstone said, "What is the use of my waiting for the end of this abominable Opium War? I will go at once to Africa!" The Directors concurred, and Africa became his sphere."

John G. Paton

"When an author wants to write a thrilling missionary story for young people, he is very likely to turn to the life of John G. Paton. Not many can compare with it. Paton went to work among cannibals in the New Hebrides islands of the South Pacific. He lived a long life and an exciting one. And he found the time to tell about it. Paton began as a city missionary in his native Scotland. He seemed to be doing well, but he says:

"Happy in my work as I felt, and successful by the blessing of God, yet I continually heard, and chiefly during my last years in the Divinity Hall, that wail of the perishing Heathen in the South Seas; and I saw that few were caring for them, while I well knew that many would be ready to take up my work in Calton and carry it forward perhaps with more efficiency than myself.

"Without revealing the state of my mind to any person, this was the supreme subject of my daily meditation and prayer; and this also led me to enter upon those medical studies, in which I purposed taking the full course; but at the close of my third year, an incident occurred, which led me at once to offer myself for the Foreign Mission field.

"The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, in which I had been brought up, had been advertising for another Missionary to join the Rev. John Inglis in his grand work in the New Hebrides. Dr. Bates, the excellent convener of the Heathen Missions Committee, was deeply grieved, because for two years their appeal had failed.

"At length, the Synod, after much prayer and consultation, felt the claims of the Heathen so urgently pressed upon them by the Lord's repeated calls, that they resolved to cast lots, to discover whether God would thus select any minister to be relieved from his home-charge, and designated as a missionary to the South Seas. Each member of the Synod, as I was informed, agreed to hand in, after solemn appeal to God, the names of the three best qualified in his esteem for such a work, and he who had the clear majority was to be loosed from his congregation, and to proceed to the Mission field-or the first and second highest, if two could be secured.

"Hearing this debate, and feeling an intense interest in these most unusual proceedings, I remember yet the hushed solemnity of the prayer before the names were handed in. I remember the strained silence that held the Assembly while the scrutinizers retired to examine the papers; and I remember how tears blinded my eyes when they returned to announce that the result was so indecisive, that it was clear that the Lord had not in that way provided a missionary. The cause was once again solemnly laid before God in prayer, and a cloud of sadness appeared to fall over all the Synod.

"The Lord kept saying within me, "Since none better qualified can be got, rise and offer yourself!" Almost overpowering was the impulse to answer aloud, 'Here am I, send me!' but I was dreadfully afraid of mistaking my own emotions for the will of God.

"So I resolved to make it a subject of close deliberation and prayer for a few days longer, and to look at the proposal from every possible aspect. From every aspect at which I could look the whole facts in the face, the voice within me sounded like a voice from God."

Adoniram Judson

"Every American Baptist knows Judson's name. Not only was he one of the first party of missionaries to go out from the United States, but he later inspired the beginning of what is now the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Burma was his field. He could scarcely have hit upon a harder one. Yet he came to be called 'the Apostle of Burma.'

"According to his son, two things moved Judson to go to the mission field. After his striking conversion, he had entered Andover Seminary to prepare for the ministry. There he came in touch with Samuel Mills and other missionary-minded students. They were just a small group, but deadly in earnest. And Judson soon became as zealous as the others for the starting of an American mission society.

"But it was not only the fellowship with these other students. It was also a sermon. He had already finished his first year at the seminary when he read it. The sermon had been preached in England by Dr. Claudius Buchanan, a chaplain of the British East India Company.

"It had for its title 'The Star in the East' and spoke of the power and progress of the Gospel in India. Judson's son says that 'this sermon fell like a spark into the tinder of Judson's soul.' Six months later he made his final decision to serve Christ as a foreign missionary." (*An Introduction to the Study of Christian Missions* by Harold R. Cook)

Gladys Aylward

"On February 24, 1929, Gladys Aylward turned twenty-seven years old. For years she had worked as a parlor maid in wealthy homes in London. She actually lived in the mansions of her employers. She had never married, but that was not the reason she was unhappy. She was unhappy because more than anything else in her life she wanted to go to China as a missionary.

"She had even managed once to enroll as a student in the China Inland Mission, a famous missionary society in London that sent missionaries to China. But they had given up on Gladys. They had told her she was too old to learn the Chinese language. She had never felt such a sense of failure. She felt she was just a mousey little parlor maid. In her tiny bedroom she would cry, 'Use me, God! Oh, please use me.'"

"How she wanted to go to China. She even managed to get a job as a parlor maid in the house of Sir Francis Younghusband. Sir Francis was an explorer famous for traveling all the way across China to the country of Tibet, where he was the first westerner to enter the 'Forbidden City' of the Dalai Lama! Now Sir Francis lived in London and wrote books about his great adventures. Gladys felt honored to just work in the great explorer's house. But it didn't satisfy her urge to go to China. It made her want to go to China even more.

"One day she was talking to a friend in her church group. The friend mentioned an elderly missionary in China named Jeannie Lawson. For some reason Jeannie was unable to get help in her mission work. She

was virtually alone in her work and afraid her work would end. So Jeannie Lawson had written friends in London pleading for someone to come to China and help her.

"'That's me!' yelled Gladys." (*God's Ambassadors Backpack Books*) Hopefully just the introduction to these missionaries' lives and how they got started in missions will encourage you to do the same! So we do see that God directs lives that are moving for Him, a person does not have to wait for a call, God has called all Christians to witness for Him! If we are faithful in little, He will make us fruitful in much. He will truly make us 'fishers of men' as He has said, if we follow Him closely! I would also like to give one more word of advice before we leave this section. 'A person who would do great things for God, must first go through a time of testing.'

(10-11) "The change here from 'they' to 'we' indicates that at Troas Luke, the narrator, joined Paul's company." (*New Scofield Reference Edition*) These two verses show that Luke, the human author, has joined up with the missionary team and is now giving a first person account. "Luke joined Paul's company in Troas and traveled with him to Philippi (v. 16 is the end of this first 'we' section), remaining in Philippi when Paul continued on his way." (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*)

"Samothrace, an island in the northeastern Aegean Sea. It was a convenient place for boats to anchor rather than risk sailing at night. Neapolis, the seaport for Philippi, ten miles away; modern Kavalla.

(12) "Philippi, a city in eastern Macedonia named after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. Since it was a Roman colony, it was independent of provincial administration and had a governmental organization modeled after that of Rome. Many retired legionnaires from the Roman army settled there, but few Jews." (*NIV Study Bible*)

"Paul took a ship from Troas and sailed to the island of Samothrace and the next day to Neapolis, which was the port of Philippi, a city lying ten miles inland. Macedonia was divided into four parts or districts, and Philippi was the chief city of one of these four districts. It was also a Roman colony. This word [colony] is a transliteration of the Latin term. 'Colonies' were cities made up largely of Roman citizens and located at strategic points throughout the empire, which enjoyed special privileges, such as self-government, freedom from imperial taxation, and the same rights as citizens in Italy. Such a city was a little Rome far from the motherland."

(13) "Apparently there was no Jewish colony or synagogue in Philippi. Ten men were sufficient to constitute a synagogue. There was, however, an unofficial meeting place of a group of Jewish women and a number of God-fearers outside the city by the river. According to the best text, where prayer was wont to be made [AV] should be where we supposed there was a place of prayer. The word for a place of prayer is used in Jewish writings as a synonym for 'synagogue.' We sat down, the normal position for a Jewish teacher." (*Wycliffe*)

"The only religious activity on the weekly Sabbath was apparently a ladies' prayer meeting, so that was where Paul headed. This gathering became the nucleus of the first Christian church in Europe." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"Notice the humble beginning of the church in Europe-at a small prayer meeting." (*Through the Bible Book By book by Myer Pearlman*)

(14) "Lydia, a businesswoman. Her name may be associated with her place of origin, the Hellenistic district of Lydia. Thyatira, in the Roman province of Asia, 20 miles southeast of Pergamum (in *the Hellenistic kingdom of Lydia*).

"It was famous for its dyeing works, especially royal purple (crimson). See Rev. 1:11 and note on Rev. 2:18. worshiper of God. Lydia was a Gentile who, like Cornelius (see 10:2), believed in the true God and followed the moral teachings of Scripture. She had not, however, become a full convert to Judaism. opened her heart. After the resurrection the minds of the disciples were opened to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45); similarly, Lydia's heart was opened to respond to the gospel message of Paul." (*NIV Study Bible*)

"Lydia was not a Jewish woman but, as a native of Thyatira, had evidently attended the synagogue there and become one of the worshippers of God in their congregation. When she heard the gospel, the Lord opened her heart and she believed-another example where divine election and human freedom are naturally juxtaposed.

(15) "Lydia's 'household' apparently consisted of her servants. There is no indication that she was either married or a widow.

(16) "The 'spirit of divination' was actually a 'python spirit,' so named because of the legendary serpent slain by Apollo, who supposedly was the god of prophecy." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"A 'python' spirit, a demonic spirit. The python was a mythical snake worshiped at Delphi and associated with the Delphic oracle. The term 'python' came to be used of the persons through whom the python spirit supposedly spoke. Since such persons spoke involuntarily, the term 'ventriloquist' was used to describe them. To what extent she actually predicted the future is not known." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(17) "The continual harangue by the girl, referring to 'the most high God,' designed to produce ridicule and resentment against Paul, showed that her 'spirit of divination' was actually a demonic spirit. Compare the experience of Jesus, whom they recognized as God, with such evil spirits (Matthew 8:31,32; Mark 1:24)." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"The 'we' section. ends here and begins again in 20:5. Most High God. A title used by the man possessed by an evil spirit (Mark 5:7). It was a common title among both Jews (see Numbers 24:16; Isaiah. 14:14; Daniel 3:26) and Greeks (found in inscriptions). But the title is not used of God in the NT by Christians or Jews. (*NIV Study Bible*)

(18) For a time as a Christian I thought that these things, such as demon possession and casting out demons, were things of the past, but I found out that this is just not the case. As we were missionaries in Trinidad in the West Indies we saw this sort of thing more than once. Not only did we see it, but we also worked with evangelist KK and the elders in the church who were casting out demons. [You can study more on this subject from our [Ephesians Part 5 Study](#), from the answer we give in the discussion section "[Do just some people see demons?](#)" and our article [Mediums, Psychics, and "Spiritualism"](#)]

Here is a true story from Gospel for Asia, where they deal with this sort of thing all the time as they go out to preach the way of salvation through Christ's blood.

"'We won't leave until she is completely delivered,' Jui Bala's parents firmly told Kewal "Devrat, a Gospel for Asia native missionary. 'We have tried everything, and nothing has worked. You have to help our daughter.' A few weeks before, Jui began having severe chest pains that caused her to cry out in pain. Her family rushed her to the local hospital, but the doctors could not find a cause for the symptoms.

"Then, she became mentally unstable, physically lashing out at her family members. She would also go for extended periods of time in complete silence, refusing to acknowledge anyone or anything around her. As Jui's behavior degenerated, her family realized a demon was controlling her. They took her to traditional witch doctors, who performed several rituals, but nothing worked.

"As their daughter's condition worsened, Jui's parents grew increasingly discouraged. Just as they had lost all hope that she would ever be free from this spiritual bondage, someone told them about Kewal. Wanting nothing more than their daughter's healing, they traveled to Kewal's home and begged for his prayers. Kewal had prayed for people from the village before, and many had seen the results of his intercession.

"They adamantly told Kewal that they would not leave until their daughter was completely delivered. Trusting that the Lord could work powerfully, Kewal began praying and fasting for Jui's freedom. Within two days, she was totally normal.

"Jui realized that it was the Lord's mighty hand that delivered her out of bondage. She gladly turned her life over to Jesus, and now follows Him. [Gospel for Asia](#) missionaries all over Asia know that the Lord is the Great Physician. They trust Him to heal any illness, even if doctors cannot."

(19) "Why Paul delayed to cast out the demon is uncertain. Perhaps he was aware of the peril to which the exorcism would expose the mission team." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

"Paul and Silas were seized not because they were preaching the Gospel but because they had disrupted a profitable business. Luke and Timothy for the time drop out of sight. Luke was concerned to trace the relations of Roman officials with the emissaries of the Gospel and to show that hostility came from other than official sources.

(20) "The government of a Roman colony was vested in two magistrates, sometimes called 'praetors.' The Greek word translated 'magistrate' is the equivalent of the Latin praetor." (*Wycliffe*)

"The obvious prejudice against Jews displayed here by the citizenry and officials against Jews perhaps accounts for the minimal Jewish population in such a large city as Philippi." (*The DEFENDER'S Study Bible*)

(21) "This was Paul's first clash with Roman officials. The new Christian sect was not a threat to the peace of Rome. The charges here were false, and Paul and Silas were completely exonerated by Roman justice (vv. 34-39)." (*New SPIRIT FILLED LIFE Bible*)

(22-24) "No careful investigation was made of these charges. Mob action was roused, to which the magistrates yielded. Paul and Silas were stripped of their clothing and beaten. Verse 35 refers to the sergeants (AV) or police (RSV) officers (NKJV) (NIV). This word designates lictors who attended the

magistrates. Each lictor carried a bundle of rods with an axe inserted among them, symbolizing the power to inflict capital punishment. [Romans 13:4]

"Paul and Silas were now beaten by the rods carried by these lictors. Paul tells us that he suffered this indignity on three different occasions (2 Corinthians 11:25). This is the only such incident that Luke records. Paul and Silas were then locked up in the inner prison with their feet securely fastened in wooden stocks. The stocks could be so adjusted as to force a man's legs wide apart in a painful position." (*Wycliffe*)

"inner cell. stocks. Used not only for extra security but also for torture." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(25) Most likely the songs that Paul and Silas were singing were the Psalms of the Old Testament. This seems to be a good method of witnessing too, since the other prisoners were listening to them (it was a captive audience). Being able to sing under the circumstance was a 'miracle' in itself. The insects and rodents must have been crawling all over on them, plus the pain they would feel from the beatings.

(26) "a great earthquake. This was a notable miracle of providence, as distinct from creation miracles such as Paul's restoration to life after stoning. There is nothing supernatural about earthquakes. However, the rate of occurrence of earthquakes in Philippian jails where Christian missionaries who had been unjustly imprisoned and beaten, yet were singing and praying and praising God at midnight, is very low. God-and no doubt His angels as well-can surely control the rate, timing and location of the processes of nature which He created." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

(27-28) In those days you lost your life if you lost your prisoners, so the jailer was not going to prolong the agony, and instead of waiting for the inevitable, he was going to run himself through with his sword.

Paul could have had malice in his heart for this man and said it is what he deserves, but, no, Paul had nothing but love in his heart for the jailer. So often today the world wants revenge, but this is not God's way. We should show love to the lost for all the wrong they do to us, and God can take this sacrifice and bring them to Himself through it. (We answer a question on the discussion page, "[How often should I forgive my brother?](#)")

(30) As a result of the love Paul and Silas had shown, and the miracle he had seen of the gates being opened, how could this jailer resist what Paul was preaching. So he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

(31-32) Paul mentions nothing about [baptism](#) being a part of salvation, but later they were baptized. This shows us that baptism is not a part of salvation, but an outward sign to the world of what has happened inwardly. (Look at our [Romans Study](#))

(33-34) Also, we notice that there was no waiting time for the jailer and his family to prove whether or not they were truly saved. So often today the church makes people wait a long time after they are [saved to be baptized](#), this is just not Scriptural! His household was all saved at the same time by their own personal acceptance of forgiveness of sins, and by believing in Christ. If more fathers would be saved, more families would be saved.

We cannot conclude from this passage that there was a baby baptized here. That would be an argument from silence. Of course, many do teach that this is why we should baptize infants. However, this is not a good way to get doctrine, this would be getting arguments from assumptions. Every other passage where it talks about salvation the person is baptized after they believe so why should it be any different here? Salvation is not something we inherit from our parents, by them baptizing us, we have to believe personally! (Look at our answer on the [interactive Study](#) on this area of baptism.)

Today many people wait a long time to be baptized, or in some cases, never get this far in their walk with the Lord. This is sin and we need to see the importance of baptism, as it is a command of Christ, even if it is not a part of our salvation! It does involve our obedience! It is also a wonderful testimony to the world, our relatives, and our friends. Often it is what brings them to the Lord seeing that you are really serious about salvation in Christ. If you have not been water baptized since you were saved, I pray that you will do it soon! Don't be afraid, go to your pastor and ask him to do this for you.

Another thing we see here is that God wants us to go to heaven by families. Paul told the jailer you get saved, and your whole family will too. This is what happened in our family, my mom had been saved when she was younger, but had gotten away from the Lord. When my Dad got saved, the rest of us got saved. Mom and Dad had sent us to Sunday School before, but it really didn't mean much to us until my folks got right with the Lord. You can read my Dad's tract on how he received the Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior. (The tract is called [What Happened to Shorty?](#))

(35-40) "Here we find first mention of the fact of Paul's Roman citizenship (v. 37). This citizenship served him to good purpose later in his ministry. Those entitled to the privilege of Roman citizenship were those born in Rome (except slaves); those born in a Roman colony, i.e., a town to which was extended the rights of Roman citizenship (Philippi was such a town); those whose fathers were citizens (Paul may have obtained his citizenship this way.); and those who purchased their citizenship. Acts 22:28. The following were the privileges of a Roman citizen: he could always claim protection by uttering the phrase, 'I am a Roman citizen:' he could not be condemned without a trial; he could not be scourged; he could not be crucified; he could appeal from the common courts to the emperor." (*Through The Bible Book by Book by Myer Pearlman*)

Chapter 17

(1) "Amphipolis . Thessalonica. The Egnatian Way crossed the whole of present-day northern Greece east west and included Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia and Thessalonica on its route. At several locations, such as Kavalla (Neapolis), Philippi and Apollonia, the road is still visible today. If a person traveled about 30 miles a day, each city could be reached after one day's journey. Thessalonica. About 100 miles from Philippi. It was the capital of the province of Macedonia and had a population of more than 200,000, including a colony of Jews (and a synagogue). All these contributed to Paul's decision to preach there."

(2) "three Sabbath days. These two weeks represent the time spent in the synagogue reasoning with the Jews, not Paul's total time in Thessalonica. An analysis of the Thessalonian letters reveals that Paul had taught them much more doctrine than would have been possible in two or three weeks." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(3) Paul's argument was twofold: that (1) according to the Scriptures, the Christ (Messiah) had to suffer and rise again; and (2) Jesus of Nazareth was that Messiah." (*New Scofield Reference Edition*)

(4) Paul and his companions were willing to go anywhere with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were not afraid of what people would say or do. In fact, Paul expected that people would have to make a decision after he had spoken and taught the truth in love.

"prominent women. Perhaps the wives of the leading men of the city, but women who deserve notice and position in their own right (see also v. 12). (*NIV Study Bible*)

Some God fearing Gentiles and leading women became disciples of Christ in Thessalonica as a result of hearing Paul preach and teach the Word of God.

(5) But there were others who did not believe the Word, these attack Jason. He probably had opened his home to Paul and Silas.

(6) They cried out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too." It is interesting that they said this, because in one sense it shows how thoroughly Paul and the other Christians were preaching the gospel, and in another sense the people were incorrect because really the Christians had turned the world right side up, it was upside down before they came!

"city officials. The Greek term politarch (lit. 'city ruler'), used here and in v. 1, is found nowhere else in Greek literature [The Greek word is politarchés. Acts has been attacked on the ground that the magistrates of Thessalonica were not called 'politarch.' However, an inscription on the Arch of Galerius over the Egnatian Way corroborates the usage of this title in Thessalonica. (*Scofield*)], but it was discovered in 1835 in Greek inscription on an arch that had spanned the Egnatian Way on the west side of Thessalonica.

"(The arch was destroyed in 1867, but the block with the inscription was rescued and is now in the British Museum in London.) The term has since been found in 16 other inscriptions in surrounding towns of Macedonia, and elsewhere."

(7-8) "defying Caesar's decrees. Blasphemy was the gravest accusation for a Jew, but treason-to support a rival king above Caesar-was the worst accusation for a Roman." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(9) post bond. Jason was forced to guarantee a peaceful, quiet community, or he would face the confiscation of his properties and perhaps even death." (*NIV Study Bible*) For the time being it looks like Paul is not able to do much follow-up in these places, later, however, he will be able to write letters and send visiting speakers to these same areas.

(10-12) Those in Berea are called 'more noble-minded,' because they examined the Scriptures daily to see for themselves whether the things Paul was teaching were true. This is what God wants us as Christians to be like. It is good to go to church and fellowship with fellow believers, it is good to hear good messages from the Word of God, but it is best to study God's Word for ourselves to see if what we are hearing is truly according to the Scriptures.

That is why I believe a study like this is invaluable! Even so when you get finished reading, double check Scripture yourself, better yet, keep your Bible open and read it for yourself as we go along. This is really the way I intended for the study to be used.

For the time being it looks like Paul is not able to do much follow-up in these places, later, however, he will be able to write letters and send visiting speakers to these same areas.

(16) Notice Paul's approach to something that vexed his spirit. These people who worshipped idols became such a burden to Paul, he had to say something. Do we see things each day that cause us to be zealous for God's righteousness, or have we become so cold and indifferent to people in their lost condition and evil practices, that we don't even say or do anything? We must at least tell our family how we feel. If we are watching TV (and I hope we don't do too much of this) and we see or hear something that is sin or wrong, do we say something? We should if we love the Lord our families should here us say what we believe!

Lot, in the book of Genesis, was 'vexed' (disturbed) by the evil practices of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah, but he didn't do say or do anything about it. In fact, he didn't even warn his family, and he lost them as well. ".and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)-(2 Peter 2:7-8)

Lot, being a believer, was bothered by what he saw and heard around him, but there is no indication from Scripture that he ever tried to do anything about the evil, other than live a righteous life himself. Maybe God wants us to do something if we are to reach our families and the lost around about us. That is why we are commanded to share the Gospel with the lost.

Are we even doing and saying some of the same things that are going on around us? Or are we like Paul, and speak up for Christ! Do people know what we stand for?! I have found that when I go to a new job (I think of it as a ministry.) I have to take a stand right away or else it is almost impossible to change peoples' first impressions of me, and what I stand for.

Another way you can witness is to give out gospel tracts to people, and then when the opportunity arises you can say something for the Lord Jesus. (We have [free tracts](#) that you can down load and use.)

(17) "The people of the Roman Empire were characterized by a great diversity of religious belief. Epicureanism (seeking tranquility as the highest good) and Stoicism (being free from passion and passively accepting everything in life as inevitable, impersonal fate) were popular philosophies. Polytheism (the belief in multiple gods) was rampant: 'The city was given over to idols' (v. 16). These philosophers actually thought that Paul was propagating a religion of two new gods: Jesus and the resurrection. Others, however, accused Paul of being a babbler. The word originally described one who picked up scraps of learning here and there and peddled them." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

"Epicurean philosophers. Originally they taught that the supreme good is happiness-but not mere momentary pleasure or temporary gratification. By Paul's time, however, this philosophy had degenerated into a more sensual system of thought. Stoic philosophers. They taught that people should live in accord with nature, recognize their own self-sufficiency and independence, and suppress their desires. At its best, Stoicism had some admirable qualities, but like Epicureanism, by Paul's time it had degenerated into a system of pride. babbler. The Greek word meant 'seed picker,' a bird picking up seeds here and there. Then it came to refer to the loafer in the marketplace who picked up whatever scraps of learning he could find and paraded them without digesting them himself." (*NIV Study Bible*)

"The Epicureans were disciples of Epicurus, 341-270 B.C., who abandoned as hopeless the search by reason for pure truth (cp. John 18:38), seeking instead true pleasure through experience. The Stoics were disciples of Zeno, 33-264 B.C. This philosophy was founded on human self-sufficiency, inculcated stern self-repression and solidarity of the race. Paul's sermon (vv. 22-32) contains a most remarkable refutation of the specific views of both of these schools, which were extremely widespread in the apostolic world. As a result of the sermon 'certain men joined him and believed' (v.34)." (*Scofield*)

"This is one of the only two specific references in the Bible to 'philosophy,' the other being Colossians 2:8. Both have strongly negative emphases, warning against philosophy-love of human wisdom.

"Stoicks. [AV] Like all other Greek and Roman philosophies of the day, Epicureanism and Stoicism were based on an evolutionary world view. The Epicureans were essentially atheists, like modern Darwinists, whereas the Stoics were pantheists, much like modern New Age evolutionists. Both believed in a infinitely old space/time/matter universe, and both rejected the concept of an omnipotent transcendent Creator. On the popular level, births were expressed in terms of polytheism, astrology and spiritism, with the many gods and goddesses essentially being personifications of natural forces and systems. Both would naturally be strongly opposed to Biblical Creationist Christianity." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

(18-34) "Athens. Notice Paul's encounter with members of two schools of philosophy-the Epicureans and the Stoics. (Philosophy is that branch of knowledge which has for its object the discovery of the truth concerning God, man, and the universe, as far as those truths can be ascertained by the human reason.)

"The Epicureans were skeptics who rejected all religion. They believed that the world rose from chance, that the soul is mortal, and that pleasure is the ultimate end of life. The Stoics were pantheists [We have an article called [Christian World View](#) and it goes into pantheism, etc.]; i.e., they believed that everything is part of God. They believed that virtue is the chief end of life, and should be practiced for its sake alone.

"Notice Paul's message. He shows God's relation to the universe (vv. 24, 25) and to man (vv. 26-29). [26 "of one blood. The concept of 'race' has no basis in Scripture; all men are descended from Adam, through Noah, and thus all are members of only one race-the human race. The term 'race,' as ordinarily used, is strictly an [evolutionary concept](#), with 'race' understood as a sub-species in the process of evolving into a new species. There is no observational scientific evidence for such evolutionary transformations, among either men or animals.

"28 In him we live. The God of creation sustains the very life of every person, even those who don't believe He exists, so that 'he is not far from every one of us' (Acts 17:27; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). poets. Paul here seems to be referring to Epimenides, Aratus and Cleanthes, each of whom seemed to have had some insight, however attained, into the fact that one supreme God had created all men.

"We are all the 'offspring' (Greek *genos*) of God by creation (Malachi 2:10). This, of course, does not mean that all are children of God spiritually. This requires the new birth by faith in Christ (John 1:12,13).

"29 Godhead. This is the first of three New Testament references to the 'Godhead' (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). Each translates from a slightly different Greek noun, but all refer essentially to the 'Godhead' of God that is, the nature or structure of God, to God as He has revealed Himself. Since He

has revealed Himself as a triune God ([Father, Son, Spirit](#)), the term has commonly been used to refer to the Trinity.

"In this verse, we are told that God can never be represented by an image or mode which man can make, either with his hands or his mind. However, what man cannot do, God has done. That is, He has constructed a marvelous model of the Godhead in His creation (see notes on Romans 1:20." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)] He then declares God's moral government of the world, this government to be perfectly manifest at the last judgment (v. 31). What were the two effects of the preaching (vv. 32-34)?" (*Through the Bible Book by Book* by Myer Pearlman)

We need to realize that people are just as hungry for the truth of God's Word today as they were in Paul's day-if not more so. We should never think that people know the way of salvation, and we should never refrain from sharing the Gospel with them. This true story took place in a large church in the United States:

"I was asked to do a retreat for the youth group of a large church. The youth pastor and I were planning to hold it at a local hotel and then take the teens out witnessing at a mall. But once the pastor caught wind of our plans, he was none too happy.

"He told the youth pastor that that type of witnessing doesn't work. Christians must build relationships first and not do 'cold-call' witnessing. The youth pastor then decided to take the teens to a retreat center far away from civilization (and any actual lost people) so they could learn how to share their faith.

"On Sunday afternoon after the retreat, one of the teens decided to go to the mall to witness, and got into a conversation with an Iranian man. The man said, 'It's very interesting that you're talking with me. One of the reasons I came to America was to find out more about Christianity. Matter of fact, I just bought a Bible yesterday.'

"During the conversation, the teenager asked, 'Have you ever been to a Christian church before?' He said 'no,' so the teen asked, 'Would you like to come with me next week to my church?' The man said, 'That would be great.' Isn't it nice to know that that type of witnessing doesn't work!" (*One Thing You Can't Do In Heaven* by Mark Cahill)

Our church recently went to a community days and set up a booth. The booth simply had a sign out front that asked the question, "Are you good enough?" When the people came into the booth, which was made like a maze, it had the Ten Commandments on the wall with what Christ said about each one. These were done individually using Roman Numerals to set off each commandment. At the end of the maze there was a cross. On one side of the cross it said, "You choose to go your own way," the other door said, "You choose to go Jesus' way." When the people came out (the Jesus way) of the booth we asked them the question, "Well are you good enough to get to heaven on your own?"

We had literally several hundred people enter the booth, and something like over fifty [prayed to receive Christ](#) as Lord and Savior. Many were given tracts, and counseled who did not get saved or said they were already saved. We found that, even in the United States, the average person does not know the way of salvation but was willing to listen to it if approached in a loving way!

I was at a church that discouraged the going from door to door with the gospel. However, a brother and I did this anyway. We found that many would pray with us the sinner's prayer after having heard the gospel in a loving way from the Bible.

Our market place today is where the people are. I believe the internet is also a market place for us today, and that is one reason we are using it to get the gospel out as long as we can use this method. We have had millions of hits from around the world even in the few short years we have been on the net. Praise God for what He is doing in our day! No, sharing the Gospel was not just for Paul's day, God wants you and I to go to the lost wherever they are found in whatever method He gives us to reach those for whom Christ died!

For more information: bible-christian.org