

Date : 16 August 2026
Theme : The Holy Spirit in building the Kingdom of God
Topic : Paul's strategy in preaching the gospel
Passage : Acts 18 & 19
Key Verse : *"In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."
(Acts 19:20, NIV)*

Introduction

The book of Acts repeatedly reveals how the early disciples, empowered by the Spirit of God advanced His Kingdom. In Acts 18 & 19, Luke shows us the unstoppable spread of the gospel. He sums it up in one powerful line: "In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power." (Acts 19:20). What lies behind this unstoppable advance? The Holy Spirit does this through ordinary, faithful people.

In Acts 18–19, we watch that partnership close up. Paul bears witness to three very different groups – (i) Jews in the synagogue, (ii) Gentiles in the marketplace, and (iii) those trapped in idolatry and spiritual darkness. These chapters serve as a case study for us. They show how to keep proclaiming Christ under different circumstances. Through it all, the Holy Spirit is the unseen strength behind Paul's ministry.

The word spread widely and grew in power through faithful witnesses, Spirit-empowered ministry, and God's sovereign presence. And this is the Spirit's pattern for us today. The same Spirit is at work in our city, in our workplaces, and in our families, building the Kingdom of God in our time. Our part is to keep on preaching, in spite of obstacles.

1. The Holy Spirit strengthens us for faithful witness (Acts 18:1-28)

In chapter 18, Paul had left Athens and arrived at Corinth, 100 km west. Upon arriving at Corinth, Paul connected with fellow tentmakers Aquilla and Priscilla, and once Silas and Timothy arrived he devoted himself fully to preaching. (Acts 18:1-5)

- Paul started where people were – he met them on their ground.

Lesson for us: God uses everyday jobs and everyday relationships. Whether you're in the marketplace or in ministry, your work can be a witness. And we need each other. Ministry was never meant to be solo. The Spirit strengthens us together.

(i) The Jews in the synagogue (Acts 18:4-6)

→ Like people today who claim to know the bible but resistant to follow Christ

- As was his custom, Paul entered a synagogue and was compelled to preach but the Jews opposed.
 - In Corinth, Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath. Paul went to the synagogue because for him, it was the Jews first. But when the Jews opposed and blasphemed, he went "to the Gentiles". He "left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshipper of God." (Acts 18:6-7).
 - Persistence isn't pounding a closed door. When hearts were hard, Paul moved to where people were open – he went "next door". Likewise, we sustain in teaching the word by going "next door" to the next opportunity.

Lesson: Know when to pivot – When the venue of preaching shuts, move to another one.

- Yet it was not without harvest, for Acts 18:8 tells us that *“Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.”*
 - And one leader’s faith sparked a community ripple effect.
 - Also Sosthenes who took over as synagogue leader in vs 17 is believed to be the same person Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 1:1 as “our brother Sosthenes”, implying that he too was later converted.

Lessons: In spite of opposition, be faithful, preach clearly and trust God for the outcome.

(ii) Gentiles / God-fearers in the marketplace (Acts 19:9-10) → Open seekers.

Paul moved on to reach out to “go to the Gentiles”. (vs6)

➔ When one door closes, another is opened, so that we can keep on preaching

- Paul was powered by the vision to stay on and keep proclaiming Christ.
 - Paul in Corinth faced hostility, and many would have quitted.
 - But the Lord met him with a word: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you...” (Acts 18:9–10).
- ❖ This word wasn’t just for Paul. It’s for us too! The Spirit strengthens faithful believers to teach/preach and to disciple.
- Paul was protected from opposition
 - when accused before Gallio, the case was dismissed, showing the Spirit’s providential protection (Acts 18:12–16).
 - Paul didn’t have to defend himself: True to His word – “no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” (vs10) - the Lord protected him.
- During this time for 18 months in Corinth, he taught, laying biblical foundation in a wealthy, immoral city. (vs11)
 - Paul established a church
 - [In Acts 18:10, the Lord told Paul in a vision that He had “many people in the city.”]
 - True to His word, many became Christians in Corinth

The Bible records some of them by name:
Phoebe (Romans 16:1), Tertius (Romans 16:22), Erastus and Quartus (Romans 16:23), Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11), Gaius (1 Corinthians 1:14), Stephanas and his household (1 Corinthians 16:15), Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17).

In Acts 18:19, Paul sailed on to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla (and leaving them there) he sailed on to Caesarea, (greeted the church there and went down to Antioch)

#Note: Acts 18:22 marks the end of Paul’s 2nd missionary journey and the start of his third journey which lasted from AD53 – AD57.

- Leaving the church at Antioch (his home base) for his 3rd missionary journey, Paul headed toward Ephesus, but along the way he revisited the churches in Galatia and Phrygia (18:23). The heart of this trip was a lengthy stay (a little over two years) in Ephesus.

Here in his 3rd missionary journey at Ephesus, Paul encountered a third group:

(iii) People caught in idolatry / spiritual darkness (Acts 19:11-20)

- Those bound by false worship / addictions

What happened:

Ephesus was deep into magic, Artemis worship, occult practices. Paul did miracles, cast out demons, and people burned their magic books worth 50,000 silver coins, and “the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour” (Acts 19:17).

But it also sparked a riot when the idol trade was threatened (Acts 19:23-27).

Lessons for us:

- Expect spiritual pushback: Where the gospel goes, idols fall and riot erupts (Acts 19:23-27). When Jesus gets exalted, darkness gets exposed.
- Depend on Word + Spirit's power – Paul didn't just argue. He prayed, and God moved. "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul" (Acts 19:11).
- Call for repentance that costs something: Burning the scrolls was public and expensive. Real conversion changes what we treasure.

2. The Holy Spirit expands the church through the chain of disciple-making

(Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-7)

Point 1 is about perseverance to keep on witnessing. We now come to Point 2 on building the body through discipleship.

- Disciple making involves spending personal time with teachable people.

(a) Chain of discipleship in Acts 18

- Paul invested time with Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth.
- Now in Ephesus: Priscilla and Aquila discipled Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)
 - Apollos was brilliant, a learned Jew from Alexandria, eloquent and knowledgeable in the Scriptures. Yet his understanding of the gospel was incomplete. They sharpened his grasp of the gospel. They took him aside and explained "the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26). Their gentle correction sharpened his grasp of Christ.
 - Once discipled with the full gospel, he became an effective witness in Achaia,
- Apollos discipled many at Achaia, where he was "a great help to those who by grace had believed" (Acts 18:27)

We happened here?

- The chain of discipleship was established and continued on:
Paul → Priscilla/Aquila → Apollos → others.

(b) Chain of discipleship in Acts 19

- In Ephesus, Paul discipled the Ephesian 12 (Acts 19:1-7)
 - Paul finds "some disciples" in Ephesus. They believed, but hadn't even heard of the Holy Spirit.
 - So Paul asked, taught, and prayed. "When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying."

What happened here?

- The church went from 12 to a movement.

(c) A BC Core Value

- Reproduce Disciples: "I reproduce disciples who follow Jesus"
 - It was here in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8-9) that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 11:1 "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.", pointing to what he was doing – Reproducing disciples who follow Jesus

3. When believers advance the Kingdom through faithful witnessing, the Holy Spirit empowers

#Note: 3 groups. 3 contexts. 1 Spirit doing the same work: strengthening, guiding, and producing fruit through faithful witness.

- Paul didn't use one method for everyone.
 - He adapted. And the Spirit send him out - He built the church. And Luke shows us what happens when we keep going: the Word spreads, opposition comes, and the Kingdom advances.

❖ The 3 Big “how to continue preaching” - takeaways from Acts 18 & 19

(a) Adapt your method, not your message - Same gospel, enter in through different doorway.

Lesson for us: Paul never changed the gospel. But he changed the door he walked through.

For:

(i) Jews in the Synagogue = People who claim to know the bible but resistant to follow Christ:
→ Scripture reasoning (Acts 18:4-6; 19:8-9).

(ii) Gentiles in the Marketplace = Open seekers
→ Teach, laying biblical foundation (Acts 18:11).

(iii) Ephesians in Idolatry = those bound by false worship / false worship / spiritualism
→ Power encounters & public repentance (Acts 19:11-20).

(b) Equip the saints so that they produce the next generation.

Paul stayed, taught, discipled - 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:11) & 2+ years in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Growth came from teaching systematically.

Lesson for us: Growth comes from making time to teach and disciple - in BC groups.

Learn the skills necessary for preaching and disciple making. This habit will produce lasting fruit.

(c) What happened at Ephesus?

(i) As was his custom, Paul entered a synagogue and spoke boldly for 3 months (Acts 19:8). But when some of them became obstinate, and malign the Way, Paul left them and took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). He rented the lecture hall of Tyrannus and taught there “every day for 2 years”, so that “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord”. (Acts 19:10)

Lessons for us on how to keep on preaching:

- Find ‘centres of influence’: He took the gospel to homes, workplaces, and public halls. Your ‘Tyrannus hall’ might be a coffee shop, a classroom, or your office pantry.
- Consistently working - “every day” (Acts 19:9). It wasn't one big event. It was faithful, daily preaching.

(ii) Spiritual warfare - exercise the gifts of the Spirit.

Begin with the Vision: “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking” (Acts 18:9)

Result: “The word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (Acts 19:20)

Lesson for us: The Spirit gives courage when we speak for Jesus and exercise authority in His name.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Identify your field: In your small group, name the group(s) you are reaching out to.
eg. (i) People with Bible background but don't know the Author; (ii) Open seekers; (iii) People bound by false worship/addiction.
2. How would you strategise witnessing to this/these group(s)
3. Mentoring relationships: How can you, like Priscilla and Aquila, invest in others by teaching and walking alongside them in the faith?