

**AMAZING ACTS—
act three**

Acts 18:23 to 28:31

Pressing on to victory

by Gerard Chrispin



EP BOOKS

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Welwyn Garden City, UK, AL7 1TS

web: www.epbooks.org

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EP books are distributed in the USA by:

JPL Fulfillment

3741 Linden Avenue Southeast,

Grand Rapids, MI 49548

orders@jplfulfillment.com

Tel: 877.683.6935

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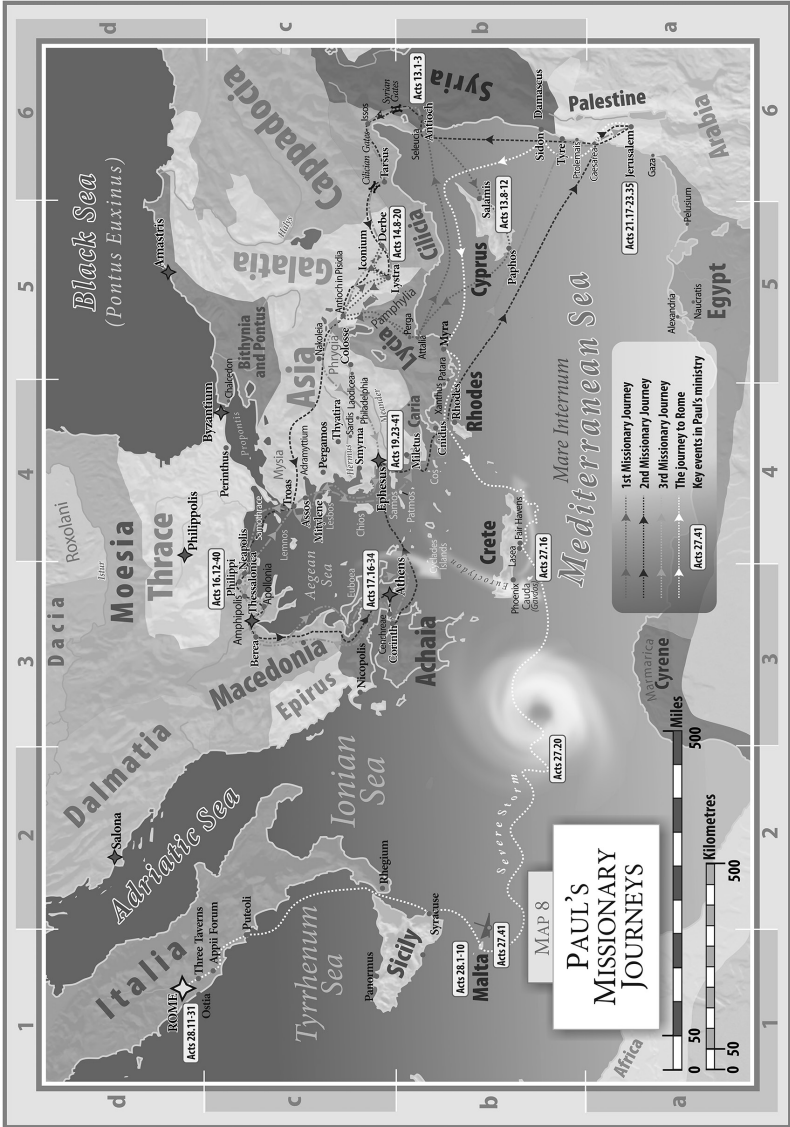
First published in 2016

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available

ISBN: 978-1-78397-153-4

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Dedication
To Phillippa—thank you.



MAP 8
PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

1st Missionary Journey
 2nd Missionary Journey
 3rd Missionary Journey
 The Journey to Rome
 Key events in Paul's ministry

Miles 0 50 100 150 200 250 300 350 400 450 500
 Kilometres 0 50 100 150 200 250 300 350 400 450 500

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Listen chapter by chapter to the Amazing Acts trilogy (Amazing Acts—act one, Amazing Acts—act two, and Amazing Acts—act three) at amazingacts.net

The whole text is also reprinted there.

Download the complete audio of the Amazing Acts trilogy from amazingacts.net/downloads, including 'iso' files to create your own audio CDs. Downloads given free of charge to owners of relevant Amazing Acts books.

Ready-made CDs are also available from the website. Ask for details.

Foreword by E. M. Hicham,

Pastor, writer and international speaker

Throughout my spiritual journey, God has brought me into contact with mature Christians who have helped to shape my Christian walk. A few weeks after my conversion (15 years ago), I was invited to join a United Beach Mission's French speaking team in Belgium, called Missions Vacances ('Holiday Missions'). I had no idea what to expect! But that week was very influential in directing the rest of my Christian life. Gerard Chrispin was one of the leaders. He was also the Bible teacher for the week. I have wonderful memories of my time on the team. In particular, there are four things about Gerard which I have never forgotten: his humour; his ability to teach the Bible in a clear and accessible way; his love for souls; and seeing a qualified lawyer unashamedly declaring his Christian convictions in the open air. Gerard practised what he encouraged others to do, namely, make reaching people with the Gospel a priority.

I am glad to say that readers will find these four qualities in Gerard's writings. Throughout this book, the reader will sense the author's compassion for individuals to trust Jesus as the Scriptures are explained in a Christ-centred way.

I thank God for Gerard and for our friendship. I have a great sense of anticipation every time I pick up the books and booklets he has written. He writes in a gripping, elegant and logical manner. His uniqueness lies in his ability to explain the Bible in an easy to follow way. Many commentaries are too technical to follow, especially for new converts or those seeking answers about the Christian faith. The book of Acts can be controversial in some parts, but *Amazing Acts* deals splendidly with these sections. You can trust Gerard's theological direction!

This book is the third of the very accessible *Amazing Acts* trilogy on the book of Acts. It is designed for individual or group reading. It can also form part of a correspondence course, which is available on request at two levels. More material can be found on the www.amazingacts.net website. This includes a free audio version of the book if you have purchased or been given a copy. It also includes for anyone a free chapter-by-chapter audio-visual version to listen to and to read, with the three questions at the end of each chapter.

I look forward to the time when these three volumes will be available both in French and Arabic. Until then, enjoy the privilege of reading this book in English! I strongly recommend it and pray that it will be a blessing to you as it was to me.

E. M. Hicham

A word from the author

Have you have come across *Amazing Acts—act three* without having first read the first two *Amazing Acts* books in the trilogy, *Amazing Acts—acts one* and *Amazing Acts—acts two*? If so, don't worry. Each book stands on its own and each covers a third of the Acts of the Apostles. However, it is more enjoyable and helpful to read the three books in order.

Amazing Acts—act three covers the final third of the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 18:23 to 28:32. The first two books cover Acts 1:1 to 9:31 and Acts 9:32 to 18:23. 'Amazing Acts Overview' examines the detail in the next section.

It is helpful and inspiring to retrace the steps of the 'main players' in history. That is why historical dramas and films are so popular now. It is a great bonus when a completely accurate historical document is the source. When that accurate source document is also infallibly inspired by God the Holy Spirit, it is better still! Readers who are honest, enquiring and open-minded are going to be blessed.

The source document here is the Bible, the written word of God. The events in Acts show brave and fruitful men and women ‘*Pressing on to victory*’. They display the thrilling reality of God working amongst weak people who turn to Christ and follow Him selflessly as Lord and Saviour. You will be informed and inspired as you read this book which itself has been informed and inspired by one of the Bible’s most thrilling sections, the Acts of the Apostles.

Thank you again to the same faithful team which delivered the first two books in the *Amazing Acts* trilogy. Despite his many commitments as a pastor and wider Christian leader, David Harding critiqued the original draft MSS and then compiled the *amazingacts.net* website. David Fortune of CPR has made valuable inputs about the optional Standard and Advanced Correspondence Courses. In Grace Baptist’s Recording Studio, Derek French has skilfully and helpfully guided the audio-recording of the Acts readings and commentary on those readings. My wife, Phillippa, has helped in all areas and recorded the Acts Scripture readings. Trudy Kinloch has again skilfully and cheerfully edited this book with great patience and understanding. Thank you to all the *Amazing Acts* team.

Thank you too to E. M. Hicham for his encouraging foreword. He is a young man with an amazing grasp of the Bible, a great love for people from all backgrounds, and a rare teaching and speaking gift from God that has blessed many in the relatively short time since he trusted Jesus Christ as His Saviour. He demonstrates the same spirit as those highlighted in the thrilling Acts of the Apostles as they boldly herald the gospel here, there and everywhere, despite opposition and hardships.

Increasingly, society seems set to encourage opposition to the Bible’s teachings and particularly its insistence that the Lord Jesus

Christ is the only Saviour of sinful people like us. To meet such thinking, may we follow the example of the early Christians we meet in Acts. Let us turn from sin and trust Jesus to save us, turn from selfishness, and live wholeheartedly for Him. May we shun empty pursuits, prioritise our time and goals, and unstintingly serve Christ. The Holy Spirit, who blessed those early wholehearted Christians, and many others through them, is still here to-day to inspire those who know and follow Jesus to bless others and keep on keeping on *'Pressing on to victory'*.

Gerard Chrispin

Amazing Acts—Overview

The 28 chapters of the Acts of the Apostles are covered in three books, *Amazing Acts—act one*, *Amazing Acts—act two*, and *Amazing Acts—act three*.

This Overview shows how the three parts relate to each other in dividing up the Acts of the Apostles.

Amazing Acts—act one (Acts 1:1–9:31) covers the birth, growth, witness and cruel persecution of the church up to the conversion and early evangelistic ministry of Saul, later to be known as Paul.

- Jesus' commission to the church to witness to Him 'in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8).
- The birth, growth, witness, and persecution of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 1:1–8:3).
- The spread of the gospel into Judea and Samaria by Christians fleeing persecution (Acts 8:4).
- Concentration of gospel preaching in Samaria by Philip, Peter and John (Acts 8:4–25).
- Concentration of gospel preaching in Judea by Philip (Acts 8:26–40).

- Moving on from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria: the conversion and nurturing of Saul, the arch-persecutor of the church, near Damascus in Syria (Acts 9:1–19); Saul immediately preaches the gospel in Damascus with the believers there (Acts 9:20–22); After a Jewish death-threat Saul flees to Jerusalem via Caesarea (Judea), from where he escapes another death-threat by going north to his home town of Tarsus in Cilicia. (Acts 9:23–30).
- A period of freedom from persecution and further growth for the church, after Saul’s departure (Acts 9:31).

Amazing Acts—act two (Acts 9:32–18:23) covers Peter’s gospel preaching in Judea, the wider spread of the gospel, persecution through Herod, Paul’s first two missionary trips which take the gospel wider still toward ‘the end of the earth’; between those missionary trips Saul attends the meeting of the apostles’ Council:

- Peter’s evangelistic ministry in Judea at Lydda, in the plain of Sharon, and at Joppa (Acts 9:32–43).
- Peter’s witness in Caesarea (Judea) to the Gentile, Cornelius; the falling of the Holy Spirit on the believing Gentiles; after Peter’s debriefing is discussed, the rejoicing of the apostles and believers that Gentiles are converted (Acts 10:1–11:18).
- The spread of the gospel further to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch; Barnabas brings Saul from Tarsus to Antioch; famine relief arranged for Judean Christians through Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:19–30).
- Herod Agrippa’s persecution of the church and martyrdom of some leaders; Peter in and out of prison; Growth of God’s word; return of Barnabas and Saul from Jerusalem (Acts 12:1–25).
- Paul’s first missionary trip (Acts 13:1–14:28).

- The Council of apostles and elders at Jerusalem about salvation by faith alone (Acts 15:1–35).
- Paul’s second missionary trip (Acts 15:36–18:23).

Amazing Acts—act three (Acts 18:23–28:31) covers the last of Paul’s three missionary ventures, Paul in Jerusalem again, his hearings before various authorities leading to his going to Rome to appeal his case to Caesar, his arrival there and freedom to share God’s word for two years:

- Paul’s third missionary trip (Acts 18:23–21:16).
- Paul in Jerusalem with the apostles and elders; his arrest in the temple; facing, speaking and testifying to a mob from which he is rescued by the soldiers (Acts 21:17–22:29);
- Paul’s appearances before the Council (Sanhedrin) in Jerusalem and Felix in Caesarea, and Festus through whom he appeals to Caesar; further appearance before King Agrippa and his testimony to the king (Acts 22:30–26:32);
- Paul’s very eventful journey to Rome via a shipwreck on Malta; his ministry there to Jewish leaders, and his relative freedom to preach about Jesus Christ for two years ‘no one forbidding him’ (Acts 27:1–28:31).

INTRODUCTION

Pressing on to victory!

Welcome to *Amazing Acts—act three*, or welcome back if you have just read *Amazing Acts—act one* or *Amazing Acts—act two* or both!

What could be more exciting, challenging or relevant today than to see how a small, dejected and defeated body of believers became the first members of the early church which, though sorely persecuted, were empowered by the Holy Spirit to turn the world upside down with the gospel and establish local churches of new believers?

Each chapter of *Amazing Acts—act three* whether in writing or by audio, contains the passage of the book of Acts covered in that chapter. *Amazing Acts—act three* covers the last ten chapters of Acts, plus a few verses from Acts chapter 18.

How can you best use this book for your own and for others' blessing? Appendix One and Appendix Two to this book explain

how best to use this book to run a Discussion Group and how best to complete and return the Correspondence Course.

1. Pray that God will help you understand and trust His word, and put it into practice in your life.
2. Listen to the relevant audio track while you read the same passage and its explanation in the book.
3. Read more than once through the verses of Acts printed in each chapter of *Amazing Acts—act three*.
4. Ask ‘What is the main point of the passage?’ How do the noted Bible references relate to that?
5. Consider the three questions in each chapter, using the Bible verses noted there to help you.
6. Pray over what you have learned. Ask God to help you to apply it faithfully to your own life.
7. Read and listen through the chapter again to see if you have missed anything important.

You may adapt these points to use *Amazing Acts—act three* for Bible studies, study groups, or one-on-one teaching.

Amazing Acts—act three may be used with any Bible translation of the book of Acts, although the New King James Version (‘NKJV’) is the one generally quoted. The Bible references function as follows: Acts 18:1–18 means Acts chapter 18, verses 1 to 18.

CHAPTER I

An eloquent Egyptian and a caring couple

ACTS 18:23–28

²³ *After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.*

²⁴ *Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.*

²⁶ *So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*

²⁷ *And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those*

who had believed through grace; ²⁸ for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 18:23

Building on the gospel: caring for new Christians

‘The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting,’ says an Old Testament Proverb.¹ Why bother hunting for food, and then lose, through laziness, what you have gained? The apostle Paul is definitely not lazy. After visiting Caesarea and Antioch, he moves on ‘over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening the disciples.’ He plans to ‘roast’ in planned Bible teaching and caring discipleship training what has been taken ‘in hunting’ through his preaching the gospel of ‘Jesus Christ and Him crucified’.² Only by personal trust in Christ can any sinner know sins forgiven, eternal life and peace with God. Only by being strengthened by God’s Spirit through Biblical discipleship in fellowship within a Bible-believing church can a Christian grow in spiritual life and meaningful service for Jesus Christ. So Paul plans to visit and strengthen new churches and Christians through God’s grace and through His word.

But what has been taken ‘in hunting’ through sharing the gospel? As we follow Paul on his third missionary journey in this third book in the trilogy of *Amazing Acts*,³ let’s review briefly how the gospel of forgiveness and eternal life has spread through the preaching of God’s word.

In Acts 1:15 we start with 120 church members. About 3,000 Christians are added at Pentecost in Acts 2:41, followed by daily conversions in the growing church in Acts 2:47. The number of men converted reaches about 5,000 in Acts 4:4, and in Acts 5:14 multitudes of men and women are ‘increasingly added’. In Acts 5:16 sick people living in cities surrounding Jerusalem are ‘all

healed’, as are those ‘tormented by unclean spirits’. Some who experience physical healing will also rejoice in receiving new life in Christ. All those delivered from unclean spirits must surely be saved spiritually from sin’s power and punishment. The number of disciples multiplies in Acts 6:1, while in Acts 6:7 the word of God spreads, again causing numbers of disciples to multiply greatly in Jerusalem, with a great many priests becoming obedient to the faith. All at Lydda and Sharon turn to the Lord in Acts 9:35, and there are many new believers at Joppa in Acts 9:42. The Holy Spirit falls on all who hear the word through Peter at Caesarea in Acts 10:44. A great number believe and turn to the Lord in Antioch in Acts 11:21, while in Acts 11:24 a great many people are once more added to the Lord, again in Antioch. God’s word grows and multiplies, surely indicating that sinners are turning to Christ in Acts 12:24. Almost all of Antioch in Pisidia comes to hear God’s word on the Sabbath after many Jews and converts to Judaism trust Jesus Christ in Acts 13:44. Again, a large number of Jews and Greeks believe in Jesus in Acts 14:1. Chapter 16 records the birth of the Philippian church, after people trust Jesus in different situations. Many Greeks and leading women come to Him in Thessalonica in Acts 17:4. The same chapter logs the conversion of many Greeks and prominent people in Berea in verse 12. Believers join together with Paul in verse 14. There is much more blessing to come as we journey from Acts 18:23 to Acts 28:31. Much more ‘spiritual hunting’ will follow!

Acts 18:24–26

Enter Apollos

But first, meet Apollos. He appears by name ten times in the pages of the New Testament.⁴ He is a Jew born in the renowned Egyptian port of Alexandria, on the Nile. This city is the home

to a large Jewish community and later features significantly in the life and witness of the early church. An eloquent speaker, Apollos is also ‘mighty in the Scriptures’. His belief in God from his background in Judaism marks him out as a disciple of John the Baptist. He rightly regards repentance as essential in order to know and walk with God. It prepares a sinner’s heart and enables him to place his faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. We will note Paul’s emphasis in the next chapter that ‘John indeed baptised with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus’.⁵ Even before he comes to understand the life-changing good news of Jesus Christ, Apollos’ instruction ‘in the way of the Lord’ channels his fervent spirit to empower him to speak and teach accurately what he has learned about God from the Old Testament and through ‘the baptism of John’. That is why he now speaks boldly in the synagogue. Imagine how uneasy those superficial and religious hypocrites feel when Apollos speaks out. Yet this is even before he comes to know Jesus! It is unsurprising that his name soon becomes bracketed in 1 Corinthians with Paul, a real man of God, who commends him as an equal. They are both examples of how God changes the lives of those who come to Christ. Sharing a real burden to preach the gospel with others, they labour together for the Lord. But what produced in Apollos this dramatic change which heralds loudly that even being sincerely religious cannot save a lost sinner and that we all need Christ to save us. The question is not whether you are sincere or religious, but do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?

Acts 18:26–27

A great husband and wife team

A godly married couple, Aquila and Priscilla, hear Apollos ‘speaking boldly in the synagogue’ in Ephesus. They discern that he has not yet really grasped the heart of the gospel message, despite teaching accurately what he has learned of ‘the things of the Lord’. They simply take him quietly on one side and explain ‘the way of God more accurately.’ Having left Rome with ‘all the Jews’, at the command of Claudius Caesar, Aquila and Priscilla enjoy close fellowship and friendship with Paul. They travel with him at times, and even risk their lives for him.⁶ Their open home hosts meetings of their local church. Much blessing to others comes through this caring and committed Jewish couple, who love and serve their Lord. Their wide experience makes them ideal people to establish Apollos in his personal faith in Christ by God’s grace. Just as Apollos is now helped by them, he helps others to believe in Jesus through grace, as he uses the Scriptures to show that ‘Jesus is the Christ.’

Acts 18:27–28

The man helped becomes the main helper

Having been helped to yield to Jesus Christ, Apollos now wants to cross from modern Turkey (then Asia Minor) to Achaia (on the Greek mainland) *en route* to Corinth.⁷ The man who has so recently been helped by others, now becomes a great helper of others. He is already experiencing the truth of the words of the Lord Jesus that ‘it is more blessed to give than receive.’⁸ How does this help come for those who believe? How else but ‘through grace’? God’s ‘grace’ is always the only way that anyone ever can help anyone else spiritually come to believe in Christ!⁹ Not only does Apollos share this message of grace with

new believers. He also takes part in public and vigorous debate with Jewish people who attack the fact that the Lord Jesus is the Christ, and therefore also the eternal Son of God. Apollos is a shepherd who comes not only to care for the sheep, but to deal with the wolves as well! Paul's burden to strengthen the new Christians is already shared by Apollos.

Have you considered what an important job the Christians have done who wrote from Ephesus to Achaia and possibly to Corinth? They encouraged their brothers in Christ on the other side of the Aegean Sea, near where it meets the Mediterranean Sea, to warmly welcome their new brother and potentially powerful gospel servant. Because they help each other, the cause of Christ benefits. That is always so when Christians encourage one another and seriously exalt Jesus by sharing His word with others.

So, as Paul makes plans to share the gospel, honour His Saviour and bless other churches and Christians, God is already raising Apollos to do the same. Is Jesus so real to you that you want both Christians and non-Christians to be blessed? Or have you yet to grasp that Christ died to save you and lives to be the Lord and Saviour whom you need to trust? Romans 14:9 says, He 'died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord'. Is He your Lord and Saviour?

Questions on Chapter 1

An eloquent Egyptian and a caring couple—Acts 18:23–28

A. Why is Paul concerned to strengthen the disciples in the 'region of Galatia and Phrygia, in order.?'?

Acts 18:23, 2 Timothy 2:1, Ephesians 6:10, Acts 3:16

B. What about Apollos encourages you to witness to sincerely religious people?

Acts 18:24–26, Matthew 7:7, Hebrews 4:12

C. How many instances of someone helping someone else are there in Acts 18:23–28?

Acts 18:23, Acts 18:26, Acts 18:27, Acts 18:28