

THE BOOK OF ACTS: CHAPTERS 17–21

Crossing Cultures, Planting Churches, and Counting the Cost

Athens

Corinth & Ephesus

Jerusalem



Key Verse: “For in Him we live and move and have our being...” — Acts 17:28

The Focus:

- Engaging culture without compromise.
- Sustained, city-based church planting.
- The true cost of the missionary calling.

Athens: The Burden and the Bridge



The Provoked Spirit:
A heart moved by spiritual darkness and idolatry
(Acts 17:16).



The Cultural Bridge:

- **Acknowledging Spiritual Hunger:** "I perceive you are very religious."
- **Finding the Connection Point:** "To the Unknown God."
- **Using Their Own Words:** Quoting local Greek poets (Epimenides & Aratus).

Uncompromising Truth in Cultural Forms

The Uncompromising Call

- **God commands repentance.**
- **Certainty of coming judgment.**
- **Proof through the Resurrection.**

The Three Responses (Mars Hill)

- 1. Some Mocked (Rejection)**
- 2. Some Delayed (Curiosity)**
- 3. Some Believed (Harvest)**

Corinth: The Sovereign Preparation



18 Months of Sustained Work

The Divine Encouragement (Acts 18:9-10):

- "Do not be afraid, but speak..."
- "...for I have many people in this city."

The Missionary Principle:

- God knows His people before you preach to them.
- Your task is to find them through the Word.

Ephesus: City-to-Region Multiplication

Asia (The Region)

Ephesus
(The City)



Strategic City Missions:

- 2 years of daily teaching in the School of Tyrannus.
- Result: All of Asia heard the Word.

Unusual Miracles:

- No limits on how God confirms the gospel (e.g., Handkerchiefs & Aprons).

The Cost of Effectiveness:

- Widespread conversion disrupts economic and spiritual power structures (The Silversmith Riot).

“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus...”

— Acts 20:24

The Core Identity: A Spirit-empowered willingness to lay down everything for the gospel.

Pressing On Despite the Warnings



The Reality of Suffering:

- Repeated prophetic warnings of bonds and imprisonment awaiting Paul.

The Unshakable Resolve (Acts 21:13):

- “I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

The Lesson:

- The call of God fundamentally outweighs the threat of human suffering.

A Spirit-Filled Missionary Model

Pentecostal Missions



Pillar 1: Intellectual Engagement (Athens)

The Spirit gives us the boldness to effectively engage the complex philosophies of our culture.



Pillar 2: Supernatural Power (Ephesus)

The Spirit works through unusual miracles to break deeply entrenched spiritual bondage.



Pillar 3: Sacrificial Empowerment (Jerusalem)

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers us for unwavering witness, even in the face of death.

Reflection & Discussion

1. How did Paul use Greek culture as a bridge in Athens without compromising the gospel?

2. What does Acts 18:9-10 teach about God preparing hearts before the missionary arrives?

3. How does Paul's farewell address model a missionary's responsibility to planted churches?

4. What does Acts 20:24 mean personally for you as a pastor?

Prayer Focus



For Missionaries in Resistant Environments:

- Wisdom: To build cultural bridges without compromising the truth.
- Courage: To press forward and count the cost despite prophetic warnings.

Let us pray for those working in philosophically secular or intellectually resistant fields today.

Action Step: Your 'Mars Hill' Message



Step 1: Study

Read Paul's Athens sermon (Acts 17:22-31).

Step 2: Identify

Note the specific cultural references and bridges he utilized.

Step 3: Create

Write a short outline for a gospel presentation using cultural reference points from your own local context (proverbs, history, values) as bridges to the truth.