

Acts Chapter 1 – The Coming Holy Spirit

THEME: Preparation for the coming of the Spirit.

As suggested in the Introduction, in my opinion the proper title for the Book of Acts would be: The Lord Jesus Christ at Work by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. And the first seven chapters reveal the Lord Jesus Christ at work by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in Jerusalem. The first chapter, which is the preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit, includes a brief introduction; a resume of the forty-day post-resurrection ministry of Jesus; His ascension and promise of return; then the apostles waiting for the Spirit, and their appointment of an apostle to take the place of Judas.

Act 1:1-2 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,

The “former treatise” was Luke's Gospel, which also was directed to Theophilus—whose name means “lover of God.” I totally reject the idea that just any lover of God is intended. Obviously, Luke knew a man by the name of Theophilus, and undoubtedly the name was appropriate—a lover of God. Luke's Gospel was “all that Jesus began both to do and teach,” and in the Book of Acts Jesus continues to do and to teach. Today He is still at it, if I may use that expression, and He will continue on with this present program until He takes His own out of the world.

“Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” makes it clear that just because Jesus was taken up into heaven didn't mean He ceased doing and teaching. But now, from the vantage place of the right hand of God, He is continuing to work through the Holy Spirit. As in the army where commands pass from one man to another, so the Lord Jesus Christ is working through the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit operates through the apostles and on out to you and to me where we are today. This is a remarkable statement here. – McGee

Strong Dictionary – Apostle - a delegate; specifically, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (“apostle”), (with miraculous powers): - apostle, messenger, he that is sent. Note: Dictionaries and commentaries disagree on the exact limits of who is an apostle, but the 12 plus Paul are the clearest examples with a physical encounter and calling directly from Jesus.

Act 1:3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs after His suffering and death. There are ten recorded appearances of Jesus after His resurrection. His post-resurrection ministry, as revealed in His appearances, has a more important bearing on the lives of Christians today than does the three-year ministry recorded in the Gospels. I have a little book entitled The Empty Tomb, which tells of this post-resurrection ministry of the Lord Jesus. Paul stated it this way: “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more” (2Co_5:16).

You and I do not know Him today as the One who walked on this earth over nineteen hundred years ago. We know Him as the one Man in the glory. He is up there right this moment, and He is real. How often the church loses sight of this fact.

Recently a letter came to me from a person who said he had been a church member all his life. He had gone through all the prescribed rituals, and he thought he was a Christian. Then through hearing the Word of God he learned that he didn't even know Jesus. The wonderful discovery for him was that not only did Jesus walk on this earth nineteen hundred years ago, but also, He is alive today and is sitting at God's right hand. He came to the living Christ and received Him as Savior and Lord. How wonderful that is! Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs.

The problem of the unbeliever today is not with the facts but with his own unbelief. The facts are available. I wonder whether anyone doubts that the Battle of Waterloo was a historical event. Very frankly, I believe that Napoleon lived, and

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I believe that he fought the Battle of Waterloo. But I have very little evidence for it. Actually, there is ten thousand times more evidence for the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ than there is for the Battle of Waterloo, and yet there are people today who say they do not believe it. Where is the problem? The problem is in the heart, the unbelieving heart. There is a natural tendency for man to run away from God just as Adam did. Man turns his back upon God today. If you are an unbeliever, the problem is with you. The problem is not in the Word of God. He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs. You can know if you really want to know. The problem is that you don't want to know. The problem is not in the mind; the problem is in the will.

Let me insert a comment here about the Resurrection. There is a verse which I think has been twisted and distorted. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (Joh_12:32). How was He lifted up? He was lifted up in the Resurrection, friend, lifted up from the dead. That is the message. Regardless of how much you talk about Jesus or how lovely you say that He is, the message is that He has been lifted up from the dead. He is risen! The reason that more people are not drawn to Christ is that there is not the preaching of a resurrected Christ. How the Book of Acts puts the emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus Christ! – McGee

Act 1:4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

That's the end of the sentence—these first four verses are all one sentence! The apostles are to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Until that event takes place, His command is to wait. - McGee

Act 1:5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

The risen Jesus appeared to the apostles and gave them these instructions. He tells them that something is going to happen to them. They are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. This baptism of the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father, and Jesus had previously told them about it.

It is very important to point out that this is not talking about water baptism, which is ritual baptism. This is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is real baptism. It is this baptism of the Holy Spirit which places a believer into the body of believers, which we sometimes refer to as the church.

When we get to the second chapter, which tells of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, we will learn that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Filling was necessary in order that they might serve. The fact that they were filled with the Holy Spirit for service indicates that the other ministries of the Holy Spirit had been performed. – McGee

The Ascension

Act 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

You will find that some of the commentators rebuke the apostles for asking this question—they feel the apostles made a mistake. I believe that the answer the Lord gives them indicates they made no mistake. Their question was a legitimate question, a natural question, and one that our Lord answered as such. He did not rebuke them. He did not call it a foolish question.

The apostles were brought up and schooled in the Old Testament. They had waited for the coming of the Messiah. They understood that the Messiah is the One who will establish the Kingdom upon this earth. That was their hope. It is still the hope for this earth. God is not through with this earth. God does not intend to sweep this earth under the rug. Although it is small enough to be swept under His rug, He is not going to do that. God has an eternal purpose for the earth. It was the Kingdom of God that they talked about, which involves the re-establishment of the house of David. These were the

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things He talked about after His resurrection—we see in verse Act_1:3 that He spoke of things “pertaining to the kingdom of God.” – McGee

Act 1:7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

He let them know, at this particular time, that the Kingdom would not be established. Rather, He would call out a people to His name, the church. In chapter 15 of Acts, when the apostles met for the first council in Jerusalem, James pointed out this fact: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Act_15:14-18). This is what God is doing today. He is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people to His name. That is, God is calling out of the world those people who will trust Christ, and the Holy Spirit baptizes them into the body of believers, the church.

So, when the apostles asked Jesus whether He would restore the Kingdom “at this time,” His answer was that this was not the subject for discussion at that time. Nor is it the subject for discussion today. There are a great many people who say to me, “Don't you think the Lord will be coming soon?” Well, now, I'll let you in on something that is confidential between you and me: I do believe that He is coming soon. However, I don't have any authority to tell you that He is coming soon, because I don't know. Our Lord said it is not for us to know the times or the seasons. That is not the important part for us.

I do believe in prophecy. However, I think one can overemphasize it. To be built up in the faith you need more than prophetic study.

Then what is our business today? Notice again that the Lord did not rebuke them. Instead, He showed that He had something else in mind. There is something else for us to do. It is not for us to know the times nor the seasons—the Father has put those in His own power—but here is your commission: - McGee

Act 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This is the commission that still holds for today. This is not given only to a corporate body, to the church as a body; it is not a corporate commission. This is a very personal command to each believer—personally, privately. This was given to these men even before the Holy Spirit had come and formed the church. It is a direct command for you and for me today. It is our business to get the Word of God out to the world. We can't say that it is up to the church to send missionaries and to give out the gospel, and then sit back and let others do it. The all-important question is whether you are getting out the Word of God. Have you gone to the ends of the earth as a witness to the gospel? Or do you support a missionary or a radio program that does? Are you personally involved? Today there are a great many people who want to talk about the times and seasons of His coming, but they don't want to get involved in getting out the Word of God. But that is His commission—not only to the apostles—that is His commission to you and me. I am of the opinion that if the Lord should suddenly appear to you or to me right where we are at this moment, He would not talk about the time of His coming, but He would talk about getting out the gospel. He wants people to be saved. This is our commission.

In order to get this gospel out, we need power. That was His promise: “Ye shall receive power.” And we need the leading of the Lord. Although it is our business today to get out the Word of God, there is no power in us, there is no power in the church, but there is power in the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who moves through an individual or through the

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church or through a radio program. The question is whether we permit Him to do so. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.”

“Ye shall be witnesses unto me.” Our witness is to Christ. He is the center of attraction. “In Jerusalem,” which applied to us means our hometown, there should be a witness to Christ. “All Judaea” is equivalent to our community; “Samaria” represents the other side of the tracks, the folk we don't associate with. Although we may not meet with these people socially, we are to take the gospel to them. Of course, we can't associate with everybody. We can select our friends as everyone else does. That is part of the freedom which we have. There are folk who wouldn't want to associate with us. There are lots of folk who wouldn't want me around; I would crimp their style. But we have both the privilege and the responsibility to get the Word of God out to folk whether or not we associate with them socially.

Finally, this witness to Christ is to go to the uttermost part of the earth. We should never lose sight of the fact that this is the Lord's intention. He has told us if we love Him to keep His commandments. His command is personal. We can't pass this off on the crowd, and say “The church is doing it; so, I don't need to get involved.” How much are you involved, friend? What is your witness to Christ? - McGee

Act 1:9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is an important and significant miracle in the ministry of the Lord. This is especially true for our space age when eyes are turned aloft, and we are talking about travel in space. Space travel isn't really new. The Lord Jesus took off, and He didn't need a launching pad or a space suit or a missile.

There was a cloud to receive Him. What kind of cloud was that? Was it a moisture cloud? No, this was the same shekinah glory cloud that had filled the tabernacle. In His high priestly prayer, He had prayed: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (Joh_17:5). When He was born into this world, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. When He left this earth, He was wrapped in glory clouds. This is the way He returned to the Father's right hand.

While the apostles are watching all this, two angels appear to them. They look like men, and they have an important message. - McGee

Act 1:10-11 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

It is the glorified Jesus who went up into heaven. This same Jesus, the glorified Jesus, will return in like manner and to the same place. Zec_14:4 tells us: “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.” He took off at that place, and He will come back to that place. - McGee

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

Act 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

“A sabbath day's journey,” which was less than one mile, kept people pretty much in their location. That was why they would all camp very close to the temple during the feast days when they came to Jerusalem to worship. The Mount of Olives would probably be covered with people camping out, possibly several hundred thousand of them at the time of the feasts. Why? Because they needed to stay within a Sabbath day's journey of the temple. - McGee

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Act 1:13-14 *And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

I rejoice that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. Her reputation has now been cleared. At this point it was obvious that Jesus was the Son of God, and virgin born, as she had claimed.

The attitude of the apostles and the other believers was that of oneness, of prayer, and of waiting.

There is no way that we can duplicate this period today. Remember that this is in a time period, a time capsule, between His ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit. You and I do not live in that time period. It cannot be duplicated. We are not waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit; He came over nineteen hundred years ago. - McGee

Act 1:15-18 *And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, "Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry." (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.*

Here is Simon Peter speaking up again. Note that this is before the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. This man needs the filling of the Holy Spirit—and so do you and me.

He certainly gives a vivid picture of Judas, doesn't he?

If you are bothered by a seeming discrepancy here and with Mat_27:5, the following quotation from Unger's Bible Dictionary by Merrill F. Unger (pp. 615–616) will be helpful to you.

NOTE. —Between these two passages (Mat_27:5; Act_1:16-25) there appears at first sight a discrepancy. In Matthew it is stated "He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself." In Acts (ch. 1) another account is given. There it is stated: (1) That instead of throwing the money into the temple he bought a field with it. (2) That instead of hanging himself, "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." (3) That for this reason, and not because the priests had bought it with the price of blood, the field was called "Aceldama." The fact would seem to be that Judas hanged himself, probably with his girdle, which either broke or became untied, and threw him heavily forward upon the jagged rocks below, thus inflicting the wound mentioned by Peter in the Acts. The apparent discrepancy in the two accounts as to the disposition of the money may be thus explained: "It was not lawful to take into the temple treasury, for the purchase of sacred things, money that had been unlawfully gained. In such case the Jewish law provided that the money was to be restored to the donor, and, if he insisted on giving it that he should be induced to spend it for something for the public weal. By a fiction of law, the money was still considered to be Judas's, and to have been applied by him in the purchase of the well-known 'potter's field'" (Edersheim, Life of Jesus, ii, 575). - McGee

Act 1:19-20 *And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'LET HIS DWELLING PLACE BE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE LIVE IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER TAKE HIS OFFICE.'*

There is always a question about what happened here. Should Simon Peter have held this election to choose a man to take the place of Judas? I don't think so. - McGee

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Act 1:21-22 *"Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."*

I believe that the election to choose a successor to Judas Iscariot was conducted by Peter without the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet been given. Matthias was evidently a good man. He met the requirements of an apostle, which meant he must have seen the resurrected Christ, as that was a necessary requirement. – McGee

Assuming this McGee interpretation is correct, do you like Peter sometimes get ahead of the Holy Spirit?

Act 1:23-26 *And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

I can't see that this was the leading of the Holy Spirit, nor that it was God's leading in the casting of lots. Is Matthias actually the one who took the place of Judas? I don't think so. I believe that in His own time, the Lord Jesus Himself appointed one to take the place of Judas Iscariot. We don't hear another word about Matthias—nothing is recorded of his ministry. I think the Holy Spirit ignored Matthias. It is my conviction that the man the Lord chose was Paul. You may ask, "Do you have an authority for that statement?" Yes. Listen to Paul as he writes to the Galatian believers: "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)" (Gal_1:1). Paul is saying that he was chosen by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. How did He do it? Through the Holy Spirit whom He had sent into the world. The ministry of Paul certainly justifies the fact that he was the one to take Judas' place. Of course, I realize that the majority of good Bible commentators disagree with me, but I am just passing on to you my own conviction.

It is remarkable, and I want to mention again how Acts 1 brings the four Gospels to a focal point. Matthew concludes with the Resurrection, Mark with the Ascension, Luke with the promise of the Holy Spirit, and John with the promise of the Second Coming. Acts 1 brings all four records together and mentions each of them. The four Gospels funnel into Acts, and Acts is the bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. - McGee

ACTS 2:1-24 Holy Spirit Comes – Peter Preaches

THEME: The Day of Pentecost.

We can divide this chapter into two sections. The coming of the Holy Spirit is recorded in verses Act_2:1-13. The first sermon in the church age, given by the apostle Peter, is recorded in verses Act_2:14-47.

Act 2:1 *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

The words fully come could be translated “fulfilled.” When the Day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in one place.

Pentecost took place fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits. You may remember in our study in Leviticus that we found that the Feast of Firstfruits speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ is the firstfruits—“... Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming” (1Co_15:23).

The Passover speaks of the death of Jesus Christ, we learn from 1Co_5:7: “... For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” Since the Passover has been fulfilled in the death of Christ, and the Feast of Firstfruits has been fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ, we believe that the Feast of Pentecost represents something—that is, it is the fulfillment of something. Its fulfillment is the birth of the church, the day the church came into existence.

When the Day of Pentecost “was being fulfilled,” or “was fully come,” means that this was the fulfillment of the meaning and the purpose for which it was given originally. On Pentecost there was to be a meal offering to the Lord, which was to be presented in two loaves of fine flour baked with leaven (Lev. 23). This was to depict the beginning and origin of the church. It spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit in the very particular ministry of calling a people out of this world to form the body of Christ, which is the church. Five minutes before the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost there was no church. Five minutes after the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost there was a church. In other words, what Bethlehem was to the birth of Christ, Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost was to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit became incarnate. He began to baptize believers, which means that the Holy Spirit identified them with Christ as His body here on this earth. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1Co_12:13).

The Holy Spirit began to perform a ministry on the Day of Pentecost. The Day of Pentecost was fulfilled on that day. When the Day of Pentecost “was fully come” does not mean it was 12:00 noon or 7:00 in the morning or 2:00 in the afternoon. It means that Pentecost, which Israel had been celebrating for many generations, was fulfilled. - McGee

Act 2:2 *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

Now I wish to call your attention to something that is very important. When the Holy Spirit came, He was not visible. However, He made His presence known in two ways. There was an appeal to two of the gates through which all mankind gets his information: the ear–gate and the eye–gate. We hear and we see. The Holy Spirit used both these gates. Through the ear–gate they heard a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind. This sound filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Notice that it was not a wind; it was the sound of a wind. It wasn't like the sound of the wind blowing through the treetops. It sounded like a tornado, and I believe that all of Jerusalem could hear it. A friend

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of my daughter lives in Kansas and went through the experience of a tornado. It did not destroy their home but came within two blocks of it. When she wrote about it to my daughter, she said, “The first thing we noticed was a sound like a thousand freight trains coming into town.” Friend, that was a rushing, mighty wind, and that was the sound. It was that kind of sound that they heard on the Day of Pentecost. - McGee

Act 2:3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

Again, I would call your attention to this. The tongues were like as of fire. It was not fire, but it looked like fire. This verse would be better translated, “There appeared unto them tongues parting asunder.” That is, the tongues were like as a fire and it rested upon each of them. This was the appeal to the eye—gate. So, on that Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to the church, baptizing them into the body of Christ, there was an appeal to the ear and an appeal to the eye.

This is not to be confused with the baptism of fire. The baptism of fire is judgment which is yet to come. In the Book of Revelation, we see the wrath of God revealed from heaven, fire from heaven. That is a baptism of fire. If men will not have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then they must have the baptism of fire—judgment. The baptism of fire is for those who have rejected Jesus Christ.

I used to go to a prayer meeting which a wonderful preacher attended. I loved that dear brother, although his theology differed from mine in some points. He would always pray that fire would fall on us. And I always canceled out that prayer and said, “Lord, for goodness’ sake, don’t let fire fall on us.” Fire, you see, is judgment. Fire burns. That is yet to come. When the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, they saw something that in appearance looked like fire. - McGee

Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This verse says they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Someone may question the fact that I have been saying they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Were they? Yes. The Lord Jesus told them they would be. “And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Act_1:4-5). The very fact that they were filled with the Holy Spirit indicates that all the other ministries of the Holy Spirit to believers in this age had already been performed. They occurred in this order: First, they were regenerated. A man must be born again. “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Joh_3:5). Secondly, they were indwelt by the Spirit of God. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom_8:9). Thirdly, they were sealed by the Holy Spirit into an eternal relationship with God. “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph_1:13-14). And again, “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph_4:30). It is possible to grieve the Spirit of God, but it is not possible to grieve Him away. He seals the believer unto the day of redemption. We are never told to ask for the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is something which God does

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“after that ye believed,” which is better translated “having believed.” Faith in Jesus Christ gives us the sealing of the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption.

Fourthly, they were baptized of the Holy Spirit. This was foretold by John the Baptist (Luk_3:16) and repeated by the Lord Jesus: “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Act_1:5). The baptism took place, which placed them in the body of believers. It marked the beginning of the church. Ever since that day every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is placed into the body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1Co_12:13).

Now when the filling of the Holy Spirit took place on the Day of Pentecost, it indicated that the other four ministries of the Holy Spirit had been accomplished. “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” The filling of the Spirit was for service. The experience of the Day of Pentecost came from the filling of the Holy Spirit (not the baptism of the Holy Spirit). It is still the same today. The filling of the Holy Spirit is for service. This is the only work of the Holy Spirit that we are to do anything about—we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph_5:18). Notice that before Pentecost the believers wanted this filling of the Spirit. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication ...” (Act_1:14). What would their supplication be about? About the promise of the Lord Jesus that He would send His Holy Spirit to them.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a command given to us. It is not an experience. It is an act of God whereby the believer in Jesus Christ is indwelt by the Spirit of God, sealed unto the day of redemption, and placed into the church, the body of Christ, by the baptism of the Spirit. The filling of the Spirit of God is the enablement for service. We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit.

After they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (v. Act_2:4). These “other tongues” are not unknown tongues. There were many tongues spoken by Jews throughout the Roman Empire. These worshipers had come from the different areas of the Roman Empire for the Feast of Pentecost. Remember that all male Jews were required to come to Jerusalem for three of the feasts. They were in Jerusalem because of that, and many of them couldn't speak Hebrew.

That is not unusual. There are many Jews in our country today who cannot speak Hebrew. For years it was a dead language. In Israel today, Hebrew is being spoken again.

Now, my friend, the Day of Pentecost cannot be duplicated. It was a precise point in history. We cannot duplicate it any more than we can duplicate Bethlehem and the birth of Christ at Christmas.

Suppose the wise men had come back to Jerusalem again the next year and had said, “Say, we're looking for the King of the Jews who is born in Bethlehem.” Suppose Herod would have said, “Weren't you fellows here last year?” “Yes.” “Well, did you find Him?” “Yes.” “Well, if He was born in Bethlehem last year, He isn't born there again this year.” “Oh, but we had such a wonderful experience here last year, we thought we'd come back and do it all over again.” Of course, Herod would have answered, “Look, fellows, you can't duplicate that. He was born in Bethlehem only once.”

Just so, friend, you cannot duplicate Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. You don't have to beg Him to come or urge Him to come. He is here. The Spirit of God is in the world today. Jesus

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told us what He would do after He came: “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (Joh_16:14). We know He is here when He takes the things of Christ and shows them to us. And when we are talking about the things of Christ, the Spirit of God has something that He can work with.

“As the Spirit gave them utterance.” These apostles were from Galilee. They couldn't speak all these other languages. But they are speaking them now. The Spirit gave them utterance. - McGee

Act 2:5-6 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

They had come from everywhere because of the Feast of Pentecost. This was their reason for being in Jerusalem.

A better translation of “when this was noised abroad” is “when this sound having taken place.” Because of the sound as of a mighty rushing wind, a multitude came together. I shall never forget here in Pasadena, where I live, the first time we heard a jet plane break the sound barrier. We were all out in our front yards wanting to know where the sound had come from. We had never heard anything like it before. The sound the people of Jerusalem heard had never been heard before; so, they came rushing toward it—which may have been to the temple area. Probably all 120 believers were there (Act_1:15).

The people who rushed there were confounded because every man heard—in the Greek the imperfect tense is used, so that it should read, “every man was hearing”—them speak in his own dialect. It was not only that the language of their country was spoken, but each man heard his own dialect as it was spoken in his area of the country.

These men were not talking gibberish. They were not talking in unknown tongues. These men were speaking the dialects of the people in the multitude.

Now there is another aspect which I must mention. Some Bible scholars believe that what is meant here is that the apostles were not speaking in other languages at all, but were speaking in their own Galilean dialect, and the miracle was in the hearing because it says that every man heard them speak in his own dialect. Was the miracle that broke down the language barrier in the speaking or in the hearing? - McGee

Act 2:7-11 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Here were people from three continents. Certainly, they were of diverse languages and dialects. They each heard these Galileans speak in an understandable dialect. May I say these were not unknown tongues. They were languages that were understood. - McGee

Act 2:12-13 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

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They were amazed—*perplexed* would be a better word. They didn't understand what was taking place.

The literal translation is sweet wine, and I understand that is a little more intoxicating. They thought these men were drunk.

Remember that Paul writes: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph_5:18). Have you noticed that a drunk man seems to have more power? He certainly is more talkative. Perhaps many of us today need the filling of the Spirit to make us talkative—not to speak in an unknown tongue, but power to speak the gospel to others. That is the kind of tongues movement we need today. And by the way, we need a tongues movement of giving the gospel in the language that the man can understand. That is all important.

What a day Pentecost was! It was the day the Holy Spirit came to call out to a body of believers to form the church. The day before Pentecost there was no church. The day after Pentecost there was a church. Just as the Feast of Pentecost in the Old Testament followed fifty days after the Feast of the Firstfruits, so fifty days after the Lord Jesus arose from the dead the Holy Spirit came to call out a body of believers.

Now Simon Peter is going to stand up and answer the mocking taunt that they are full of new wine. - McGee

Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

Act 2:14-15 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

Now I think that we need to recognize who the congregation was. These were men of Judea and all that dwell at Jerusalem. In that day Jerusalem was entirely a Jewish city. Pilate and his people had their headquarters in Caesarea, not in Jerusalem. This early church was 100 percent Jewish. It was made up of Israelites. We need to recognize that. The church began in Jerusalem, then moved out to Judea, then Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. This has been the movement of the church from that day to this. In the Old Testament it was to Jerusalem that the world was to come for worship. Now they are commanded to leave Jerusalem and to take this message to the ends of the earth.

Peter replies to their mockery and ridicule by saying, “This could not be drunkenness, because look at the time of day it is!” This was not an hour when people on that day were drunk. He is talking to the cynic.

Now Peter quotes to them from their own Scripture. – McGee

Act 2:16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

He uses this prophecy as an answer to the cynical, the unbeliever, the mocker. This is his purpose for quoting it. He says, “That is that” which is, this is similar to or this is like that. He does not say that this is the fulfillment of that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. He is saying, “Why do you think this is something odd or something strange? We have prophecy that says these things are going to come to pass.” Peter goes on to quote the prophecy from Joel. I'm glad Simon Peter quoted as much as he did because he makes it obvious that he was not attempting to say this was fulfilled. Now what is it that is to come? - McGee

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Act 2:17-21 'AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS. AND ON MY MENSERVANTS AND ON MY MAIDSERVANTS, I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS; AND THEY SHALL PROPHECY. I WILL SHOW WONDERS IN HEAVEN ABOVE AND SIGNS IN THE EARTH BENEATH: BLOOD AND FIRE AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE COMING OF THE GREAT AND AWESOME DAY OF THE LORD. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.'

I don't think that anyone would claim that on the Day of Pentecost the moon was turned to blood or that the sun was turned to darkness. When Christ was crucified, there was darkness for three hours, but not on the Day of Pentecost. Nor were there wonders of heaven above and signs in the earth beneath. Nor was there blood and fire and a vapor of smoke. Simon Peter quotes this passage to these mockers to show them that the pouring out of the Spirit of God should not be strange to them. Joel had predicted it, and it is going to come to pass.

My friend, Joe_2:28-32 has not been fulfilled to this day. If we turn back to the Book of Joel, we will find that he had a great deal to say about the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord will begin with the Great Tribulation period. It will go on through the Millennium. In three chapters of the Book of Joel the Day of the Lord is mentioned five times. Joel talks about the fact that it is a time of war, a time of judgment upon the earth. That has not yet been fulfilled. It was not fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

If we could only see that all Simon Peter is saying in his introduction is, "Now look, this is not strange or contrary. The day is coming when this will be fulfilled. And today we are seeing something similar to it." Now after his introduction, he will move on to his text. Remember he is speaking to men who knew the Old Testament. Don't try to read nineteen hundred years of church history into this. This is just the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost. This is the inception of the church. Obviously, he is speaking to the Jews—"Ye men of Israel." He doesn't say, "Ye men of Southern California." He is talking to Israelites. Now he is getting down to the nitty gritty. Now he is getting to his subject. – McGee

Act 2:22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—

Now I personally think that miracles and wonders and signs were all different. I believe that miracles were performed for one purpose, wonders for another purpose, and signs for another purpose. Jesus did certain things that were to be signs. Some miracles of healing were performed to get the attention of His hearers. These were the three areas in which our Lord moved. - McGee

Act 2:23-24 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Peter is saying that what has happened was not contrary to God's program. This is not something that took God by surprise. However, he makes it clear that this does not release men from their responsibility. Who is responsible for the crucifixion of Christ? The religious rulers were the ones who began the movement. I would say that they were largely to blame. They moved upon the multitude so that they

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produced mob action. They also maneuvered the Roman government to execute Him. Remember, friend, He was crucified on a Roman cross. Peter is pointing his finger at his fellow Israelites.

But there is no use in our arguing about who was responsible for His death back at that time. I'll tell you who is responsible for His death. You are responsible, and I am responsible. It was for my sins and for your sins that He died. Listen to the words of Jesus:

Joh 10:17-18 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

Peter is speaking to men who were directly involved in the plot of the Crucifixion, and he says, "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

However, that is not the most important part of his message. He goes on, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." He preaches the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the first sermon ever preached in the church age. This is the beginning. This is the Day of Pentecost. What is his theme? It is not the prophecy of Joel, my friend. It is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's not try to change his subject! Now he is going to quote his text. He quotes from Psa_16:8-10. I am glad he did that because this helps me to understand Psalm 16. - McGee

Acts 2 vs 22-47 Peter's Sermon results in 3,000 baptisms.

Act 2:22-24 *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: 'I FORESAW THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE MY FACE, FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN.*

But who is the Lord? Peter will next announce the startling news that this Jesus whom they had crucified is both Lord and Christ. He does so first by speaking of the life of Jesus, then His death, resurrection, ascension, and finally His glorification at the right hand of God the Father. If they had any illusions that Jesus was still in a Judean tomb, Peter will soon disabuse their minds! They must be told that the One they had murdered is in heaven, and they must still reckon with Him.

Here then is the flow of the apostle's argument: Jesus of Nazareth was demonstrated to be a Man from God by the many miracles He performed in the power of God (v. 22). In His determined purpose and foreknowledge, God delivered Him into the hands of the Jewish people. They, in turn, turned Him over to the Gentiles (men without the law) to be crucified and put to death (v. 23). However, God raised Him up from among the dead, having loosed the pains of death. It was not possible for death to hold Him a prisoner because:

1. The character of God demanded His resurrection. He had died, the Sinless for the sinful. God must raise Him as proof of His complete satisfaction with the redemptive work of Christ.
2. The prophecies of the OT demanded His resurrection. This is the particular point which Peter presses in the following verses. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 2:25-27 *For David says concerning Him: 'I FORESAW THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE MY FACE, FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART REJOICED, AND MY TONGUE WAS GLAD; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL REST IN HOPE. FOR YOU WILL NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN HADES, N. WILL YOU ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.*

In Psalm 16 David had written prophetically concerning the Lord's life, death, resurrection, and glorification.

As to His life, David described the unbounded confidence and assurance of One who lived in uninterrupted fellowship with His Father. Heart, tongue, and flesh—His whole being was filled with joy and hope.

As to His death, David foresaw that God would not leave His soul in Hades, nor would He allow His Holy One to see corruption. In other words, the soul of the Lord Jesus would not be left in the disembodied state, neither would His body be permitted to disintegrate. (This verse should not be used to prove that the Lord Jesus went to some prison house of departed spirits in the lowest parts of the earth at the time of His death. His soul went to heaven —Luk_23:43 —and His body was placed in the tomb.) – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 2:28 *YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE.'*

As to the resurrection of the Lord, David expressed confidence that God would show Him the path of life. In Psa_16:11 a, David wrote, "You will show me the path of life." In Act_2:28 a Peter quoted it, You have made known to me the ways of life. Peter changed the future tense to the past tense. The Holy Spirit obviously directed him to do this since the resurrection was now past.

Acts 2 vs 22-47 Peter's Sermon results in 3,000 baptisms.

The present glorification of the Savior was predicted by David in the words, you will make me full of joy in Your presence, or as Psa_16:11 puts it, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."- Believers Bible Commentary

Act 2:29 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Apparently, Peter was standing in the temple area. He could point his finger to the sepulcher of David. I stood in that temple area, and I could point my finger up to the top of Mount Zion where David is buried. He is saying, "It is obvious that David wasn't speaking about himself because his bones are right up there on the top of the hill. His grave is there; his body did undergo corruption. He is not speaking of himself but of Someone whom you and I know, someone who did not see corruption but was raised from the dead." - McGee

Act 2:30-31 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

When he wrote the Psalm, David was speaking as a prophet. He remembered that God had promised to raise up One of his descendants to sit on his throne forever. David realized that this One would be the Messiah, and that though He would die, His soul would not be left in the disembodied condition, and His body would not decay. - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 2:32-33 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Now Peter repeats an announcement that must have shocked his Jewish audience. The Messiah of whom David prophesied was Jesus of Nazareth. God had raised Him from among the dead, as the apostles could all testify because they were eyewitnesses to His resurrection. Following His resurrection, the Lord Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God, and now the Holy Spirit had been sent as promised by the Father. This was the explanation of what had happened in Jerusalem earlier in the day. – Believers Bible Commentary

Now Peter is saying to the crowd there that day, "This that you have seen—that is, the miracle of hearing their own languages spoken by Galileans—has taken place because Jesus was raised from the dead." – McGee

Is it any wonder that the first sermon after the Holy Spirit is an Easter sermon on the Resurrection?

Act 2:34-35 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL." ' "

Old Testament saints didn't go to heaven. If any of them had been up in heaven, David would have been there. David did not ascend into heaven. You see, the Old Testament saints are going to be raised to live down on this earth someday. It is the church that will be taken to the New Jerusalem. It is said of the believers today when they die that they are absent from the body and present with the Lord (2Co_5:8).

Now he quotes Psa_110:1. He is showing them that Jesus is up yonder at the right hand of God. He will be there until He comes back to establish His Kingdom. But while He is at the right hand of God, He is still working in the world. - McGee

Acts 2 vs 22-47 Peter's Sermon results in 3,000 baptisms.

Act 2:36-37 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Now, once again, the announcement comes crashing down upon the Jewish people. GOD HAS MADE BOTH LORD AND CHRIST—THIS JESUS WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED (Greek word order). As Bengel said, "The sting of the speech is put at the end"—THIS JESUS, whom you crucified. They had crucified God's Anointed One, and the coming of the Holy Spirit was evidence that Jesus had been exalted in heaven (see Joh_7:39).

So mighty was the convicting power of the Holy Spirit that there was an immediate response from the audience. Without any invitation or appeal from Peter, they cried out, "What shall we do?" The question was prompted by a deep sense of guilt. They now realized that the Jesus whom they had slain was God's beloved Son! This Jesus had been raised from the dead and was now exalted in heaven. This being so, how could these guilty murderers possibly escape judgment?

Notice: Peters method led by the Holy Spirit is point out their need for a savior. Can anyone really accept Christ without understanding the position in sin and the hopelessness without Jesus?

Act 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter's answer was that they should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. First, they were to repent, acknowledging their guilt, and taking sides with God against themselves.

Then they were to be baptized for (or unto) the remission of their sins. At first glance, this verse seems to teach salvation by baptism, and many people insist that this is precisely what it does mean. Such an interpretation is impossible for the following reasons:

1. In dozens of NT passages, salvation is said to be by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Joh_1:12; Joh_3:16, Joh_3:36; Joh_6:47; Act_16:31; Rom_10:9, for example). No verse or two could conceivably contradict such overwhelming testimony.
2. The thief on the cross had the assurance of salvation apart from baptism (Luk_23:43).
3. The Savior is not stated to have baptized anyone, a strange omission if baptism is essential to salvation.
4. The Apostle Paul was thankful that he baptized only a few of the Corinthians—a strange cause for thankfulness if baptism has saving merit (1Co_1:14-16).

It is important to notice that only Jews were ever told to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (see Act_22:16). In this fact, we believe, is the secret to the understanding of this passage. The nation of Israel had crucified the Lord of glory. The Jewish people had cried out, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Mat_27:25). The guilt of the Messiah's death was thus claimed by the people of Israel.

Now, some of these Jews had come to realize their mistake. By repentance they acknowledged their sin to God. By trusting the Lord Jesus as their Savior, they were regenerated and received eternal forgiveness of sins. By public water baptism they dissociated themselves from the nation that crucified the Lord and identified themselves with Him. Baptism thus became the outward sign that their sin in connection with the rejection of Christ (as well as all their sins) had been washed away. It took them off Jewish ground and placed them on Christian ground. But baptism did not save them. Only faith in Christ could do that. To teach otherwise is to teach another gospel and thus be accursed (Gal_1:8-9).

An alternative interpretation of baptism for the remission of sins is given by Ryrie:

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This does not mean in order that sins might be remitted, for everywhere in the New Testament sins are forgiven as a result of faith in Christ, not as a result of baptism. It means be baptized because of the remission of sins. The Greek preposition eis, for, has this meaning "because of" not only here but also in such a passage as Mat_12:41 where the meaning can only be "they repented because of [not in order to] the preaching of Jonah." Repentance brought the remission of sins for this Pentecostal crowd, and because of the remission of sins they were asked to be baptized.

Peter assured them that if they repented and were baptized, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. To insist that this order applies to us today is to misunderstand God's administrative dealings in the early days of the church. As H. P. Barker has so ably pointed out in *The Vicar of Christ*, there are four communities of believers in the Book of Acts, and the order of events in connection with the reception of the Holy Spirit is different in each case.

Here in Act_2:38 we read about Jewish Christians. For them, the order was:

1. Repentance.
2. Water baptism.
3. Reception of the Holy Spirit.

The conversion of Samaritans is recorded in Act_8:14-17. There we read that the following events occurred:

1. They believed.
2. They were baptized in water.
3. The apostles prayed for them.
4. The apostles laid their hands on them.
5. They received the Holy Spirit.

In Act_10:44-48 the conversion of Gentiles is in view. Notice the order here:

1. Faith.
2. Reception of the Holy Spirit.
3. Water baptism.

A final community of believers is made up of disciples of John the Baptist, Act_19:1-7:

1. They believed.
2. They were rebaptized.
3. The Apostle Paul laid his hands on them.
4. They received the Holy Spirit.

Does this mean there were four ways of salvation in the Book of Acts? Of course not. Salvation was, is, and always will be on the basis of faith in the Lord. But during the transition period recorded in Acts, God chose to vary the events connected with the reception of the Holy Spirit for reasons which He knew but did not choose to reveal to us.

Then which of these patterns applies to us today? Since Israel nationally has rejected the Messiah, the Jewish people have forfeited any special privileges they might have had. Today God is calling out of the Gentiles a people for His Name (Act_15:14). Therefore, the order for today is that which is found in Acts 10:

Faith.

Acts 2 vs 22-47 Peter's Sermon results in 3,000 baptisms.

Reception of the Holy Spirit.

Water baptism.

We believe this order applies to all today, to Jews as well as to Gentiles. This may sound arbitrary at first. It might be asked, "When did the order in Act_2:38 cease to apply to Jews and the order in Act_10:44-48 begin?" No definite date can be given, of course. But the Book of Acts traces a gradual transition from the gospel's going out primarily to Jews, to its being repeatedly rejected by the Jews, to its going out to the Gentiles. By the end of the Book of Acts the nation of Israel had been largely set aside. By unbelief it had forfeited any special claim as God's chosen people. During the Church Age it would be reckoned with the Gentile nations, and God's order for the Gentiles, outlined in Act_10:44-48, would apply. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 2:39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Peter next reminds them that the promise of the Holy Spirit is to them and to their children (the Jewish people) and to all who are afar off (the Gentiles), even as many as ... God would call. The very people who had said, "His blood be on us and on our children," are now assured of grace for themselves and their children if they will trust the Lord.

This verse has often been used mistakenly to teach that children of believing parents are thereby assured of covenant privileges, or that they are saved. Spurgeon answers this effectively:

Will not the Church of God know that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The natural birth communicates nature's filthiness, but it cannot convey peace. Under the new covenant, we are expressly told that the sons of God are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The important thing to notice is that the promise is not only to you and to your children but to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. It is as inclusive as the "whosoever" of the gospel invitation. - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 2:40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." In other words, "Get away from this religion. Turn to Christ." – McGee

When you are asked what religion, you are, how do you respond?

Act 2:41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

This is not some preacher's count. These were genuinely born-again believers. Here is one place where the figure on the number of converts is absolutely accurate. – McGee

There was a great forward surge of people, desiring to be baptized as outward evidence that they had gladly received Peter's word as the word of the Lord.

There were added to the company of believers that day about three thousand souls. If the best proof of a Holy Spirit ministry is the conversion of souls, then surely Peter's was that kind of ministry. Doubtless this Galilean fisherman was reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus, "I will make you fishers of men" (Mat_4:19). And perhaps of the Savior's saying, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (Joh_14:12).

Acts 2 vs 22-47 Peter's Sermon results in 3,000 baptisms.

It is instructive to notice the care with which the number of converts is recorded—about three thousand souls. All servants of the Lord might exercise similar caution in tabulating so-called decisions for Christ. – Believers Bible Commentary

The Fellowship of the Believers

Act 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

The proof of reality is in continuance. These converts proved the reality of their profession by continuing steadfastly in:

1. The apostles' doctrine. This means the inspired teachings of the apostles, delivered orally at first, and now preserved in the NT.
2. Fellowship. Another evidence of new life was the desire of the new believers to be with the people of God and share things in common with them. There was a sense of being separated to God from the world, and a community of interests with other Christians.
3. The breaking of bread. This expression is used in the NT to refer both to the Lord's Supper and to eating a common meal. The meaning in any particular case must be determined by the sense of the passage. Here it obviously refers to the Lord's Supper, since it would be quite unnecessary to say that they continued steadfastly eating their meals. From Act_20:7 we learn that the practice of the early Christians was to break bread on the first day of the week. During the early days of the church, a love feast was held in connection with the Lord's Supper as an expression of the love of the saints for one another. However, abuses crept in, and the "agape" or love feast was discontinued.
4. Prayers. This was the fourth principal practice of the early church, and expressed complete dependence on the Lord for worship, guidance, preservation, and service. – Believers Bible Commentary

I have a little booklet called the Spiritual Fingerprints of the Visible Church. How can you identify a real church? Notice the four marks of identification. First, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. The mark of a church is not the height of the steeple nor the sound of the bell. It is not whether the pulpit is stationed in the middle or the chancel is divided. The important issue is whether or not they hold to the apostles' doctrine. Correct doctrine was one of the fingerprints of the visible church. Secondly, fellowship. They were sharing the things of Christ. The third, breaking bread. Breaking of bread is more than just going through the ritual of the Lord's Supper. It means being brought into a fellowship and a relationship with Christ. Fourth, prayers. I'm afraid in the average church today it is a little fingerprint. That is, prayer is the evident weakness of the church. Actually, the greatest asset of any church is prayer. - McGee

Act 2:43 *Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.*

A sense of reverential awe came over the people. The mighty power of the Holy Spirit was so evident that hearts were hushed and subdued. Astonishment filled their souls as they saw the apostles performing many wonders and signs. Wonders were miracles which excited wonder and amazement. Signs were miracles designed to convey instruction. A miracle could be both a wonder and a sign. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 2:44-47 *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God. And having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

Never has the church been as spiritually strong as it was at that time. This type of living would never work today because we have too many carnal Christians. And, notice, it was the Lord who did the adding to the church.

Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

THEME: First miracle of the church; Peter's second sermon.

We are still in the first division of the Book of Acts which shows the Lord Jesus Christ at work by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in Jerusalem. We have seen the birthday of the church on the Day of Pentecost, a day which can never be repeated. There was a church because the Holy Spirit had become incarnate in believers. He was indwelling the believers, and He filled them with His love, power, and blessing for service.

Just as you and I cannot repeat Bethlehem, neither can we repeat Pentecost. But we do need the power of the Holy Spirit today. Thank God, He is in the world, convicting the world, restraining evil in the world. We don't have to seek Him; He is indwelling all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this third chapter we will find the healing of the lame man, verses Act_3:1-11. The appealing and revealing address of Peter is in verses Act_3:12-26. The result was five thousand men who believed! – McGee

The Lame Beggar Healed

Act 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

This apparently was the time of the evening sacrifice when a priest went in to offer incense with his prayers. We find in the first chapter of Luke that this was the service Zacharias was performing when he went to minister before the golden altar and the angel appeared to him. That golden altar, the altar of incense, speaks of prayer. This was the time of prayer. There would be a great company in the temple area praying at this time. – McGee

Act 3:2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

This man had been born lame. He was brought every day and put there at the gate of the temple. What a contrast he was to the gate which is called Beautiful. Here was a beautiful gate, and here was a man who was carried. Man can make beautiful things, but man cannot improve himself. Of course, man can do some trimming on the outside. He can cut his hair, have his fingernails manicured, take a bath now and then, but man can never change that old nature which he has. This is the contrast we have here—a beautiful gate of the temple and a man lame from his mother's womb.

He was there to beg for alms. This was the way he lived, of course. - McGee

Act 3:3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

The lame man had obviously given up hope of ever being cured, so he contented himself to ask for a handout. - McGee

Act 3:4 And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

Instead of looking on this man as a helpless wretch, Peter saw him as one in whom the mighty power of God might be demonstrated! "If we are led by the Spirit, we will fix our eyes on those whom God intends to bless, instead of firing blank cartridges and beating the air" (Selected).

Peter's command, "Look at us," was not intended to attract publicity to John and himself, but merely to insure the undivided attention of the beggar. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 3:5-6 So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Still expecting nothing more than financial help, the cripple gave them his attention. Then he heard an announcement that was both disappointing and thrilling to him. As far as a handout was concerned, Peter had nothing to give. But he

Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

had something better to give. By the authority of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he commanded the lame man to rise up and walk. A witty old preacher said, “The crippled beggar asked for alms and he got legs.”

It is said that Thomas Aquinas visited the pope at a time when large sums of money were being counted. The pope boasted, “We need no longer say with Peter, ‘Silver and gold I do not have!’” Aquinas replied, “Neither can you say with Peter, ‘Rise up and walk!’” – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Have the riches we have in the church and in our lives corrupt our faith and tarnished our righteousness?

Act 3:7-8 And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So, he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.

As Peter helped the man to his feet, strength flowed into the hitherto useless feet and ankle bones. Here we are reminded again that in the spiritual life, there is a curious mingling of the divine and the human. Peter helps the man to his feet; then God performs the cure. We must do what we can do; then God will do what we cannot do.

The miracle of healing was immediate, not gradual. Notice how the Spirit of God multiplies words of action and movement: leaping up, stood ... walked and entered ... walking, leaping.

When we remember the slow, painful process an infant goes through in learning to walk, we realize how wonderful it was for this man to walk and leap right away, for the first time in his life.

This miracle, performed in the Name of Jesus, was a further testimony to the people of Israel that the One they had crucified was alive and was willing to be their Healer and Savior. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 3:9-10 And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

The fact that the beggar had lain daily at the door of the temple made him a familiar sight. Now that he was healed, the miracle was necessarily generally known. The people could not deny that a mighty miracle had taken place, but what was the meaning of it all? – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico

Act 3:11 Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

Is this to be the beginning of the Kingdom? Great things had happened in Jerusalem during the past few weeks. They had witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, His resurrection, His ascension, and the Day of Pentecost. They are amazed. What is really taking place? - McGee

Act 3:12 So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

He doesn't say, “Ye men of the United States.” He is talking to the men of Israel. This is the Jerusalem period, friend. This is the transition period. The church has not yet moved out to other areas. No one in Rome has heard yet. No one in America has heard. No one in England has heard. This is in Jerusalem.

Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

May I say something kindly? Folk reading the Bible should bring to it the same common sense they use in reading other books. This is God's Book. But it is not some “way out yonder” type of book. It deals with us right where we are, and it communicates so we can understand it.

Peter is very careful to tell them that this miracle was not done in his own power. He is going to direct this Jewish audience back to the Old Testament. He is going to tell them that if they will turn to God, these prophecies can be fulfilled.

Listen to some of the prophecies which these Jewish people knew. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zec_12:10). This would be fulfilled if they would turn to Him. It was not fulfilled because the nation did not accept the Lord Jesus at that time. They did not repent and turn to Him. Peter will invite them to turn to the Lord Jesus. They will refuse. The time is still to come when this will be fulfilled. Also Ezekiel spoke of the Kingdom: “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Eze_36:27-28). Notice the twelfth chapter of Isaiah, a remarkable chapter—only six verses—that speaks of the worship during the time of the Kingdom: “And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation” (Isa_12:1-2). Also, as we have mentioned, Isa_35:6 told of the lame man leaping as an hart. “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa_35:10). They should have seen that this lame man was a miniature, a picture of the whole nation. If they would but turn to God, all these promises would be fulfilled. - McGee

Act 3:13-16 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Quickly he brings them to the true Author of the miracle. It was Jesus, the One they had rejected, denied, and killed. God raised Him from the dead and glorified Him in heaven. Now, through faith in Him, this man had been cured of his helplessness.

Peter's holy boldness in accusing the men of Israel is remarkable. His charges against them are:

1. They delivered up Jesus (to the Gentiles for trial).
2. They denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to release Him.
3. They denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for the release of a murderer (Barabbas).
4. They killed the Prince (or Author) of life.

Notice, by contrast, God's treatment of Jesus:

1. He raised Him from the dead (v. 15).
2. He glorified His Servant Jesus—not His Son Jesus, as in the 1611 Version (v. 13).

Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

Notice finally the emphasis on faith in Christ as the explanation of the miracle of healing (v. 16). In this verse, as elsewhere, the name stands for the person. Thus, faith in His name means faith in Christ. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 3:17 "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

There is a distinct change in Peter's tone in this verse. Having charged the men of Israel with the death of the Lord Jesus, he now addresses them as his Jewish brethren, graciously allowing that they did it in ignorance, and urging them to repent and be converted.

It almost seems contradictory to hear Peter say that the Jews crucified the Lord Jesus in ignorance. Did He not come with the full credentials of the Messiah? Did He not perform wondrous miracles in their midst? Did He not infuriate them by claiming to be equal with God? Yes, this is all true. And yet they were ignorant of the fact that Jesus Christ was God incarnate. They expected the Messiah to come, not in lowly grace, but rather as a mighty military deliverer. They looked upon Jesus as an impostor.

They did not know He was truly the Son of God. They probably thought they were doing God a service in killing Him. Thus the Savior Himself said at the time of the crucifixion, "They do not know what they do" (Luk_23:34), and Paul later wrote, "Had they [the princes of this age] known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1Co_2:8).

All this was designed to assure the men of Israel that their sin, however great, was still subject to the forgiving grace of God. - McGee

Act 3:18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

Without excusing their sin, Peter shows that God overruled it to fulfill His own purposes. The prophets of the OT had predicted that the Messiah would suffer. The Jewish people were the ones who inflicted the suffering on Him. But now He offered Himself to them as Lord and Savior. Through Him they could receive forgiveness of their sins.

Act 3:19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

The people of Israel should repent and make an about-face. When they would do this, their sins would be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come.

It must be remembered that this message is addressed to the men of Israel (v. 12). It emphasizes that national repentance must precede national restoration and blessing. The times of refreshing ... from the presence of the Lord refer to the blessings of Christ's future kingdom on earth, as mentioned in the next verse.

Do you believe healing as a person and as a nation is dependent on repentance?

Act 3:20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

Act 3:21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Following Israel's repentance, God will send the Messiah, Jesus. As mentioned previously, this refers to the Second Advent of Christ to set up His thousand-year reign on the earth.

The question inevitably arises at this point, "If Israel had repented when Peter was speaking, would the Lord Jesus have returned to earth?" Great and godly men have differed on this subject. Some insist He would have returned; otherwise,

Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

they say the promise was not a bona fide one. Others take the passage as being prophetic, as showing the order of events that would actually take place. The question is a purely hypothetical one. The facts are that Israel did not repent, and the Lord Jesus has not returned.

It is clear from verse 21 that God foresaw that the nation of Israel would reject Christ, and that the present age of grace would intervene before His Second Coming. Heaven must receive Christ until the times of restoration of all things. The times of restoration of all things point forward to the Millennium. They do not indicate universal salvation, as some have suggested; such a teaching is foreign to the Bible. Rather they point to the time when creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption and Christ will reign in righteousness as King over all the earth.

These times of restoration had been foretold by the prophets of the OT period.

Verse 21 has been used in an effort to disprove the pretribulation Rapture. The argument is that if the heavens must receive Jesus until the beginning of the Millennium, then He cannot come before then to take the church home to heaven. The answer, of course, is that Peter is speaking here to the men of Israel (v. 12). He is discussing God's dealings with Israel nationally. As far as the nation of Israel is concerned, the Lord Jesus will remain in heaven until He comes to reign at the end of the Tribulation. But individual Jews who believe on Him during this Church Age will share with believing Gentiles in the Rapture of the church, which could take place at any moment. Also, in the Rapture, the Lord does not leave the heavens; we go to Him in the air. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 3:22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. HIM YOU SHALL HEAR IN ALL THINGS, WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU.'

As an example of an OT prophecy looking forward to Christ's glorious reign, Peter quotes Deu_18:15, Deu_18:18-19. The passage pictures the Lord Jesus as God's Prophet in Israel's golden age, announcing God's will and law.

When Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me," he did not mean likeness as to character or ability, but likeness in the sense that both were raised up by God. "He will raise Him up as He raised me up." – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 3:23 AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERY SOUL WHO WILL NOT HEAR THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE.'

The nation of Israel was on the verge of a great judgment. In A.D. 70 Titus, the Roman general, came with his army and destroyed the city. It is estimated that over a million people perished, and the rest were sold into slavery throughout the Roman Empire. Judgment did come upon these people. – McGee

During Christ's reign on earth, those who refuse to hear and obey Him will be utterly destroyed. Of course, those who reject Him today suffer eternal judgment also, but the primary thought of this passage is that Christ will yet rule with a rod of iron and that those who disobey Him and rebel against Him will be promptly executed. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 3:24-26 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

3:24 To further emphasize that the times of restoration were well predicted, Peter adds that all the prophets from Samuel and his successors spoke of these days.

3:25 Peter now reminds his Jewish hearers that the promise of these times of blessing was made to them as sons of the prophets and descendants of Abraham. After all, God had made a covenant with Abraham to bless all the families of the earth in his seed. All the promises of millennial blessing center in the Seed, i.e., in Christ. They should therefore accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah.

3:26 God had already raised up His Servant (3:13), and had sent Him first to the nation of Israel. This refers to the Incarnation and life of our Lord rather than to His resurrection. If they would receive Him, He would turn away every one of them from their iniquities.

In this sermon by Peter, delivered to the people of Israel, we notice that it is the kingdom that is in view rather than the church. Also the emphasis is national rather than individual. The Spirit of God is lingering over Israel in longsuffering mercy, pleading with God's ancient people to receive the glorified Lord Jesus as Messiah and thus hasten the advent of Christ's kingdom on earth.

But Israel would not hear. – Believers Bible Commentary

This is a transition period. They were given their final chance to accept the Messiah. Because they turned down their opportunity to accept the Messiah, later on Paul will come on the scene as the apostle to the Gentiles. What might have happened if they had turned to God is merely speculation. They did not turn to Him. God is never surprised by what man does, and He still works things out according to His plan and purpose. - McGee

GATE, THE BEAUTIFUL

This gate of Herod's temple is mentioned in the narrative of the healing of the lame man by Peter and John in Acts 3:2,10. Little dispute exists as to the identification of the Beautiful Gate with the splendid "gate of Nicanor" of the Mishna (Mid., i.4), and "Corinthian Gate" of Josephus (BJ, V, v, 3), but authorities are divided as to whether this gate was situated at the entrance to the women's court on the East, or was the gate reached by 15 steps, dividing that court from the court of the men. The balance of recent opinion inclines strongly to the former view (compare Kennedy, "Problems of Herod's Temple," *The Expositor Times*, XX, 170); others take the opposite view (Waterhouse, in *Sacred Sites of the Gospels*, 110), or leave the question open (thus G. A. Smith, *Jerusalem*, II, 212). See TEMPLE, HEROD'S.

The gate itself was of unusual size and splendor. It received the name "Nicanor" from its being the work, or having been constructed at the expense, of an Alexandrian Jew of this name. Lately an ossuary was discovered on Mt. Olivet bearing the Greek inscription:

"The bones of Nicanor the Alexandrian, who made the doors."

Its other name, "Corinthian," refers to the costly material of which it was constructed-- Corinthian bronze. Josephus gives many interesting particulars about this gate, which, he tells us, greatly excelled in workmanship and value all the others (BJ, V, v, 3). These were plated with gold and silver, but this still more richly and thickly. It was larger than the other gates; was 50 cubits in height (the others 40); its weight was so great that it took 20 men to move it (BJ, VI, vi, 3). Its massiveness and magnificence, therefore, well earned for it the name "Beautiful."

W. Shaw Caldecott

Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

THEME: First miracle of the church; Peter's second sermon.

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Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

Notice finally the emphasis on faith in Christ as the explanation of the miracle of healing (v. 16). In this verse, as elsewhere, the name stands for the person. Thus, faith in His name means faith in Christ. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 3:17 *"Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.*

There is a distinct change in Peter's tone in this verse. Having charged the men of Israel with the death of the Lord Jesus, he now addresses them as his Jewish brethren, graciously allowing that they did it in ignorance, and urging them to repent and be converted.

It almost seems contradictory to hear Peter say that the Jews crucified the Lord Jesus in ignorance. Did He not come with the full credentials of the Messiah? Did He not perform wondrous miracles in their midst? Did He not infuriate them by claiming to be equal with God? Yes, this is all true. And yet they were ignorant of the fact that Jesus Christ was God incarnate. They expected the Messiah to come, not in lowly grace, but rather as a mighty military deliverer. They looked upon Jesus as an impostor.

They did not know He was truly the Son of God. They probably thought they were doing God a service in killing Him. Thus the Savior Himself said at the time of the crucifixion, "They do not know what they do" (Luk_23:34), and Paul later wrote, "Had they [the princes of this age] known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1Co_2:8).

All this was designed to assure the men of Israel that their sin, however great, was still subject to the forgiving grace of God. - McGee

Act 3:18 *But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.*

Without excusing their sin, Peter shows that God overruled it to fulfill His own purposes. The prophets of the OT had predicted that the Messiah would suffer. The Jewish people were the ones who inflicted the suffering on Him. But now He offered Himself to them as Lord and Savior. Through Him they could receive forgiveness of their sins.

Act 3:19 *Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,*

The people of Israel should repent and make an about-face. When they would do this, their sins would be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come.

It must be remembered that this message is addressed to the men of Israel (v. 12). It emphasizes that national repentance must precede national restoration and blessing. The times of refreshing ... from the presence of the Lord refer to the blessings of Christ's future kingdom on earth, as mentioned in the next verse.

Do you believe healing as a person and as a nation is dependent on repentance?

Act 3:20 *and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,*

Act 3:21 *whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*

Following Israel's repentance, God will send the Messiah, Jesus. As mentioned previously, this refers to the Second Advent of Christ to set up His thousand-year reign on the earth.

The question inevitably arises at this point, "If Israel had repented when Peter was speaking, would the Lord Jesus have returned to earth?" Great and godly men have differed on this subject. Some insist He would have returned; otherwise,

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they say the promise was not a bona fide one. Others take the passage as being prophetic, as showing the order of events that would actually take place. The question is a purely hypothetical one. The facts are that Israel did not repent, and the Lord Jesus has not returned.

It is clear from verse 21 that God foresaw that the nation of Israel would reject Christ, and that the present age of grace would intervene before His Second Coming. Heaven must receive Christ until the times of restoration of all things. The times of restoration of all things point forward to the Millennium. They do not indicate universal salvation, as some have suggested; such a teaching is foreign to the Bible. Rather they point to the time when creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption and Christ will reign in righteousness as King over all the earth.

These times of restoration had been foretold by the prophets of the OT period.

Verse 21 has been used in an effort to disprove the pretribulation Rapture. The argument is that if the heavens must receive Jesus until the beginning of the Millennium, then He cannot come before then to take the church home to heaven. The answer, of course, is that Peter is speaking here to the men of Israel (v. 12). He is discussing God's dealings with Israel nationally. As far as the nation of Israel is concerned, the Lord Jesus will remain in heaven until He comes to reign at the end of the Tribulation. But individual Jews who believe on Him during this Church Age will share with believing Gentiles in the Rapture of the church, which could take place at any moment. Also, in the Rapture, the Lord does not leave the heavens; we go to Him in the air. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 3:22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. HIM YOU SHALL HEAR IN ALL THINGS, WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU.'

As an example of an OT prophecy looking forward to Christ's glorious reign, Peter quotes Deu_18:15, Deu_18:18-19. The passage pictures the Lord Jesus as God's Prophet in Israel's golden age, announcing God's will and law.

When Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me," he did not mean likeness as to character or ability, but likeness in the sense that both were raised up by God. "He will raise Him up as He raised me up." – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 3:23 AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERY SOUL WHO WILL NOT HEAR THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE.'

The nation of Israel was on the verge of a great judgment. In A.D. 70 Titus, the Roman general, came with his army and destroyed the city. It is estimated that over a million people perished, and the rest were sold into slavery throughout the Roman Empire. Judgment did come upon these people. – McGee

During Christ's reign on earth, those who refuse to hear and obey Him will be utterly destroyed. Of course, those who reject Him today suffer eternal judgment also, but the primary thought of this passage is that Christ will yet rule with a rod of iron and that those who disobey Him and rebel against Him will be promptly executed. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 3:24-26 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

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3:24 To further emphasize that the times of restoration were well predicted, Peter adds that all the prophets from Samuel and his successors spoke of these days.

3:25 Peter now reminds his Jewish hearers that the promise of these times of blessing was made to them as sons of the prophets and descendants of Abraham. After all, God had made a covenant with Abraham to bless all the families of the earth in his seed. All the promises of millennial blessing center in the Seed, i.e., in Christ. They should therefore accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah.

3:26 God had already raised up His Servant (3:13), and had sent Him first to the nation of Israel. This refers to the Incarnation and life of our Lord rather than to His resurrection. If they would receive Him, He would turn away every one of them from their iniquities.

In this sermon by Peter, delivered to the people of Israel, we notice that it is the kingdom that is in view rather than the church. Also the emphasis is national rather than individual. The Spirit of God is lingering over Israel in longsuffering mercy, pleading with God's ancient people to receive the glorified Lord Jesus as Messiah and thus hasten the advent of Christ's kingdom on earth.

But Israel would not hear. – Believers Bible Commentary

This is a transition period. They were given their final chance to accept the Messiah. Because they turned down their opportunity to accept the Messiah, later on Paul will come on the scene as the apostle to the Gentiles. What might have happened if they had turned to God is merely speculation. They did not turn to Him. God is never surprised by what man does, and He still works things out according to His plan and purpose. - McGee

GATE, THE BEAUTIFUL

This gate of Herod's temple is mentioned in the narrative of the healing of the lame man by Peter and John in Acts 3:2,10. Little dispute exists as to the identification of the Beautiful Gate with the splendid "gate of Nicanor" of the Mishna (Mid., i.4), and "Corinthian Gate" of Josephus (BJ, V, v, 3), but authorities are divided as to whether this gate was situated at the entrance to the women's court on the East, or was the gate reached by 15 steps, dividing that court from the court of the men. The balance of recent opinion inclines strongly to the former view (compare Kennedy, "Problems of Herod's Temple," The Expositor Times, XX, 170); others take the opposite view (Waterhouse, in Sacred Sites of the Gospels, 110), or leave the question open (thus G. A. Smith, Jerusalem, II, 212). See TEMPLE, HEROD'S.

The gate itself was of unusual size and splendor. It received the name "Nicanor" from its being the work, or having been constructed at the expense, of an Alexandrian Jew of this name. Lately an ossuary was discovered on Mt. Olivet bearing the Greek inscription:

"The bones of Nicanor the Alexandrian, who made the doors."

Its other name, "Corinthian," refers to the costly material of which it was constructed-- Corinthian bronze. Josephus gives many interesting particulars about this gate, which, he tells us, greatly excelled in workmanship and value all the others (BJ, V, v, 3). These were plated with gold and silver, but this still more richly and thickly. It was larger than the other gates; was 50 cubits in height (the others 40); its weight was so great that it took 20 men to move it (BJ, VI, vi, 3). Its massiveness and magnificence, therefore, well earned for it the name "Beautiful."

W. Shaw Caldecott

Acts 5: Holy Spirit operates in Truth & Persecution spreads the Gospel

THEME: Death of Ananias and Sapphira; second persecution.

As we come to chapter 5, we are continuing to see the effects of the great sermon that Simon Peter gave. Also we are introduced to the first defection in the church, followed by the death of Ananias and Sapphira—who were Christians, but were not living on the high spiritual level of the early church.

At the end of chapter 4 we were introduced to a man by the name of Barnabas. He will be before us again. He was one of the wonderful saints in the early church, a true man of God. He was the first missionary partner of the apostle Paul when they went into the difficult Galatian area, and yet God marvelously blessed their ministry there.

Barnabas had given quite a sum of money to the church. He had made a generous contribution, and everyone was talking about it. I imagine he received a great deal of publicity for his generosity. Remember that in the early church they had all things common. It reveals the fact that they were on a high spiritual level to be able to do this.

Now the first defection comes in. Having all things in common could not continue and did not continue simply because of the carnal nature that is in mankind. - McGee

Ananias and Sapphira

Act 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

It is obvious that they were imitating Barnabas. They saw that he got a certain amount of publicity, and they thought it would be nice if they could get that kind of publicity too. They wanted it.

I have found that there are people who will give in order to be noticed. I recall a meeting with businessmen in Pasadena when I was a pastor there. We were planning to start a youth organization, and we were asking these men to give donations for the founding of this movement. It was decided that donations would not be made public.

I was informed that one of these men would contribute very little if he were not given the opportunity to speak out publicly to let everybody know how much he was giving. It is quite interesting that he contributed a small amount. After the meeting he confided in one of the men that he had intended to give about ten times that amount, but he had expected to be able to stand up or at least raise his hand to indicate how much he had given. You see, pride is still in human nature today. That was the condition of Ananias and Sapphira. - McGee

Act 5:2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

There was nothing wrong with the fact that they kept back part of the money. They had a right to do that. The property had been theirs and they had the right to do with the money whatever they wished.

Today, we in the church are under grace. We are not forced to give any certain amount. Someone may say we ought to give a tithe. In the early church they gave everything they owned. Ananias and Sapphira did not give it all but kept back part of it, which they had a right to do. Their problem, their sin, was that they lied about it. They said they were giving all when actually they were keeping part of it for themselves.

I don't like to have people sing the song that talks about putting "my all" on the altar. Unfortunately, that makes liars out of the people who are singing. We need to be very careful about the songs we sing. A vow to the Lord should never be made lightly.

Ananias and Sapphira said they were laying all on the altar, but they were lying about it. - McGee

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Act 5:3 *But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"*

The sin of this man and his wife was that they lied about it. - McGee

Act 5:4 *While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*

There are people today who deny that the Holy Spirit is God. You will notice that Simon Peter believed He was God. First, he says, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Then he says, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The Holy Spirit is God. - McGee

Act 5:5 *Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.*

There are those today who think that Simon Peter caused the death of this man, Ananias. They even blame him for his death. I want to absolve him of this crime. Simon Peter was probably as surprised as anyone when Ananias fell down dead. I don't think that he knew at all what was going to happen. Do you know who struck Ananias dead? God did. Do you feel that you want to bring charges against God? Do you want to call the FBI to tell them that God is guilty of murder? May I say to you, if you can give life, you have the right to take it away. This is God's universe. We are God's creatures. We breathe His air. We use bodies that He has given to us. My friend, He can take our bodies any time He wishes to. God is not guilty of a crime. This is His discipline within the church. God is the One who is responsible for the death of Ananias and Sapphira. – McGee

Are you aware of the proximity principle in the Bible? The closer you are to God, the closer you are to His righteous, and higher the standard.

Read **2 Sam 6:6-7** *And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and [d]took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his [e]error; and he died there by the ark of God.*

How close are you willing to get to God? It is our free will that keeps us at distance – not God!

Act 5:6-9 *And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." Then, Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."*

Simon Peter knows what will happen to her. He did not know what was going to happen to Ananias, but now it is obvious what will happen to this woman. - McGee

Act 5:10-11 *Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.*

There are two things that amazed me about this incident. One is the fact that a lie, such as these two were living, could not exist in the early church. There was a holiness of life in the church. Ananias and Sapphira, although they were saved, lied to the Holy Spirit and were removed from the company of believers. They had committed the sin unto death. "If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto

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death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1Jn_5:16). This was a sin unto death which Ananias and Sapphira committed. This kind of sin could not exist in the early church.

There was defection in the church and it required discipline. However, after this experience the church would never be as pure as it was before. Up until this time they had all things in common. This incident almost ruined them. We shall see more of this in the next chapter.

Fear came upon all the church, and fear came upon people who heard of these things. Power would continue in the church, and multitudes would be saved. Yet the church would never be as pure as in those first days of existence.

The other amazing thing is the spiritual discernment of Simon Peter. This is also lacking today.

I was very much amused at a young man who came to me in a Bible class not long ago. He told me he had the gift of discerning spirits, and he could tell truth from error. Then he quoted one of the worst heretics today. I questioned him again about his gifts of discernment of spirits, of truth and error, and then asked him whether he approved of the man whom he had just quoted. "Oh yes," he said, "this man speaks the truth." I told him that I didn't believe he had any special gift—he just thought he did.

Today the worst kind of hypocrite can get into our Bible churches. They are not good at coming to Bible studies—I have discovered that, but they can hold offices and even run the church. If those who lied to God in our churches were to drop down dead, we would have a lot of funerals. The undertakers would be doing a land-office business. - McGee

Many Signs and Wonders Done

Act 5:12-14 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet, none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

Notice that the apostles exercise the apostolic gifts. Gifts of healing and gifts of miracles were sign gifts which were given to the apostles. They did many signs among the people.

The discipline in the church had put a fear on the people and had stopped the revival. Yet there were those who were still being saved. Believers were being added to the Lord. We know that by A.D. 300 there were millions of people in the Roman Empire who had turned to Christ. - McGee

Act 5:15-16 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

May I compare this to modern faith healing? Modern faith healers never heal all the people who come to them. Have you ever noticed that? The apostles had sign gifts, friend. No one in the church since then has had those gifts. People were healed, every one of them. They emptied the hospitals. This was the power of the early church.

We must remember that at that time there was no written New Testament. The church is built on Jesus Christ—He is the Cornerstone—and the apostles were witnesses to Christ. The sign gifts were given to them to demonstrate the fact that they spoke with God's authority. Today we have a written New Testament as our authority. - McGee

The Apostles Arrested and Freed

Act 5:17-18 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

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Notice that the Sadducees are leading in the persecution. It was the Pharisees who had led in the persecution against Jesus; it is the Sadducees who lead the persecution against the early church. So, the apostles are arrested for the second time and are put into prison. - McGee

Act 5:19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,

This translation should be “an angel” and not “the angel.” In the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord was none other than the preincarnate Christ, but now Christ is the Man in glory at God's right hand, and He is the One who is directing the activity of His apostles. Today, unfortunately, much of the time His hands and His feet are paralyzed because the people in the church are not moving for Him in this world. Jesus Christ wants to move through His church. He wants to move through you and me if we permit Him. This is not Christ who appeared here; it was an angel. - McGee

Act 5:20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

The angel aptly referred to the Christian faith as this life. It is not just a creed or set of doctrines, but a Life—the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus imparted to all who trust Him. - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 5:21 And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

At daybreak the apostles were teaching at the temple. In the meantime, the high priest met in solemn conclave with the council (the Sanhedrin) and the senate (all the elders) and waited for the prisoners to be brought before them. - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 5:22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,

Act 5:23 saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!"

This is the same sort of thing that happened at the resurrection of Christ. The stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out; He was out before the stone was rolled away. The stone was moved to let those on the outside come in. The same thing happened here. The doors did not need to be opened to let the apostles get out. They were out long before the doors were unlocked. - McGee

Act 5:24-25 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. So, one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

The bewildered officers had to report to the court that everything at the prison was in good order—except that the prisoners were gone! The doors were properly locked, and the guards were all at their stations, but the occupants were missing. A distressing report indeed! “Where will it all end?” mused the captain of the temple and the chief priests. “How far will this popular movement go?” Then their questions were interrupted by a messenger announcing that the escaped prisoners were back at their old stand in the temple—teaching the people! We must admire their courage, and we must regain the capacity of the early church to suffer for our convictions at any cost. - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 5:26-28 Then, the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

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The officers used no violence in bringing the apostles to the council. They feared the people would stone them if they were openly rough to these followers of Jesus, now held in high regard by many of the common people.

The high priest served as spokesman. "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?" He purposely avoided using the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. "You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." This was an unintentional compliment to the effectiveness of the apostles' ministry. "You intend to bring this Man's blood on us." But the Jewish leaders had already done this when they cried, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Mat_27:25). - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 5:29 But, Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

The apostles were obeying what their Lord and Master had told them to do. Believers are commanded to obey civil authority—except when it comes in conflict with the commandment of God. - McGee

Do you do this? Too many times we tend to obey men when the price is high.

Act 5:30-32 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Previously the apostles had prayed for boldness to speak the word. Now with courage from above, they insist that their obligation is to obey God rather than men. They flatly declare that Jesus had been raised up by God, that Israel had murdered Him by hanging Him on a tree, but that God had exalted Him to His right hand—a Prince and Savior. As such He was willing to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. As a final thrust, the apostles add that they are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God gives to those who obey Him by believing on His Son.

God raising up Jesus (v. 30) may refer to His Incarnation or His resurrection. The probable meaning here is that God raised Him up, in Incarnation, to be the Savior. - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 5:33 When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

Act 5:34-37 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After, this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.

Deep conviction accompanied the words of these embodied consciences—so deep that the rulers of the Jews plotted to kill them. At this juncture Gamaliel intervened. He was one of the most distinguished of Israel's rabbis, and the teacher of Saul of Tarsus. His advice does not indicate that he was a Christian or that he was even pro-Christian. It was simply worldly wisdom.

After having the apostles taken from the room, he first reminded the Sanhedrin that if this movement were not of God, it would soon collapse. Two illustrations of this principle were offered: (1) Theudas, a self-styled leader with about four hundred revolutionaries, who was slain and whose men were scattered; (2) Judas of Galilee, another fanatic, who stirred up an abortive sedition among the Jews, but who also perished, and whose followers were dispersed. - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 5:38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but, if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God."

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If this Christian religion were not of God, the best thing would be to leave it alone, and it would soon fade out. To combat it would only make it more determined to survive. (This argument is not altogether true. Many godless institutions have flourished for centuries. In fact, they have gained more adherents than the truth. But the argument is true in God's time, if not in man's.)

On the other hand, Gamaliel continued, if the movement were of God, they would not be able to overthrow it, and they would be found in the awkward position of fighting against God. - Believers Bible Commentary

Act 5:40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

If these men were innocent, they should have let them go. If these men were guilty, they should have held them and punished them. Beating them and then letting them go was a sorry subterfuge. They should have listened to Gamaliel a little more carefully.

Things aren't much different today. There is that gray line between guilty and not guilty. The courts today let people off by giving them some light sentences. My friend, if a person is guilty, he should be punished. If he is not guilty, he should be let go with no sentence. - McGee

Act 5:41-42 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

The beating inflicted on the apostles had two unexpected results. First, it caused them deep joy that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name they loved. Second, it sent them forth with renewed zeal and persistence, daily in the temple and in homes, teaching and preaching Jesus as the Messiah.

So once again Satan outwitted himself. - Believers Bible Commentary

Acts 6 – 7 – Deacons and Stephen’s Speech

THEME: The appointment of deacons; witness of Stephen, a deacon.

In this chapter we see the further result of the defection that was in the church. We first saw that defection in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. They were believers who were saved, but they could not remain in the early church with that lie in their lives.

Now the defection we see in this chapter led to the selection of deacons. The chapter continues with the account of one of those deacons, Stephen. He was framed, arrested, and tried.

THE APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS - Seven Chosen to Serve

Act 6:1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

If the devil cannot destroy by attacks from without, he will seek to overthrow by dissension within. This is illustrated in these verses.

In the early days of the church, it was customary to make daily disbursements to the poor widows of the church who had no other means of support. Some of the believers who had been Greek-speaking Jews complained because their widows were not receiving the same treatment as the widows of Hebrews (those from Jerusalem and Judea). – Believers Bible Commentary

We need to recognize that this took place early in the history of the church. They had attempted a form of communal living and, actually, it succeeded for a short while. Then carnality entered the church. We saw how Ananias and Sapphira misrepresented their situation. Now we find that there is a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews. This is not a clash between two races. This is not a demonstration of anti-Semitism. The word Grecians here means “Hellenists,” Greek-speaking Jews. They had a background of Greek culture while the Hebrews in Jerusalem closely followed the Mosaic Law. Naturally, a misunderstanding developed.

It has been estimated that the number in the church at this time may have been around twenty-five thousand. And we see that this early church was not perfect. We hear people say, “We need to get back to the early church. The early church was power-conscious, and we today are problem-conscious.” That is only a half-truth. The early church did have power, but the early church had problems also.

The high plane to which the Spirit had brought the church was interrupted by the intrusion of satanic division and confusion. The sharing of material substance, which first characterized the church, gave way to the selfishness of the old nature. Carnality had come in. The Grecians, who evidently were a minority group, felt neglected and demanded that their widows be given equal consideration with the Hebrews. This communal form of living wasn't working as well as they would have liked. This was brought to the attention of the apostles. - McGee

Act 6:2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

The apostles felt that they should not give up the study of the Word of God. They felt it was important for them to continue with that. If they gave up the study of the Word of God and served tables, that would be the undoing of them. They should spend their time in prayer and in the study of the Word of God.

It is important for every church to recognize that the minister should have time to study the Word of God and should have time for prayer. Unfortunately, the average church today is looking for a pastor who is an organizer and a promoter, a sort of vice-president to run the church, a manager of some sort. That is unfortunate. As a result the church is suffering

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today. When I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles, I had to move my study to my home. I built a special room over the garage for my study. I found out that all I had in the church was an office, not a study. They didn't intend for me to study there. They didn't want me to study there. - McGee

Act 6:3-4 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Although these men are not designated deacons in the Bible, it is not unreasonable to think of them as such. In the expression, serve tables, the word serve is the verb form of the noun from which we get the English word deacon, so their function literally was to “deacon” tables.

1. Of good reputation - Reputable
2. Full of the Holy Spirit – Spiritual
3. Full of wisdom - Practical

More detailed qualifications are given in 1Ti_3:8-13. – Believers Bible Commentary

The seven men were to be appointed because a crisis had arisen. The apostles felt it was important that they should not have the burden of this detail so that they could give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Now I want you to notice the qualifications of these seven men who are to assume the burden of handling the material substance of the church. I'm afraid this is something which is neglected in the average church today when the deacons are chosen. In fact, I've heard men say they didn't want to be appointed to the spiritual office of an elder but would like to be a deacon to handle the material things.

May I say to you, the office of deacon requires more spirituality and wisdom and prayer than any other office. Now notice the qualifications: These men had to be men of honest report. Their honesty was to be unquestionable. It is really a tragic thing for a church to have a deacon whose honesty is in question so that others—including the pastor—cannot trust him. Such a man should not be in the office of deacon. The second qualification was “full of the Holy Ghost.” They were not to be filled with wine but were to be “filled with the [Holy] Spirit” (Eph_5:18). Thirdly, they were to be men of wisdom. They were to be spiritual men who would be able to make an application of spiritual truth. That was very important. You see, the fact that they were handling material matters was apt to give them a lopsided view of things. So it is most important that deacons should be men who look at things from the spiritual point of view.

We shall see that Stephen was a man who met these qualifications. He had wisdom—“they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (v. Act_6:10). He had real conviction. Also he was “full of faith.” Not only did he have saving faith but also serving faith—witnessing faith. It wasn't the amount of his faith but the object of his faith that was important. We learn from this same verse that he was full of power. Such were the kind of men chosen as deacons. - McGee

Act 6:5-6 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

I can't tell you anything more about the last five men. The first two, Stephen and Philip, will be mentioned again as we go along in the Book of Acts. They were outstanding men in the early church. Although they were to “serve tables,” the record of them is that they were spiritual men.

Now, friends, there is a great deal of hocus-pocus and abracadabra connected with this matter of laying on of hands. A great many people think that some spiritual power is connected to it. They think that putting on the hands

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communicates something to a person. Frankly, the only thing you can communicate to someone else by the laying on of hands is disease germs. You can pass them on, but you cannot pass on any kind of power.

What is the meaning of the laying on of hands? As we saw in Leviticus, when we were studying the Old Testament sacrifices, the sinner would put his hand on the head of the animal to be sacrificed, which signified that the animal to be offered was taking his place. The offering was identified with the sinner.

When the apostles put their hands on the heads of the deacons, it meant that now the deacons would be partners with them. They were together in this service. It designated that these men were set aside for this office, denoting their fellowship in the things of Christ and their position as representatives for the corporate body of believers.

Notice that this was a social service in which these men were engaged. The early church took care of its own. I think that should still be true today. The early church had a poverty program, and it included only the members of the church. The church today should also take care of its own. - McGee

Act 6:7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

It is still important in our day for the Word of God to be increasing. Certainly this is the purpose of my radio program. It is my sincere desire that the Word of God may be increased.

Don't miss the fact that many of the priests turned to the Lord. Some of them must have been serving in the temple when the veil was rent in two at the death of Christ. Many of them must have turned to Christ after that experience. - McGee

Stephen Is Seized

Act 6:8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

Apparently these deacons are one with the apostles in having the sign gifts. They have been brought into a unique position. Because Stephen is a strong witness to the gospel, he incurs the hatred of the Sadducees. False witnesses are brought before the council to accuse Stephen.

Act 6:9 Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen.

Opposition to Stephen's powerful ministry arose from the synagogue. These were places where Jews gathered together on the Sabbath for instruction in the law. The synagogues were named according to the people who met there. The Freedmen were perhaps Jews who had been freed from slavery by the Romans. Cyrene was a city in Africa, some of whose Jews had apparently settled in Jerusalem. The Alexandrian Jews had come from the seaport of Egypt by that name. Cilicia was the southeastern province of Asia Minor, and Asia was a province of Asia Minor made up of three territories. Apparently communities of Jews from all of these places had synagogues in or near Jerusalem. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 6:10-14 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

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These zealous Jews proved no match for Stephen as they disputed with him. The words which he spoke and the power with which he spoke them were irresistible. In a desperate move to silence them, they secretly induced false witnesses to accuse Stephen of blasphemy against Moses and God. Soon he was standing before the Sanhedrin, charged with speaking against the temple and the law. They falsely quoted him as saying that Jesus would destroy the temple and change the whole system which Moses delivered to Israel. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 6:15 *And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.*

The Sanhedrin heard the charges, but as they looked at Stephen, they saw not the face of a demon, but the face of an angel. They saw the mysterious beauty of a life that is fully surrendered to the Lord, determined to proclaim the Truth, and more concerned with what God thinks than with what men may say. They saw something of the glory of Christ reflected in the radiant face of His devoted follower. – Believers Bible Commentary

Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin, and false witnesses are brought in. The false witnesses tell a half-truth, of course. The Lord Jesus did say that they would destroy this temple and He would raise it up again, but He was speaking of the temple of His body. At His trial, the false witnesses misunderstood that and misrepresented it. So here, they misunderstand Stephen when he says that the temple in Jerusalem will be left desolate. Actually, it was desolate without Christ anyway. And they twist what he is saying about the customs of Moses. Of course men are not saved by the Law but by grace. But salvation in Moses' day was by grace even as it is today. Their accusation is based on only a partial truth.

They see something marvelous in the face of Stephen. This man came closer to being an angel than any man who has ever lived. – McGee

Act 7:1-2 *Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?" And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,*

They have made an accusation against him. He is questioned as to the truth of the charges. In his response he makes no attempt to clear himself. In fact, he doesn't even mention the charges they have made against him.

What a marvelous beginning. He calls them brethren. They are his brethren in the flesh. He calls the older men fathers. He is a younger man and shows them this respect. This young man is to become the first martyr in the church.

We sometimes hear it said that at the beginning Christianity was actually a youth movement. It is not altogether inaccurate to state that it was a youth movement. Two men who held as prominent a place as any were Stephen and Saul of Tarsus, whom we will meet soon. These two men had a great deal to do with the shaping of the course of the early church. Both of them were remarkable young men. Both of them were gifted and used by the Holy Spirit. Yet the only time these two young men ever met, they were enemies. The Cross divided Stephen and Saul of Tarsus just as truly as it divided the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. Paul knew what he was saying in 1Co_1:18 : "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." When Saul saw Stephen, he thought Stephen was very foolish.

This address of Stephen is a master stroke. He reviews the history of the nation beginning with Abraham. That is where the history of the nation Israel began. They did not go back any farther. You will find the same thing in the Gospel of Matthew. This book, written to the nation Israel, traces the genealogy of Jesus Christ back to Abraham. If you want to trace it all the way back to Adam, you must turn to the Gospel of Luke. Stephen starts with Abraham, a man of faith.

Even though he traces the resistance and rebellion against God by the nation, still there was always a believing remnant.

This is true today, too. In the organized church, in the visible church which you and I can see, there is a remnant of believers. Not every one in the visible church is a true believer. People may ask, "Do you think So-and-So is a Christian?"

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The answer is that even though he goes to church and is a church officer, he may not be a Christian. Just as in the nation Israel there was the believing remnant, so in the visible church there is the little remnant of true believers.

Abraham was a man of faith. He believed God, and he obeyed God. Faith always leads to obedience. Stephen starts his narrative with Abraham in Mesopotamia, down in the Tigris–Euphrates Valley. That was the place of Abraham's hometown. It was there that God called him.

Act 7:3-8 and said to him, 'GET OUT OF YOUR COUNTRY AND FROM YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME TO A LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.' Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years. 'AND THE NATION TO WHOM THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE I WILL JUDGE,' said God, 'AND AFTER THAT THEY SHALL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE.' Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

7:1-8 This first section of the message takes us back to the beginning of the Hebrew nation. It is not exactly clear why Abraham's history is dealt with at such length, unless it is:

1. To show Stephen's familiarity with and love for the nation of Israel.
2. To lead up to the story of Joseph and Moses, both types of the rejection of Christ.
3. To show that Abraham worshiped God acceptably even though his worship was not confined to a specific locality. (Stephen had been accused of speaking against the temple—“this holy place.”)

The salient points in Abraham's biography are:

1. His call by God in Mesopotamia (vv. 2, 3).
2. His journey to Haran, then to Canaan (v. 4).
3. God's promise of the land to Abraham, though the patriarch himself was not given any of it—as was proved by his purchase of the cave of Machpelah as a burial place (v. 5). The fulfillment of that promise is still future (Heb_11:13-40).
4. God's prediction of Israel's bondage in Egypt and of eventual deliverance (vv. 6, 7). Both parts of this prediction were accomplished by men who had been rejected by the nation: Joseph (vv. 9-19); Moses (vv. 20-36). The four hundred years mentioned in verse 6 and in Gen_15:13 refer to the time when the Jewish people were afflicted in Egypt. The four hundred and thirty years cited in Exo_12:40 and Gal_3:17 cover the period from the arrival of Jacob and his family in Egypt to the Exodus and the giving of the law. The Israelites were not persecuted during their first thirty years in Egypt; in fact, they were treated quite royally.
5. The covenant of circumcision (v. 8a).
6. The birth of Isaac, then Jacob, then the twelve patriarchs (v. 8b). This, of course, brings the history up to Joseph, one of Jacob's twelve sons. – Believers Bible Commentary

Acts 6 – 7 – Deacons and Stephen's Speech

Act 7:9-14 *"And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.*

Act 7:15-18 *So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers. And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. "But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt 10till another king arose who did not know Joseph.*

Of all the types of Christ in the OT, Joseph is one of the clearest and most precious, although he is never specifically stated to be. Surely the Jews of Stephen's day must have felt the sharp arrows of conviction as they heard Stephen review the steps of Joseph's career, then remembered what they had done to Jesus of Nazareth!

1. Joseph sold into Egypt by his brothers (v. 9).
2. The rejected one raised to power and glory in Egypt (v. 10).
3. Joseph's brothers driven to Egypt by famine, but failed to recognize their brother (vv. 11, 12).
4. The second time Joseph was made known to them. Then the rejected one became the savior of his family (vv. 13, 14). Note: There seems to be a contradiction between the seventy-five souls given in verse 14 and the seventy mentioned in Gen_46:27. Stephen followed the Greek translation of Gen_46:27 and Exo_1:5, which has seventy-five. The Hebrew text has seventy, indicating nothing more serious than a different way of numbering Jacob's family.
5. The death of the patriarchs, and their burial in the land of Canaan (vv. 15, 16). Another difficulty appears in this verse. Here it says that Abraham bought a burial place from Hamor. Gen_23:16-17 says that Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah in Hebron from the sons of Heth. Jacob bought land in Shechem from the children of Hamor (Gen_33:19). There are several possibilities: (1) Abraham may have bought land in Shechem as well as in Hebron. Later Jacob could have repurchased the plot in Shechem. (2) Stephen could have used Abraham's name for Abraham's descendant, Jacob. (3) Stephen may have condensed the purchases by Abraham and Jacob into one for brevity.
6. The growth of Jacob's family in Egypt and their slavery after Joseph's death (vv. 17-19). This, of course, prepares us for the next step in Stephen's argument—the treatment which Moses received at the hands of his people.

Acts 7 – Stephen acts in faith the church is built on the blood of martyrs

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Acts 7 – Stephen acts in faith the church is built on the blood of martyrs

heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.

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Of all the types of Christ in the OT, Joseph is one of the clearest and most precious, although he is never specifically stated to be. Surely the Jews of Stephen's day must have felt the sharp arrows of conviction as they heard Stephen review the steps of Joseph's career, then remembered what they had done to Jesus of Nazareth!

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Act 7:20-25 At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.

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Act 7:26-28 *And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?' But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE OVER US? DO YOU WANT TO KILL ME AS YOU DID THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY?'*

Act 7:29-34 *Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons. "And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, 'I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS—THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB.' And Moses trembled and dared not look. 'Then the LORD said to him, "TAKE YOUR SANDALS OFF YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE WHERE YOU STAND IS HOLY GROUND. I HAVE SURELY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE WHO ARE IN EGYPT; I HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANING AND HAVE COME DOWN TO DELIVER THEM. AND NOW COME, I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT." '*

Act 7:35-37 *"This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. HIM YOU SHALL HEAR.'*

Act 7:38-43 *"This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, 'MAKE US GODS TO GO BEFORE US; AS FOR THIS MOSES WHO BROUGHT US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS BECOME OF HIM.' And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'DID YOU OFFER ME SLAUGHTERED ANIMALS AND SACRIFICES DURING FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? YOU ALSO TOOK UP THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH, AND THE STAR OF YOUR GOD REMPHAN, IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP; AND I WILL CARRY YOU AWAY BEYOND BABYLON.'*

7:20-43 Stephen is showing with incisive boldness that the Jewish people were guilty on at least two previous occasions of rejecting saviors whom God had raised up to deliver them. His second proof is Moses.

Stephen had been charged with speaking blasphemous words against Moses (Act_6:11). He proves that the nation of Israel is the guilty party—guilty of refusing this man of God's choice.

Stephen reviews the life of Moses, as follows:

1. Birth, early life, and education in Egypt (vv. 20-22). The phrase, mighty in words, may refer to his writings, since he disclaimed being eloquent (Exo_4:10).
2. His first rejection by his brethren when he defended one of them against an Egyptian (vv. 23-28). Note verse 25! How it reminds us of Christ's rejection by His own!

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3. His exile in the land of Midian (v. 29).
4. God's appearance to him in the burning bush, sending him back to Egypt to deliver his people (vv. 30-35).
5. He became the savior of the nation (v. 36).
6. His prophecy concerning the coming Messiah (v. 37). (Like me means “as He raised me.”)
7. His role as law-giver to the congregation in the wilderness (v. 38).
8. Moses rejected a second time by the people, as they worshiped the golden calf (vv. 39-41). The idolatry of Israel is elaborated in verses 42 and 43. While professing to offer ... sacrifices to the Lord, the people took up the tabernacle of Moloch, one of the most loathsome of all ancient forms of idolatry, and bowed to Remphan, a stellar deity. For this sin God warned that they would be carried off into Babylonian captivity. In verses 42 and 43 Stephen quotes from the Septuagint version of Amo_5:25-27. That is why the captivity is said to be beyond Babylon instead of “beyond Damascus.” Both are, of course, true.

History repeats itself. In every generation we can find the same pattern. People are the same. When confronted with God's message, they do not understand (25). When urged to live at peace, they refuse to listen (27). When given a God-sent deliverer, they reject him (39). When rescued from an evil situation, they prefer useless idols to the merciful God (41). Such is human nature—rebellious, ungrateful, foolish. God is the same. The God who spoke to Moses was the same God who had spoken to his ancestors (32). This God hears when people are troubled (34). He comes to deliver (34). He leads His people from death to life (36). He surrenders to their own desires those who willfully reject Him (42). Such is our great God—merciful, powerful, holy. He is always the same, whatever happens (Mal_3:6). For Stephen's hearers it was a warning not to trifle with God. It is also an assurance that every promise of God stands firm forever. - McGee

Act 7:44-46 "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob.

Stephen had been charged with speaking against the temple. He replies by going back to the days when Israel had the tabernacle (tent) of witness in the wilderness. It was during this same time that the people were also worshiping the host of heaven. When Joshua led the Israelites into the land of Canaan, and the heathen inhabitants were expelled, the tabernacle was brought into the land and continued until the days of David. The fathers had asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob and had thus found favor before God. – McGee

Act 7:47-50 But Solomon built Him a house. "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS MY FOOTSTOOL. WHAT HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME? SAYS THE LORD, OR WHAT IS THE PLACE OF MY REST? HAS MY HAND NOT MADE ALL THESE THINGS?'

David's desire to build the temple was not granted, but Solomon built Him a house.

Acts 7 – Stephen acts in faith the church is built on the blood of martyrs

Although the temple was the dwelling place of God among His people, God was not confined to that building. Solomon stated this clearly when the temple was dedicated (1Ki_8:27). Also Isaiah had warned the people that buildings are not what really count with God but rather the moral and spiritual condition of men's lives (Isa_66:1-2). He looks for a broken and contrite heart, for a man who trembles at His word.
– McGee

Act 7:51-53 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

The Jewish leaders had charged Stephen with speaking against the law. He now answers the accusation with a brief, finely worded denunciation.

It was they who were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. "He rebukes them, not as the Israel of God, but as stubborn and uncircumcised Gentiles in heart and ears." They were sons of their fathers in habitually resisting the Holy Spirit. Their fathers had persecuted the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ. Now they had betrayed and murdered this Just One. They were the people who had failed to keep the law—the very people to whom it was given by the direction of angels.

Nothing more needed to be said! Indeed, nothing more could be said! They had sought to put Stephen on the defensive. But he became the prosecutor and they the guilty defendants. His message was one of God's final words to the Jewish nation before the gospel started moving out to the Gentiles. – McGee

Act 7:54-60 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

As soon as Stephen bore public testimony to seeing the heavens opened, the mob refused to listen to him further; they cried fiercely, charged upon him, dragged him outside the city walls and stoned him.

As if incidentally, the Spirit records the name of a young man who stood guard over the clothes of the perspiring executioners. The name was Saul. It is as if the Spirit would say to us, "Remember that name. You will hear it again!"

Stephen's death resembled that of our Lord:

1. He prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (v. 59). Jesus had prayed, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luk_23:46).
2. He prayed, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (v. 60). Jesus had prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luk_23:34).

Acts 7 – Stephen acts in faith the church is built on the blood of martyrs

Does it not suggest that through occupation with the Lord, Stephen had been “transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co_3:18)?

Then, having prayed, he fell asleep. When the word “sleep” is used in connection with death in the NT, it refers to the body, not the soul. The believer's soul goes to be with Christ at the time of death (2Co_5:8); the body is pictured as sleeping.

Ordinarily the Jews were not allowed to carry out the death penalty; this was reserved for their Roman overlords (Joh_18:31 b). But the Romans seem to have made an exception when the temple was threatened. Stephen had been accused of speaking against the temple, and though the charge was unfounded, he was executed by the Jews. The Lord Jesus had been accused of threatening to destroy the temple (Mar_14:58), but the testimony of the witnesses conflicted. - McGee

Acts 8 – Saul Persecutes the Church

CHAPTER 8

THEME: Conversion of Ethiopian eunuch (son of Ham).

We have now arrived at the second major division of the Book of Acts. You remember that we divided the book according to the Lord's commission in Act_1:8. First they were to witness in Jerusalem. Now we come to the Lord Jesus Christ's work by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in Judea and Samaria. This section of the book includes chapters 8–12.

Chapter 7 concluded with a most unusual scene. It included the two young men who had the greatest influence upon the early church. The one was Stephen, the deacon, the young man who gave up his life, the first martyr in the church. That other was a young Pharisee who had charge of the stoning of Stephen. His name was Saul. - McGee

Saul Ravages the Church

Act 8:1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Saul was taking the lead in the persecution of Stephen, and he was in the cheering section. Now this young man, Saul of Tarsus, was amazed when he saw the face of Stephen. Stephen was looking into the heavens, and there he saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Young Saul looked up—he didn't see anything. But, friend, he wished he could. He will see a little later. I believe that Stephen is the one who prepared Saul for the appearance of the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road.

Saul becomes the chief persecutor of the church. This causes the church to scatter. Actually, he does the church a favor. They were all settled down in Jerusalem, and I don't think they would have moved out had it not been for the persecution which Saul of Tarsus instigated.

Judea and Samaria are the next territories which the Lord had told them to enter. Judea surrounds Jerusalem, and Samaria lies to the north of Jerusalem. - McGee

Act 8:2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

I would like to make a few remarks here about Christian burial. There is a question that comes to us today: Is it right or wrong for Christians to be cremated? There is nothing in the Bible against it. No one will lose salvation by being cremated. However, the burial of a Christian is like sowing seeds. It is like putting the body into a motel so it can sleep until the Resurrection.

This is the way Paul speaks of it in 1 Thessalonians 4. He speaks of the body as seed in 1 Corinthians 15. You don't burn the seed before you plant it. Neither do you burn a person before you put him into a motel or hotel to go to sleep. Planting the body in the earth like a seed is a testimony—an evidence of your faith in a future resurrection. Undoubtedly the body of Stephen was terribly mutilated. They took him up tenderly and put him in the ground as you would plant a seed. Stephen had gone into the presence of Christ, who was waiting in heaven for him. His body went into the ground to await the Resurrection. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body"

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(1Co_15:42-44). I cannot see that cremation sets forth this idea. Rather, this is the picture of real Christian burial.

Some people protest that we are running out of space for graves. My friend, this old earth has taken in bodies for thousands of years now, and there is still room. - McGee

Act 8:3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

This was a young man full of zeal. Remember that he later wrote about himself—“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church ...” in Php_3:6.

Philip Proclaims Christ in Samaria

Act 8:4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

Here we see the effect of the persecution. Actually, it did not hinder the church but furthered the work of the church. Later on, Paul would give this same kind of testimony after he had been put into prison in Rome, “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (Php_1:12). I do not believe that the church can ever be hurt from the outside. It can be hurt from the inside, as we shall see later in this chapter.

Act 8:5-8 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

The dispersal of the Christians did not silence their testimony. Everywhere they went they carried the good news of salvation. Philip, the “deacon” of chapter six, headed north to the city of Samaria. He not only proclaimed Christ but performed many miracles. Unclean spirits were driven out and the paralyzed and lame were healed. The people gave heed to the gospel, and, as might be expected, great joy resulted.

The primitive church obeyed the explicit commands of Jesus Christ:

It went out as Christ had gone (Joh_20:21; cf. Act_8:1-4).

It sold its goods and gave to the poor (Luk_12:33; Luk_18:22; cf. Act_2:45; Act_4:34).

It left father, mother, houses, and lands to go everywhere preaching the Word (Mat_10:37; cf. Act_8:1-4).

It made disciples and taught them to work and obey (Mat_28:18-19; cf. 1Th_1:6).

It took up its cross and followed Christ (Acts 4; 1 Thess. 2).

It rejoiced in tribulation and persecution (Mat_5:11-12; cf. Acts 16; 1Th_1:6-8).

It left the dead to bury their dead and went and preached the gospel (Luk_9:59-60).

It shook the dust from off its feet and moved on when men refused to hear (Luk_9:5; cf. Act_13:51).

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It healed, exorcised, raised the dead, and bore lasting fruit (Mar_16:18; Acts 3-16). – Believers Bible Commentary

Simon the Magician Believes

Act 8:9-11 But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.

He sets himself up as some great one. We find the same sort of thing today. If someone claims to be a faith healer, that sets him apart, believe me. People may declare that the faith healers are humble. Humility is not manifest in services where a person is supposedly healing people and implying that he is the only person there who has that gift. That is “giving out that himself was some great one,” as Simon the sorcerer was doing.

These people felt that Simon the sorcerer was like a god. Just as with these people, there are a great many people who are bewitched today. My friend, do not be bewitched by any man or his power. Even if a man is giving out the Word of God, do not look to the man. Look to the Word of God and check to see if he is presenting it accurately. Look to God. Turn to Him. When we get our eyes on man, we take our eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what had happened in Samaria. - McGee

Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, and many men and women believed. Simon came in contact with Philip, and apparently he made a profession of faith under the ministry of Philip. I believe that Simon is the first religious racketeer in the church—but, unfortunately, not the last. He professes to be a believer during the sweeping revival in Samaria under the ministry of Philip. - McGee

Act 8:13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

Simon believes, he is baptized, and he becomes a friend of Philip. You would certainly think he was a real child of God. However, he is not converted. We will see that there are also others who are professing believers, but they are not born again. They have the head knowledge, they go along with the crowd, but they are not saved. Although they have been baptized with water, they have not been baptized into the church of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

There are a great many people like that today. I receive many letters from people who have told me that since they have been studying the Bible along with our program, they have begun to examine their faith. Many have come to realize that they have just been following along with someone else and that they have not been genuinely, personally converted. Paul says, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves ...” (2Co_13:5). It is a very good thing to check yourself. See whether you are in the faith or not.

This man Simon had all the outward trappings. He answered that he did believe in Jesus, and so he was baptized. But it was not a genuine faith. – McGee

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Act 8:14-16 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

When the apostles heard that there was a great moving of the Spirit down in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to check on it. They found a great company of professing believers who had not been born again. They had not been baptized into the church by the Holy Spirit. They were not saved. They had gone through an outward ceremony.

My friend, being baptized with water or going through some other ceremony will not make you a Christian. This gives the background to explain why Simon was able to put over his racket on the others. He liked this idea of performing miracles. - McGee

Act 8:17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

It may be that Philip had not told all the facts and conditions of the gospel. It may be that they had not accepted them. At any rate, now they are brought into partnership with the apostles. Now they believe the gospel and they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the Spirit of God has entered into them. I think this needs to be considered in its historical setting. It was the commission given to the apostles to open up each new area to the gospel. On the Day of Pentecost the gospel was given in Jerusalem. Peter and John are to bring it into Samaria and Judea. Paul is to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Jesus had given this commission. We are now seeing it fulfilled here in Samaria. - McGee

Act 8:18-19 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

Simon wanted to pay for the gift. Why? Well, because this man is a religious racketeer. He wants to use it for profit.

How many such claims are made by individuals today! They claim that great miracles take place in their meetings and humbly say they have nothing to do with them. If that is so, why do they permit this type of deception to go on? Bewitch is the word used here. There have been religious racketeers around bewitching the multitudes from that day to this.

Persecution from the outside didn't hurt the church. It scattered the believers and actually worked for the furtherance of the gospel. What hurt the church was that people got on the inside, professing to be believers when they were not believers. Always the church is hurt from the inside.

It was the same with the Lord Jesus. He was betrayed from the inside. He was betrayed to His nation by one of His own disciples. His own nation betrayed Him to the Roman Empire, and the Roman Empire crucified Him. Also today He is betrayed within the church.

It is like the wooden horse brought into the city of Troy. The city was impenetrable, it was invulnerable, until that wooden horse got on the inside. The Devil started out by persecuting the church, fighting it from the outside. He found that didn't work. It just spread the gospel. Then He decided to start his work

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from the inside. That is where he can get in and do damage. How many pastors could testify to that today! - McGee

Act 8:20-21 *But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God."*

Simon the sorcerer was deeply impressed by the fact that the Holy Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on the Samaritans. He had no deep sense of the spiritual implications of this, but rather looked on it as a supernatural power which would serve him well in his trade. So he offered money to the apostles in an effort to buy the power.

Peter's answer indicates that Simon was not a truly converted man:

1. "Your money perish with you." No believer will ever perish (Joh_3:16).
2. "You have neither part nor portion in this matter"; in other words, he was not in the fellowship.
3. "Your heart is not right in the sight of God." This is a fitting description of an unsaved person.
4. "You are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." Could these words be true of a regenerate person? – Believers Bible Commentary

The traits of a false Christianity. Even in the true Church, and in its purest days, there was to be found a Simon the sorcerer.

1. The false Christianity is often concealed under the formal rites of the Church service. Outwardly Simon was a baptised member, inwardly he was a hypocrite.
2. It is revealed in the spiritual manifestations of the Church. When the Holy Ghost descends, Simon is at once detected.
3. Its spirit is that of selfish ambition, seeking for power over men rather than power with God.
4. It should be dealt with promptly, rebuked unsparingly, and should find no countenance in the Church.
5. It may find mercy and forgiveness if the false disciple will seek the Lord. – Biblical Illustrator

Act 8:22-24 *Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me."*

Peter urged Simon to repent of his great sin, and pray that his wicked plan might be forgiven. Simon's reply was to ask Peter to serve as a mediator between God and himself. He was the forerunner of those who would rather go to a human mediator than to the Lord Himself. That there was no true repentance on Simon's part is indicated by the words, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of these things which you

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have spoken may come upon me.” He was not sorry for his sin, but only for the consequences which it might bring on him.

It is from this man, Simon, that we get the modern word, “simony”—making a business out of that which is sacred. It includes the sale of indulgences and other supposed spiritual benefits, and all forms of commercialism in divine matters. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 8:25 So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

The gospel is starting its journey to the ends of the earth. It started in Jerusalem. The apostles were there and a church was established. Soon the center will move to Antioch. Then it will move to Ephesus. Later it will move to Alexandria, then to Rome. Today, I don't think there is any particular center of the church. It has gone to the ends of the earth.

I believe that one of the finest vehicles to get the gospel to the ends of the earth is radio. Through this mechanical means the church can do what has not been accomplished since the first century when the gospel did penetrate to all the known world. – McGee

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

In chapters 8, 9, and 10 we find the record of three remarkable instances of conversion. I think that these three have been lifted out and given to us particularly for a lesson. Chapter 8 gives the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, a son of Ham. Chapter 9 gives the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a son of Shem. Chapter 10 gives the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, a son of Japheth. You will recall that the entire human family is divided into these three categories. This was an ethnological and a geographical division made after the Flood. Ham, Shem, and Japheth were the sons of Noah. We find here that the gospel reaches out to representatives of these three divisions of the human family.

You will also notice from these examples that in a conversion three factors must be brought into focus before there can be a conversion. All three of these are evident in these three representative conversions.

1. The work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had taken this man Philip to Samaria where there had been a great moving of the Spirit of God. Then the Holy Spirit moved him down to Gaza, and again we see His moving in the heart of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Spirit of God had gone ahead to prepare the heart and also to prepare the messenger. This leading of the Spirit of God is absolutely essential. I'm afraid that a great deal of personal work is done in a haphazard manner and without the leading of the Spirit of God. I believe that we ought to make it a matter of definite prayer before we talk to anyone. We should talk to the Lord about the individual before we talk to the individual about the Lord. It is not simply that we need the Holy Spirit to lead us. What we need is for the Spirit of God to go ahead of us and prepare the way, then to call us up to where He is. We want to go where the Spirit of God is moving. This is the first essential in a conversion. We find it true in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and also in the conversion of Saul and of Cornelius.

2. The Word of God. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom_10:17). The Word of God is the second essential. The Holy Spirit will take the things of Christ and will reveal

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them to an individual. It is the Spirit of God using the Word of God. But, wait a minute, there must be a human instrument.

3. The man of God. The Spirit of God uses the man of God who delivers the Word of God to produce a son of God, one who is born again. We will see this in the record of the conversion of this Ethiopian eunuch.

The second part of chapter 8 brings us to another part of the ministry of Philip. The gospel had gone to Samaria, and there were many genuine believers. But we also saw that in Samaria evil came into the church in the person of Simon the sorcerer. Now, in contrast to Simon the sorcerer, we come to the experience of Philip with a eunuch from Ethiopia. Philip led this man to Christ, and he became a genuine believer, a wonderful man of God. - McGee

Act 8:26 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.

Samaria is an area which lies north of Jerusalem. Now Philip is told to go way down to the south. What we know as the Gaza strip is south, over along the Mediterranean. This was the trade route down into Egypt and Ethiopia. He would probably travel through Jerusalem to get there.

Philip had been speaking to multitudes in Samaria, and now he is sent down to a desert. He is to leave the place where there has been a great moving of the Spirit of God and go into a place, a desert, where there is nobody. However, when he gets there, he finds that God does have someone to whom he is to witness. - McGee

Act 8:27-28 So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

We read here that this man of Ethiopia had charge of all the treasure of the queen. He was actually the Secretary of the Treasury. He was an official, and a high official of that day. This man was not traveling alone. He had a great retinue of servants and minor officials with him. He wasn't sitting in a chariot with the reins in one hand and a book in the other hand as we see him pictured. This man was sitting back in a chariot, protected from the sun by a canopy. He had a private chauffeur and was riding in style.

He was a citizen of Ethiopia, but he had come to Jerusalem to worship. This indicates that he was a proselyte to Judaism. He had just been to Jerusalem, the center of the Jewish religion. Although Judaism was the God-given religion, he was leaving the city still in the dark. He was reading the prophet Isaiah, but he was not understanding what he was reading. - McGee

Act 8:29-30 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The Holy Spirit is leading, as He must in any conversion. Philip is the man of God whom the Spirit of God is using. The Word of God is already in that chariot, for the Ethiopian is reading from the prophet Isaiah.

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Philip is a hitchhiker. When he hears what the man is reading, he asks, “Do you understand what you are reading there?” The Ethiopian doesn't; so he stops his retinue and invites Philip to come up and ride with him.

Act 8:31-33 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO THE SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH. IN HIS HUMILIATION HIS JUSTICE WAS TAKEN AWAY, AND WHO WILL DECLARE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS TAKEN FROM THE EARTH."

Where was he reading? You will recognize that this is from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He was reading the seventh and eighth verses. It is obvious that he must have been reading for some time. So it is also obvious that he must have read the preceding verses: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa_53:3-6). - McGee

Act 8:34-35 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

The Holy Spirit will use the Word of God.

I do not believe that people can be converted by hearing a song. The song may affect a person emotionally and influence the will to make a decision for Christ. However, if the Word of God is not in it, there can be no true conversion. It requires the Word of God. How important that is!

Simon Peter, whom God used so wonderfully in the conversion of multitudes, makes it very clear that the Word of God must be involved if a person is saved. He wrote in his first epistle: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1Pe_1:23-25).

When the Spirit of God uses the Word of God, what is going to happen? These men were in the chariot, discussing the Word of God. Philip was telling the eunuch about Jesus. - McGee

Act 8:36-37 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Remember that Philip had had an experience with Simon the sorcerer up there in Samaria. He is not about to have a repetition of that. When this man asks for water baptism, Philip wants to be very sure that he believes with all his heart. - McGee

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Act 8:38-39 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

Philip is snatched off the page of Scripture. He is not needed here anymore. The Ethiopian rides off the pages of Scripture in his chariot. He went on his way, rejoicing. Now what about this man? The first great church was not in the United States, nor was it in Europe, nor was it in Jerusalem, nor was it in Asia Minor. The first great church was in northern Africa. The Ethiopian evidently went back and through his witness and his influence, a church was begun there. You would find it very profitable to read about the early church in North Africa. - McGee

Act 8:40 But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

Azotus is Ashdod, which is over in the Gaza strip. To reach Caesarea, he would have gone through Joppa. Tel Aviv is there today. So he went, preaching the gospel along the coast up to Caesarea. The gospel has gone to Judea and to Samaria and is moving out. The eunuch has carried it down to Ethiopia. Philip is carrying it along the coast to Caesarea.

Acts 8 Part II – Phillip evangelizes with unflinching obedience!

CHAPTER 8

THEME: Conversion of Ethiopian eunuch (son of Ham).

We have now arrived at the second major division of the Book of Acts. You remember that we divided the book according to the Lord's commission in Act_1:8. First they were to witness in Jerusalem. Now we come to the Lord Jesus Christ's work by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in Judea and Samaria. This section of the book includes chapters 8–12.

Chapter 7 concluded with a most unusual scene. It included the two young men who had the greatest influence upon the early church. The one was Stephen, the deacon, the young man who gave up his life, the first martyr in the church. That other was a young Pharisee who had charge of the stoning of Stephen. His name was Saul. - McGee

Act 8:25 So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

The gospel is starting its journey to the ends of the earth. It started in Jerusalem. The apostles were there, and a church was established. Soon the center will move to Antioch. Then it will move to Ephesus. Later it will move to Alexandria, then to Rome. Today, I don't think there is any particular center of the church. It has gone to the ends of the earth.

I believe that one of the finest vehicles to get the gospel to the ends of the earth is radio. Through this mechanical means the church can do what has not been accomplished since the first century when the gospel did penetrate to all the known world. – McGee

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

In chapters 8, 9, and 10 we find the record of three remarkable instances of conversion. I think that these three have been lifted out and given to us particularly for a lesson. Chapter 8 gives the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, a son of Ham. Chapter 9 gives the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a son of Shem. Chapter 10 gives the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, a son of Japheth. You will recall that the entire human family is divided into these three categories. This was an ethnological and a geographical division made after the Flood. Ham, Shem, and Japheth were the sons of Noah. We find here that the gospel reaches out to representatives of these three divisions of the human family.

You will also notice from these examples that in a conversion three factors must be brought into focus before there can be a conversion. All three of these are evident in these three representative conversions.

1. The work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had taken this man Philip to Samaria where there had been a great moving of the Spirit of God. Then the Holy Spirit moved him down to Gaza, and again we see His moving in the heart of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Spirit of God had gone ahead to prepare the heart and also to prepare the messenger. This leading of the Spirit of God is absolutely essential. I'm afraid that a great deal of personal work is done in a haphazard manner and without the leading of the Spirit of God. I believe that we ought to make it a matter of definite prayer before we talk to anyone. We should talk to the Lord about the individual before we talk to the individual about the Lord. It is not simply that we need the Holy Spirit to lead us. What we need is for the Spirit of God to go ahead of us and prepare the way, then to call us up to where He is. We want to go where the Spirit of God is moving. This is the first

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essential in a conversion. We find it true in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and also in the conversion of Saul and of Cornelius.

2. The Word of God. “So, then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom_10:17). The Word of God is the second essential. The Holy Spirit will take the things of Christ and will reveal them to an individual. It is the Spirit of God using the Word of God. But wait a minute, there must be a human instrument.

3. The man of God. The Spirit of God uses the man of God who delivers the Word of God to produce a son of God, one who is born again. We will see this in the record of the conversion of this Ethiopian eunuch.

The second part of chapter 8 brings us to another part of the ministry of Philip. The gospel had gone to Samaria, and there were many genuine believers. But we also saw that in Samaria evil came into the church in the person of Simon the sorcerer. Now, in contrast to Simon the sorcerer, we come to the experience of Philip with a eunuch from Ethiopia. Philip led this man to Christ, and he became a genuine believer, a wonderful man of God. - McGee

Act 8:26 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.

Samaria is an area which lies north of Jerusalem. Now Philip is told to go way down to the south. What we know as the Gaza strip is south, over along the Mediterranean. This was the trade route down into Egypt and Ethiopia. He would probably travel through Jerusalem to get there.

Philip had been speaking to multitudes in Samaria, and now he is sent down to a desert. He is to leave the place where there has been a great moving of the Spirit of God and go into a place, a desert, where there is nobody. However, when he gets there, he finds that God does have someone to whom he is to witness. – McGee

Would you go immediately like Philip, or would you have lots of questions, maybe have to through down the fleece ask for many confirmations? Do you believe we miss opportunities due to lack or prompt obedience to the Lord?

Why didn't the angel go himself? Because this was a mission where a man was worth more than an angel. In the Lord's plan of salvation there is a place for redeemed sinners as witnesses for Christ, to do a work that no angel could accomplish. It is not for us to say that God could have had any better plan than this. As the plan stands, the man is needed for its prosecution. The best that an angel can do is to come as a messenger from God and tell the man to arise and go. (H. C. Trumbull, D. D) – Biblical Illustrator

Is a large crowd always better? Or can a single encounter in a desert yield greater fruit for the Kingdom?

This incident is a type of what often happens in the experience of God's people. Our Lord Himself on one occasion left the busy, crowded cities where He was carrying on a most beneficent ministry, for the lonely desert, in order that there He might cure the solitary demoniac, who, in his turn, was the means of a wonderful spiritual awakening among the people of Decapolis. Peter was sent from the large

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maritime city of Joppa, where he could preach to persons from all parts of the world, in order to instruct a single Gentile family in the small town of Caesarea. And so, God bids His servants still leave the ninety and nine and go after the one lost sheep. We think that we need to get together large meetings in order to produce a deep and widespread impression. But crowds have not always been helpful in the matter of progress. Not infrequently, by their distractions, they have placed hindrances in the way. A man has in a crowd no calmness of mind to think but is swayed exclusively by the feelings of the moment. Our Lord's own best work, so to speak, was not done in crowds; and the sayings of His that sink deepest into our hearts were uttered when conversing with a solitary woman beside well or near a tomb. The fickle crowds fell away from Him in His hour of need; but the solitary souls whom He called to Him one by one from the seashore and the receipt of custom, and the desolated home, clung faithfully to Him to the last.

– Biblical Illustrator

Act 8:27-28 So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

We read here that this man of Ethiopia had charge of all the treasure of the queen. He was actually the Secretary of the Treasury. He was an official, and a high official of that day. This man was not traveling alone. He had a great retinue of servants and minor officials with him. He wasn't sitting in a chariot with the reins in one hand and a book in the other hand as we see him pictured. This man was sitting back in a chariot, protected from the sun by a canopy. He had a private chauffeur and was riding in style.

He was a citizen of Ethiopia, but he had come to Jerusalem to worship. This indicates that he was a proselyte to Judaism. He had just been to Jerusalem, the center of the Jewish religion. Although Judaism was the God-given religion, he was leaving the city still in the dark. He was reading the prophet Isaiah, but he was not understanding what he was reading. - McGee

Act 8:29-30 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." So, Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The Holy Spirit is leading, as He must in any conversion. Philip is the man of God whom the Spirit of God is using. The Word of God is already in that chariot, for the Ethiopian is reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Philip is a hitchhiker. When he hears what the man is reading, he asks, "Do you understand what you are reading there?" The Ethiopian doesn't; so, he stops his retinue and invites Philip to come up and ride with him.

Act 8:31-33 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO THE SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH. IN HIS HUMILIATION HIS JUSTICE WAS TAKEN AWAY, AND WHO WILL DECLARE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS TAKEN FROM THE EARTH."

Where was he reading? You will recognize that this is from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He was reading the seventh and eighth verses. It is obvious that he must have been reading for some time. So, it is also obvious that he must have read the preceding verses: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him

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stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa_53:3-6). - McGee

Act 8:34-35 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

The Holy Spirit will use the Word of God.

I do not believe that people can be converted by hearing a song. The song may affect a person emotionally and influence the will to make a decision for Christ. However, if the Word of God is not in it, there can be no true conversion. It requires the Word of God. How important that is!

Simon Peter, whom God used so wonderfully in the conversion of multitudes, makes it very clear that the Word of God must be involved if a person is saved. He wrote in his first epistle: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1Pe_1:23-25).

When the Spirit of God uses the Word of God, what is going to happen? These men were in the chariot, discussing the Word of God. Philip was telling the eunuch about Jesus. - McGee

Act 8:36-37 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Remember that Philip had had an experience with Simon the sorcerer up there in Samaria. He is not about to have a repetition of that. When this man asks for water baptism, Philip wants to be very sure that he believes with all his heart. - McGee

Act 8:38-39 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

Philip is snatched off the page of Scripture. He is not needed here anymore. The Ethiopian rides off the pages of Scripture in his chariot. He went on his way, rejoicing. Now what about this man? The first great church was not in the United States, nor was it in Europe, nor was it in Jerusalem, nor was it in Asia Minor. The first great church was in northern Africa. The Ethiopian evidently went back and through his witness and his influence, a church was begun there. You would find it very profitable to read about the early church in North Africa. – McGee

Preaching to one

I remember, years ago, one Sunday that I had to preach at the Chapel Royal; and in those days the old duke used to attend service there, and when he was in town the congregation may have numbered generally some seven or eight persons, but when he was out of town perhaps two or

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three. And on this occasion, he was out of town. Well, the morning prayer was over, and the clergyman who had said it had to leave for duty elsewhere; and by the time I had mounted the pulpit the clerk had gone into the vestry to stir the fire. I was left alone with the congregation! Under the circumstances it would have been ridiculous to have preached the sermon, and I went down to the congregation and told him so. He said—it was a young man I knew—“Oh! I have come a long way on purpose to hear you preach. I beg you will proceed.” “No!” I said, “I really can’t. Besides, how personal you would find the sermon. But I will walk across the park with you, and give you the heads of my sermon as we walk along.” Then I and Samuel Wilberforce, Esquire, walked across the park together. (Dean Hook.)

The Rest of the Story: Samuel Wilberforce is known for pushing against slavery, debating Charles Darwin, defending the faith, and a leading Bishop in London with world acclaim based on his writings to this day.

Act 8:40 But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

Azotus is Ashdod, which is over in the Gaza strip. To reach Caesarea, he would have gone through Joppa. Tel Aviv is there today. So he went, preaching the gospel along the coast up to Caesarea. The gospel has gone to Judea and to Samaria and is moving out. The eunuch has carried it down to Ethiopia. Philip is carrying it along the coast to Caesarea.

Acts 9 – Transformation of Saul and healing of his sight

THEME: Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (son of Shem).

This chapter tells about another remarkable conversion. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch was in a chariot; the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was down in the dust. Probably he was riding a little donkey when he went up to Damascus, and he was knocked right down into the dust.

When we get to the Book of Philippians, we will look at the theological, psychological, and philosophical aspects of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Here, we are dealing with the facts of what actually happened on the road to Damascus. - McGee

The Conversion of Saul

Act 9:1-2 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

When the persecution broke out in Jerusalem, the church went underground. The apostles remained in Jerusalem, but many of the others were scattered—we found Philip up in Samaria and along the Mediterranean coast. The thing that triggered it was the stoning of Stephen, followed by persecution.

The other religious leaders in Jerusalem were satisfied after they had run the Christians out of Jerusalem. They were willing to let it stay at that point. But not Saul of Tarsus! He was the one who was breathing out threatenings and slaughter. He hated Jesus Christ. I do not think that the Lord Jesus Christ ever has had an enemy greater than this man Saul of Tarsus. He went to the high priest and said, "Look, I've heard that a group of them have run off up there to Damascus, and I'm going after them." The fact of the matter is that he intended to ferret them out, anywhere they went. His goal was to exterminate the Christians.

Act 9:3-4 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Paul will recount this incident twice more in the Book of Acts. In fact, Paul never tired of telling about his conversion. We find him going over it again in his Epistle to the Philippians where he gets right down to the heart of the matter and tells what really happened to him. Here we are simply given the facts. He will go over them again when he gives his testimony before king Agrippa—that is a masterpiece. - McGee

Act 9:5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Will you notice, here, the ignorance of Saul? He was possibly the most brilliant man of his day. He was probably a graduate of the University of Tarsus, the greatest Greek university of that day. He was a student in the school of Gamaliel, the Hebrew scholar. He was trained in the details of the Jewish religion. But he did not know the Lord Jesus Christ. "Who art thou, Lord?" Friend, to know *Him* is life. Saul didn't know Him! - McGee

Act 9:6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Saul is right down in the dust on that road to Damascus. This is a remarkable conversion. He immediately reveals his conversion. This man who hated the Lord Jesus, who did everything he could against Him, now calls Him "Lord." And he asks what the Lord would have him do. He is ready to do the bidding of the Lord. He has been completely changed. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat_7:20). We can surely tell what has happened to this man.

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Act 9:7 *And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.*

Later on it says that they didn't hear. Is this a conflict? No, they heard a voice but that was all. They couldn't understand what was said. It didn't make any sense to them. They didn't see anyone. There was no one for them to see. They were speechless with amazement. We shall see this in more detail in Acts 22 and 26. - McGee

Act 9:8-9 *Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

This man was blinded by the light that he had seen from heaven. Here was a man who was puzzled as much as any man has ever been. Some people jump up and down when they are converted. Some shout for joy. Not Saul of Tarsus. There never was a man as confused as he was. Had we met him on one of those three days in Damascus and had we asked him what had happened to him, his answer would have been, "I don't know." But he is going to find out. - McGee

Act 9:10-12 *Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."*

Saul of Tarsus, a brilliant young man, is sitting in darkness and confusion. The Spirit of God comes to another man, Ananias, and sends him over to Saul of Tarsus. - McGee

Act 9:13-16 *Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."*

God states two reasons for calling Saul. He was God's chosen vessel for two things. First, he was to bear the name of Jesus. Notice that he is not called a witness as the disciples were. Although Paul may have seen Jesus at His crucifixion, he had not walked with Him in the days of His flesh. He really knew nothing about Him until that day on the road to Damascus. Now he is to bear that name. That is the same name we are to bear today, the name of Jesus.

He is to bear that name before three different groups: Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Gentiles are first on the list. Paul will be the great apostle to the Gentiles. Then to kings—he will appear before kings, probably including Nero himself, and then to the nation Israel. When Paul goes into a city, he always will begin in the Jewish synagogue. The synagogue will be his springboard to put him into the community, into the life of the city. From there he will reach the Gentiles. But he will go to the Jews first.

Second, the Lord said He will show Saul what great things he must suffer for His name's sake. He is chosen to suffer for Jesus Christ. In my judgment, there has never been anyone else who has suffered for the Lord as Paul the apostle suffered. None of us dare say, "I'm suffering more than anyone else. Why does God let this happen to me?" We may be suffering or we may think we are suffering more than we are. At any rate, none of us suffer as Paul the apostle suffered for the Lord.

Now as we look back on this remarkable conversion, you may remember that I said conversion requires the Holy Spirit using the Word of God through a man of God. Does this prove true in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus?

The Lord Jesus appeared to Saul personally. Before the Lord Jesus left His disciples, He told them that He was going away but that He would not leave them orphans. He promised them that He would send His Holy Spirit, and this is what the Spirit would do: "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father

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hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (Joh_16:14-15). Now I think that when our resurrected Lord appeared to Saul personally, the Spirit of God opened his eyes spiritually and closed them physically so that he might see the Lord Jesus. So the Holy Spirit was definitely at work.

How about the Word of God? How was that used in the conversion of Paul? Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee. He knew a great deal about the Word of God. In fact, if there ever has been anyone saturated with the Word of God, he was Saul of Tarsus. When reading his epistles, it becomes obvious that he was very familiar with the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God were operative in Saul's conversion.

How can one say that God used a man of God as the human instrument to reach Saul? Although a man of God was not present at the time, I believe the man whom the Lord used to reach Saul was none other than Stephen. These two young men, Saul and Stephen, met only once, and that was when Saul stood with those who killed him. Stephen had looked up into the heavens and said, “I see heaven open and Jesus standing there!” (see Act_7:56). Saul of Tarsus looked up into the heavens and couldn't see anything. Then he looked into the face of Stephen, and he knew that Stephen was actually seeing something. I believe that Saul actually hoped that the heavens would open and that he, too, could have a vision of God. And he did on the Damascus road. It was Jesus Christ who was revealed to him.

I believe that God uses a human instrument in the conversion of every individual, although that individual may not be present at the moment of the conversion. That is the reason you and I should cast our influence for the Lord Jesus Christ at all times.

Recently I received a letter from a man who is a barber. A certain man had been his customer for twenty years. One time when the customer got out of the chair and was paying for his haircut, he asked the barber, “Have you ever heard Dr. McGee on the radio?” The barber said he had not; so the customer walked over to his radio and turned it to the station on which we can be heard in that town. He said, “Every morning at eight o'clock! You listen to him!” That was the last time these two men saw each other. The customer died suddenly within a day or so. You can guess the end of the story. The barber started listening to the program. He had been listening to it for over two years when he wrote to me. He has come to know Jesus Christ as his Savior. The human instrument in his conversion was his old customer.

Dr. C. I. Scofield is the man who edited the Scofield Bible. Before his conversion he was an outstanding international lawyer, but he had the problem of being a very heavy drinker. He had a godly mother who prayed for him continually. She died before Dr. Scofield was converted. On one occasion Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was praying with Dr. Scofield. He told us that he heard Dr. Scofield say, “Lord, if my mother doesn't know that I have been converted, would You please tell her so?” God uses a human instrument in the conversion of every person although that person may not be present at the moment of conversion. I don't think a person can be converted without a human instrument. So why don't you be an instrument? That doesn't mean you have to get a person to his knees; it does mean that you get the good news of Jesus Christ to him. There will not be a real conversion without a man of God using the Word of God, directed by the Spirit of God.

Now, going back to Saul of Tarsus where we left him in Damascus, he is still sitting in solitary blindness, praying. Brilliant young man that he is, he is still somewhat confused since his conversion. So the Spirit of God appeared to Ananias and sent him over to help him.- McGee

Act 9:17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

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What a change! He is still Saul of Tarsus, but now he is Brother Saul. He is not the enemy. He is a brother. Any person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ is a brother to any other believer. Unfortunately, I must add that brothers don't always act like brothers.

Saul is to receive his physical sight. Also, he is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He is to be filled with the Holy Spirit for service. This is the experience which reveals itself in the life of the believer. He was baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Damascus road. In other words, he was saved on the Damascus road. But it wasn't until this man Ananias came to him that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He is going to become a witness for the Lord Jesus. He will receive his physical weight and his spiritual sight. - McGee

Act 9:18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Now he is baptized with water as a sign and seal of his conversion. The water had nothing to do with his salvation. He had been baptized by the Holy Spirit—that is, he had been saved on the Damascus road. When Ananias had laid his hands on him, he had been filled with the Holy Spirit for service. And now he is baptized with water. - McGee

Saul Proclaims Jesus in Synagogues

Act 9:19-20 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

Saul of Tarsus begins to witness immediately. Why? Because he is filled with the Holy Spirit. He began to preach “Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”

Friend, you must know who Christ is before you can believe what He did. He died to pay the penalty for your sins. It is because He is the Son of God that He could die for your sins. I couldn't die for your sins; you couldn't die for mine. No human being can die a redemptive death for another human being. Only Christ could do this because He is the Son of God. So Saul began to preach that Christ is the Son of God. That is the first thing you must know. - McGee

Act 9:21-22 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

The “very Christ” means the very Messiah. Saul confounded the Jews by preaching this. Saul of Tarsus is number one in several departments. He is number one in suffering; he is number one as a missionary. I think he is also number one in his I.Q.—he was a brilliant man. He was able to confound those who attempted to tackle him intellectually. - McGee

Saul Escapes from Damascus

Act 9:23-25 Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.

When the Jews couldn't win by argument, they resorted to another tactic, which was to eliminate the enemy.

I'm sure it must have been quite a thrilling experience to have been let down over the wall in a basket. Yet we never read anywhere in the New Testament that Paul toured the Roman Empire giving a lecture on the subject, “Over the Wall in a Basket.” That ought to be a lesson for a great many folk who deal in sensationalism today. Here is a man who has had a most remarkable experience, but he has something more important to present.

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We must never let our experience get in the way of presenting Christ. We must never let our person get in the way of the person of Christ. Sometimes I hear the very pious prayer, “Hide the preacher behind the Cross.” No, friend, that is not what he needs. Rather, we should pray, “Help the preacher to present Christ in such a way that the Spirit of God can take the things of Christ and show them to us. Help him to present Christ!” This was Paul's method. - McGee

Saul in Jerusalem

Act 9:26 *And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.*

They thought this was a deception on the part of Saul of Tarsus, that he was worming his way in. They were experiencing persecution. And they probably had heard of Simon the sorcerer and the tactics he used in Samaria. - McGee

Act 9:27-28 *But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.*

Good old Barnabas, whose very name means the “son of consolation and comfort”! He comes over and puts his arms around Saul. What a blessing he was to him! How we still need people who will put their arms around some new Christian and will help that new Christian along. Barnabas becomes the sponsor of Saul.

Paul is accepted into the assembly at Jerusalem and joins forces with the Jerusalem church. - McGee

Act 9:29-30 *And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.*

These are not Greeks. They are Israelites who have a Greek background. They had been brought up outside Israel somewhere in the Greek world. The witness of Saul was so powerful that they concluded the only way to get rid of his effectiveness was to eliminate him, to kill him.

Paul goes to his hometown. He probably went back home to tell his father and mother, brothers and sisters, and other relatives about Christ. We know nothing about them. Paul never talked about his family—with one exception. In Romans 16 he mentions some folk who are related to him. - McGee

Act 9:31 *Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.*

The church continued to grow. The gospel went into Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. It will start to go to the ends of the earth very shortly. – McGee This is a partial fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

The Healing of Aeneas

Act 9:32-35 *Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.*

Because Peter was an apostle, he had the sign gifts of an apostle.

Dorcas Restored to Life

Acts 9 – Transformation of Saul and healing of his sight

Act 9:36 *At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.*

This woman was engaged in social service. She had the gift of sewing. Do you mean to tell me that sewing is a gift of the Holy Spirit? Yes, it was for this woman. Many people today are seeking for some exciting, fleshly gift such as speaking in tongues. May I suggest seeking a gift that is practical? I say very carefully and kindly, "Dear sister, learn to sew."

Sewing was a gift of Dorcas. I doubt that she ever spoke at a missionary meeting or taught a women's Bible class. I don't think she ever had such an opportunity because she was one of the early saints. But she did a lot of wonderful things for folk. - McGee

Act 9:37-39 *But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.*

Notice how the Christians prepared for burial in that day.

They sent word from Joppa to Lydda that a very wonderful woman in the church there in Joppa had died. They apparently believed that Simon Peter could raise her from the dead. At least they asked him to come down.

You will notice that it was the widows who conducted this fashion show. They were all showing off the garments that Dorcas had made. Why did the widows do it? Because they were poor. They wouldn't have had any clothes if it had not been for Dorcas. She had sewn their clothes for them. This was her ministry. Sewing was her gift of the Holy Spirit. - McGee

Act 9:40-41 *But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.*

Here is an example of the exercise of a sign gift. We have in the Book of Acts, the historical book of the church, the ministries of Simon Peter who was an apostle and of Paul who was an apostle. Simon Peter was a minister to his own people; yet he was the one to open the door for the Gentiles. Saul of Tarsus became the apostle Paul, and he was the apostle to the Gentiles. The record states that each one raised a person from the dead. Quite possibly they raised others, but these are recorded to show that these men had sign gifts. They could perform miracles. They could heal the sick. They could raise the dead. These were the marks, the evidences of an apostle. They were apostolic gifts. Paul says that the apostles are the foundation of the church in the sense that the church is built on them. They are the ones who put down the New Testament on which the church is actually built.

Today we do not need sign gifts. The issue today is doctrine. At the end of the era of New Testament writings, the apostle John wrote his epistles. Listen to his instructions for detecting deceivers: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2Jn_1:10-11).

Toward the end of Paul's own ministry the record clearly shows that Paul did not exercise the gift of healing. For instance, notice that he left Trophimus at Miletum sick (2Ti_4:20). Why did not Paul heal his friend Trophimus? Paul, you see, had come to the end of his ministry, and the sign gifts even then were beginning to disappear from the church. At the beginning of Paul's ministry nothing of the New Testament had been written. Paul himself wrote the second book of the

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New Testament. When he went into a new territory with his message, what was his authority? He had no authority except sign gifts. However, after the New Testament was in written form, the emphasis shifted from sign gifts to correct doctrine. Paul warns that if a man does not have correct doctrine—even if he is an angel from heaven—you should not receive him. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal_1:8).

However, in the early days of the church, the apostles' sign gifts were important. Notice the reaction of those who heard of Dorcas being restored to life. - McGee

Act 9:42-43 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

This miracle of resurrection **became widely known**, so that **many believed on the Lord**. However, comparing verse 42 with verse 35, it seems that more were converted through the healing of Aeneas than through the raising of Dorcas.

Peter stayed many days in Joppa, staying in the house of Simon, a tanner. The mention of Simon's trade here is significant. The Jews considered tanning a disreputable business. Constant contact with the bodies of dead animals caused ceremonial defilement. The fact that Peter lived with Simon showed he was no longer bound by this particular Jewish scruple.

It has often been pointed out that in three successive chapters we have the conversion of a descendant of one of Noah's sons. The Ethiopian eunuch (chap. 8) was undoubtedly of the line of Ham. Saul of Tarsus (chap. 9) was a descendant of Shem. Now here in chapter 10, in Cornelius, we see one of Japheth's posterity. It is a striking witness to the fact that the gospel is for all races and all cultures, and that in Christ all these natural distinctions are abolished. As Peter used the keys of the kingdom in opening the door of faith to the Jews in chapter 2, he is seen doing the same to the Gentiles in chapter 10. – Believers' Bible Commentary

ACTS 10 – The Holy Spirit comes upon the Gentiles

Chapter 10 continues the record of the ministry of Simon Peter. Later Peter will pass from the scene, and the history will continue with the ministry of the apostle Paul. Although Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter opened the door to the Gentiles by entering the home of Cornelius and presenting salvation through Christ to his household. - McGee

Peter and Cornelius

Act 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,

Remember that Paul had been in Caesarea (Act_9:30) and probably some of the other apostles had been preaching the gospel along the coast. Tel Aviv is really a part of old Joppa. As one travels up the coast from Joppa, the next place of any size is Caesarea, which was really a Roman city. It was the place where Pilate lived. The governor and those who ruled the land stayed there. This is where Cornelius was stationed. He was a centurion, which means he was a commander of a hundred soldiers in the Roman army. The Italian band was a cohort of Roman soldiers recruited in Italy. - McGee

Act 10:2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

He was “a devout man.” That means his worship was rightly directed. He recognized his dependence upon that which is divine. Remember that even a pagan can have devotion and a deep conviction to his gods. Sometimes we wish that Christians today had more devotion and conviction.

He was a devout man and “one that feared God.” He was not a Jewish proselyte in the strict sense of the term, but gravitated toward Judaism and could be called a “proselyte of the Gate.” Today we might say that he was a man who lived in the neighborhood, attended church on special occasions, was friendly toward the church, but was not actually a Christian. That could have been Cornelius. He feared God.

He “gave much alms to the people” means he gave many gifts of charity to the Jewish people. The nation Israel has always laid great stress upon giving. God had taught them this in the Old Testament. We speak of the tithe, but it is obvious from the Mosaic system that they actually gave three tenths. They gave for the running of the government (which was a theocracy at the beginning), they gave for the maintenance of the temple, and they gave a tenth of all that they produced. So they have been a giving, generous people.

It is interesting that even today many of our eleemosynary, that is, charitable foundations, were established by Jews. There is no group of people in our day that gives as generously as does the Jewish community in its support of the nation Israel. They are a very generous people.

Cornelius “prayed to God always.” This centurion took his needs to God. He needed to have more light. He wanted it. He probably didn't really know too much about prayer, but he prayed. - McGee

Act 10:3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

This centurion was an officer in the Roman army, a career officer, and a man of influence. Also he had a tremendous influence in his own household, as we shall see. He was a good man to all outward

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observation. In America today he would pass for a Christian, a Christian of the highest degree, an outstanding man. But he actually was not a Christian. He had not even heard the gospel.

He is an example of a man who lived up to the light which he had. Joh_1:9 says this of Jesus: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." This centurion had not met Jesus Christ nor come into His presence, but he was living up to the light that he had. Paul is referring to those who do not live by the light they have in Rom_1:19-20 : "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." This is God's answer to that oft-repeated question, "What about the poor pagan, that 'good' heathen, who wants to know God but never had a chance? Is he lost?" The answer is that God will get light to such a person. God will enable him to hear the gospel. Now how will God get the gospel to Cornelius? The barriers seem insurmountable. The church at this time—and for the first eight years—was exclusively Jewish.

These Christian Jews were still going to the temple and observing many Jewish customs. They could do that under grace because they were trusting Christ. Then the gospel broke over into Samaria. The Jews in Jerusalem were surprised, but they recognized the hand of God in this. Now how is God going to open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles? Paul is to be the great missionary to the Gentiles, but God has Paul out in the desert in Arabia, training him there. It is Simon Peter who must open the door to the Gentiles. God used perhaps the most prejudiced and religious bigot, the greatest extremist of the day. Obviously, the Holy Spirit directed every move in getting the gospel to the Gentiles. My friend, all genuine Christian work is directed by the Holy Spirit. No other work amounts to anything. The Holy Spirit had to work in the heart of the Gentile; the Holy Spirit had to work in the heart of the Jew. The Holy Spirit directed the bringing of the gospel to the gentile world. - McGee

Act 10:4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

An angel of God appeared to Cornelius in a vision. He was not dreaming but was given this vision while he was praying.

Now I do want you to notice that there are certain things that do count before God. These are things which can in no way merit salvation, but they are things which God notes. The prayers of Cornelius and his alms had come up for a memorial before God, and God brought the gospel to him. Wherever there is a man who seeks after God as Cornelius did, that man is going to hear the gospel of the grace of God. God will see that he gets it. - McGee

Act 10:5-6 Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

The angel tells him where to find Peter. He doesn't need more of an address. The odor of those hides down in that vat will lead them to the right place!-McGee

That Peter shares hospitality with Simon is significant. Just like Jesus, he is eating and drinking with the outcast, people who are Jewish but on the fringe of society from the perspective of Temple purity and Pharisaical tradition. While tanners are never included in the list of outsiders with whom Jesus eats, they might very well be in the same category as tax collectors and prostitutes.

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It is therefore quite curious that Peter hesitates when he is told to God to Cornelius in chapter 10. This is a testimony to how far Jews and Gentiles were separated culturally. Peter has no problem staying in the home of a tanner who was unclean, yet will not enter the home of a Gentile God-fearer, someone who was likely more “clean” than the tanner, with respect to the Law. The difference, of course, is that even if Cornelius was a God-Fearer, he was still an uncircumcised Gentile. - Phillip J. Long has taught full time at Grace Christian University since 1998, specializing in Bible and Biblical languages.

A tanner. Showing that the strictness of the Jewish law was losing its hold on Peter; since the tanner’s occupation was regarded as unclean by strict Jews, and the tanners were commanded to dwell apart. “If a tanner married without mentioning his trade, his wife was permitted to get a divorce. The law of levirate marriage might be set aside if the brother-in-law of the childless widow was a tanner. A tanner’s yard must be at least fifty cubits from any town” (Farrar, “Life and Work of St. Paul”).

Marvin Richardson Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 497. – Logos Word Study

Act 10:7-8 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

These men won't have any trouble finding the tanner's house. While they are on their way, God must prepare Simon Peter.

Notice: Cornelius obedience and lack of specifics by the Lord. Have you ever notice that many blessing come after acts of faith and obedience?

Peter's Vision

Act 10:9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

It is absolutely necessary for God to prepare Simon Peter. You see, Simon Peter didn't have the breadth that Paul had. Although he didn't have the background or the training that Paul had, God can use him differently. I believe it is a tremendous mistake to think that every person has to be poured into the same mold for God to use him. - McGee

Act 10:10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance

Act 10:11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.

Act 10:12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

Act 10:13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

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Act 10:14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

The next day, at about noon, Peter went up on the flat roof of Simon's house in Joppa to pray. He was hungry at the time and would like to have eaten, but the meal was still being prepared down below. His hunger, of course, provided a fitting preparation for what was to follow. Falling into a trance, he saw a sheet ... let down from heaven by its four corners, with all kinds of four-footed animals ... , birds, and reptiles in it, clean and unclean. A voice from heaven directed the hungry apostle to "Rise, ... kill and eat!" Remembering the Law of Moses which forbade a Jew to eat any unclean creature, Peter uttered the historic contradiction, "Not so, Lord!" Scroggie comments, "Whoever says 'not so' should never add 'Lord,' and whoever truly says 'Lord' will never say 'Not so.'" – Believers Bible Commentary

While Peter is wondering what this means, a voice speaks to him. Isn't it interesting that he calls Him, "Lord," but he doesn't obey what the Lord tells him to do?

Now don't miss this. Here is a man who is on this side of the Day of Pentecost. He is living in this age of grace when it makes no difference whether we eat meat or whether we don't eat meat. However, Peter is still abiding by the Mosaic system and he is not eating anything that is ceremonially unclean. He is sincere and honest about it. Someone may say that he ought to be broad-minded and eat everything. Well, you see that the Lord is teaching him that he is no longer under the Mosaic system and is free to eat anything. Today the big problem is that some people decide they don't want to eat meat and then they try to put everyone else under that same system. My friend, under grace you can eat meat or not eat meat. That is your business. Eating some certain food may give you indigestion, but it certainly will not change your relationship with the Lord. – McGee

Is this really about what type of meat we eat? Can food really impact your relationship with the Lord?

Act 10:15-16 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

It is clear that the vision had deeper significance than the mere matter of eating foods, clean and unclean. True, with the coming of the Christian faith, these regulations concerning foods were no longer in effect. But the real significance of the vision was this: God was about to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. As a Jew, Peter had always looked upon the Gentiles as unclean, as aliens, as strangers, as far off, as godless. But now God was going to do a new thing. Gentiles (represented by the unclean beasts and birds) were going to receive the Holy Spirit the same as the Jews (clean beasts and birds) had already received Him. National and religious distinctions were to be dissolved, and all true believers in the Lord Jesus would be on the same level in the Christian fellowship. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:17-22 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?" And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you."

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While Peter was pondering this vision in his heart, the servants of Cornelius arrived at the gate and inquired for him. Directed by the Spirit, he went down from the housetop to greet them. When he learned the purpose of their visit, he invited them in and gave them accommodation for the night. The servants paid high tribute to their master as “a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews.” – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:23-25 Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

On the next day Peter set out for Caesarea with the three servants of Cornelius and some brethren from Joppa. They apparently journeyed all day, because it was on the following day that they reached Caesarea.

In anticipation of their arrival Cornelius ... had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter arrived, the centurion fell down at his feet as an act of reverence. The apostle refused such worship, protesting that he was only a man himself. It would be fitting if all self-appointed “successors” of Peter would imitate his humility by forbidding people to kneel before them! – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:26-29 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

Finding a crowd assembled inside the house, Peter explained that as a Jew he would not ordinarily have come into a Gentile house like this one, but that God had revealed to him that he should no longer think of the Gentiles as being untouchables. Then he asked for what reason they had sent for him. – Believers Bible Commentary

This amazes me. Why would Simon Peter ask that question? Why didn't he immediately begin to tell them about Jesus Christ? Well, you see, the Spirit of God is in charge here, and He keeps Peter from rushing right into this.

This should be an important lesson for us. So often we are rather brisk and even crude in our witnessing. Because we find it difficult to witness, generally when we do it, we are very amateurish about it. We do it so abruptly and in such a way that often it offends people.

We need to be led by the Spirit of God. I personally believe that the finest kind of evangelism today is prayer evangelism. I mean that we should begin by praying for an individual. Then the day will come when we need to put legs on the prayer. Ask God to lead you. Friend, I know that He will lead you. If you have been praying for a loved one, or a friend, or a stranger, don't just go to him in your own strength and in the power of the flesh. If you do, you will fail. Let God be the One to lead you.

Let me share with you one of my first experiences of witnessing. When I was a student in college, I was very zealous to be a witness for God, but I was rather timid about it, and, very frankly, I wanted to be sure I had the leading of the Holy Spirit. I didn't have any money for bus or train fare, so I did a lot of

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hitchhiking. One time when I was out on the highway, a man in a brand new Model A Ford drove by and stopped fifty yards past me. Then he motioned for me to come on and get in. He said that he always looked over a hitchhiker before he picked one up. He introduced himself and told me he was a salesman for drug companies. He asked where I was going and I told him it was to Memphis. Well, he was going all the way to Memphis and he would be glad to take me all the way, but he did need to stop at several drug stores on the way to get his orders from them. Obviously, that was fine with me.

As we rode along, we talked of everything under the sun. Under my breath I was praying, "Lord, I'd like to witness to this man, but You will have to open the door for me. I'm not going to broach the subject because if I do, he'll think he has some religious nut in the car with him. If I open the door, he will probably open the car door and tell me to get out." So we rode along some more and just talked and talked. Finally he asked me whether I'd mind driving for him. Of course, I would love to drive that new car; so I did. He sat there and relaxed.

We got about sixty miles from Memphis and we had run out of conversation. There was a lull, and I was still praying, "Lord, we're getting near Memphis and there still hasn't been a door open for me. I'm not going to open it because I'm afraid he'll throw me out. You open the door for me if You want me to witness." We rode on for about ten more minutes, and then out of a clear sky he said, "You know, my wife and I went to church yesterday." He looked at me and laughed, and I laughed. Then he said, "I don't go very often. But that preacher said the funniest thing. He said Jesus was coming to this earth again. What do you think about that?"

Well, friend, I told him. Then I told him all about the first coming of the Lord Jesus. Finally I said, "The second coming of Christ means nothing to you now. You've got to come to Christ and accept what He did for you the first time He came if you are to have an interest in His second coming." This man was wide open. He drove me to the dormitory where I stayed at the college. He parked there and said, "I want to see you again." So I just blurted out, "Wouldn't you like to accept Christ as your Savior?" He said, "I sure would." I told him he could do that right there in the car. So we bowed our heads in prayer. I prayed and then asked him to pray, and he accepted Christ. Now I'll be honest with you, I would never have opened my mouth if the Lord hadn't prompted him to open up the conversation. We need to be led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit had prepared his heart, and his conversion was genuine. The first sermon I preached after I was ordained in Nashville, as I looked down at the congregation, I noticed this man and his wife. He just sat there and smiled. Afterward I invited him to join my church. He said they had already joined a good church over in another part of town. He and his wife had become active Christians. What a wonderful experience that was!

We ought to be very careful in our witnessing that we are being led by the Spirit of God. Simon Peter does not walk right in and begin lecturing or preaching. He first finds out what is going on. "Why have you called for me? Why did you send these men for me?" - McGee

Act 10:30-33 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'" So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

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Cornelius readily described the vision he had seen four days before when an angel assured him that his prayer had been heard and directed him to send for Peter. The hunger of the Gentile heart for the word of God is praiseworthy. He said, “Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.” Such an open and teachable spirit is sure to be rewarded with divine instruction. – Believers Bible Commentary

Gentiles Hear the Good News

Act 10:34-35 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Peter prefaced his message with a frank admission. Up to now he had believed that God's favor was limited to the nation of Israel. Now he realized that God did not respect a man's person because of his nationality, but was interested in an honest, contrite heart, whether in a Jew or a Gentile. “In every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.”

There are two principal interpretations of verse 35:

1. Some think that if one truly repents and seeks after God, he is saved even if he has never heard about the Lord Jesus. The argument is that although the man himself might not know about Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, yet God knows about it and saves the man on the basis of that sacrifice. He reckons the value of the work of Christ to the man whenever He finds true faith.
2. The other view is that even if a man fears God and works righteousness, he is not thereby saved. Salvation is only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But when God finds a man who has lived up to the light he has received about the Lord, He makes sure that the man hears the gospel and thus has the opportunity to be saved.

We believe that the second view is the proper interpretation. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:36-38 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Peter next reminds his hearers that although the gospel message was sent to the Jews first, yet Jesus Christ ... is Lord of all—Gentile as well as Jew. His audience must have heard the story of Jesus of Nazareth; it had begun in Galilee, at the time John was baptizing, and had spread throughout all Judea. This Jesus, anointed by the Spirit, had lived a life of selfless service for others, doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:39-40 And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

Notice carefully what Simon Peter does. He presents the facts concerning Jesus Christ, assuming there are some of the incidents which they already know. He makes it very clear to them that this Jesus was

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crucified on a tree and that He rose again on the third day. God raised Him and showed Him openly. This is the gospel. Nothing short of that will do.

This past Christmas I received many cards on which were printed the rather well-known message, "One Solitary Life." It is very fine; there is no question about that. It is very readable, but there is a strange omission—a solitary omission in it. The most important fact is not recorded. It records that Jesus died, even mentions that He was buried, but completely leaves out His resurrection. Friend, there is not a single sermon preached, as recorded in the Book of Acts, that does not mention the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the very heart of the gospel. Until that is preached, the gospel has not been preached. Jesus Christ died, He was buried, He rose again from the dead. Those are the historical facts. Your relationship to a risen Savior determines your eternal destiny. He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and He was raised again for our justification (Rom_4:25). - McGee

Act 10:41-43 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

In resurrection, the Lord commissioned the apostles to proclaim Him as Judge of the living and the dead. This agrees with many other Scriptures which teach that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son (Joh_5:22). This means, of course, that as Son of Man He will judge Jews and Gentiles alike.

10:43 But Peter does not linger on a note of judgment. Instead he introduces a grand statement of evangelical truth, explaining how the judgment can be avoided. As all the prophets of the OT had taught, whoever believes in the name of the Messiah will receive remission of sins. It is not an offer to Israel alone, but takes in all the world. Would you like to know the forgiveness of sins? Then believe in Him! – Believers Bible Commentary

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

Act 10:44-48 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

This incident has been called the Gentile Pentecost. Peter was astonished that the Gentiles should receive the Holy Spirit. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit was made audible by their speaking in tongues. The tongues were an evidence to Simon Peter and the others with him that God would save the Gentiles and would give to them His Holy Spirit. Peter later relates this as evidence that these Gentiles had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and that God had granted repentance unto life also to the Gentiles (Act_11:17-18). In Act_15:7-11 Peter again refers to this incident, declaring that it proves that the Holy Ghost has been given to the Gentiles and that they are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ just as are the Jews. It is hard for us to realize the great barrier that existed between Jew and Gentile. The Jews of that day simply could not believe that Gentiles were going to be saved—in spite of the fact

ACTS 10 – The Holy Spirit comes upon the Gentiles

that the Lord had told them this was to be so. Then the Gentiles at Cornelius' house are baptized in water.

Again let me call your attention to the fact that the Book of Acts records three representative conversions. The Ethiopian eunuch was a son of Ham. Saul of Tarsus was a son of Shem. Cornelius was a son of Japheth. In each instance the Holy Spirit moved, using a man of God and the Word of God. – McGee

The general lessons of our study are apparent of Cornelius.

1. Cornelius and Peter, Jew and Gentile, both had visions granted by God. God is no respecter of persons. Some very ignorant, uneducated man, despised in our eyes, may find the truth as well as we.
2. Christ takes what is best out of all as the foundation of advance into new truth concerning Himself. God's Spirit makes a preparatio evangelica everywhere.
3. All men need progress religiously—progress not beyond Christ, but progress deeper into the mysteries of the sublime truth given to us in Him. Let no one ever say he has no more to learn about the Son of God. (D. J. Burrell D. D.) – Biblical Illustrator

ACTS 10 – The Holy Spirit comes upon the Gentiles

Chapter 10 continues the record of the ministry of Simon Peter. Later Peter will pass from the scene, and the history will continue with the ministry of the apostle Paul. Although Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter opened the door to the Gentiles by entering the home of Cornelius and presenting salvation through Christ to his household. - McGee

Peter and Cornelius

Act 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,

Remember that Paul had been in Caesarea (Act_9:30) and probably some of the other apostles had been preaching the gospel along the coast. Tel Aviv is really a part of old Joppa. As one travels up the coast from Joppa, the next place of any size is Caesarea, which was really a Roman city. It was the place where Pilate lived. The governor and those who ruled the land stayed there. This is where Cornelius was stationed. He was a centurion, which means he was a commander of a hundred soldiers in the Roman army. The Italian band was a cohort of Roman soldiers recruited in Italy. - McGee

Act 10:2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

He was “a devout man.” That means his worship was rightly directed. He recognized his dependence upon that which is divine. Remember that even a pagan can have devotion and a deep conviction to his gods. Sometimes we wish that Christians today had more devotion and conviction.

He was a devout man and “one that feared God.” He was not a Jewish proselyte in the strict sense of the term, but gravitated toward Judaism and could be called a “proselyte of the Gate.” Today we might say that he was a man who lived in the neighborhood, attended church on special occasions, was friendly toward the church, but was not actually a Christian. That could have been Cornelius. He feared God.

He “gave much alms to the people” means he gave many gifts of charity to the Jewish people. The nation Israel has always laid great stress upon giving. God had taught them this in the Old Testament. We speak of the tithe, but it is obvious from the Mosaic system that they actually gave three tenths. They gave for the running of the government (which was a theocracy at the beginning), they gave for the maintenance of the temple, and they gave a tenth of all that they produced. So they have been a giving, generous people.

It is interesting that even today many of our eleemosynary, that is, charitable foundations, were established by Jews. There is no group of people in our day that gives as generously as does the Jewish community in its support of the nation Israel. They are a very generous people.

Cornelius “prayed to God always.” This centurion took his needs to God. He needed to have more light. He wanted it. He probably didn't really know too much about prayer, but he prayed. - McGee

Act 10:3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

This centurion was an officer in the Roman army, a career officer, and a man of influence. Also he had a tremendous influence in his own household, as we shall see. He was a good man to all outward

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observation. In America today he would pass for a Christian, a Christian of the highest degree, an outstanding man. But he actually was not a Christian. He had not even heard the gospel.

He is an example of a man who lived up to the light which he had. Joh_1:9 says this of Jesus: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." This centurion had not met Jesus Christ nor come into His presence, but he was living up to the light that he had. Paul is referring to those who do not live by the light they have in Rom_1:19-20 : "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." This is God's answer to that oft-repeated question, "What about the poor pagan, that 'good' heathen, who wants to know God but never had a chance? Is he lost?" The answer is that God will get light to such a person. God will enable him to hear the gospel. Now how will God get the gospel to Cornelius? The barriers seem insurmountable. The church at this time—and for the first eight years—was exclusively Jewish.

These Christian Jews were still going to the temple and observing many Jewish customs. They could do that under grace because they were trusting Christ. Then the gospel broke over into Samaria. The Jews in Jerusalem were surprised, but they recognized the hand of God in this. Now how is God going to open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles? Paul is to be the great missionary to the Gentiles, but God has Paul out in the desert in Arabia, training him there. It is Simon Peter who must open the door to the Gentiles. God used perhaps the most prejudiced and religious bigot, the greatest extremist of the day. Obviously, the Holy Spirit directed every move in getting the gospel to the Gentiles. My friend, all genuine Christian work is directed by the Holy Spirit. No other work amounts to anything. The Holy Spirit had to work in the heart of the Gentile; the Holy Spirit had to work in the heart of the Jew. The Holy Spirit directed the bringing of the gospel to the gentile world. - McGee

Act 10:4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

An angel of God appeared to Cornelius in a vision. He was not dreaming but was given this vision while he was praying.

Now I do want you to notice that there are certain things that do count before God. These are things which can in no way merit salvation, but they are things which God notes. The prayers of Cornelius and his alms had come up for a memorial before God, and God brought the gospel to him. Wherever there is a man who seeks after God as Cornelius did, that man is going to hear the gospel of the grace of God. God will see that he gets it. - McGee

Act 10:5-6 Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

The angel tells him where to find Peter. He doesn't need more of an address. The odor of those hides down in that vat will lead them to the right place!-McGee

That Peter shares hospitality with Simon is significant. Just like Jesus, he is eating and drinking with the outcast, people who are Jewish but on the fringe of society from the perspective of Temple purity and Pharisaical tradition. While tanners are never included in the list of outsiders with whom Jesus eats, they might very well be in the same category as tax collectors and prostitutes.

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It is therefore quite curious that Peter hesitates when he is told to go to Cornelius in chapter 10. This is a testimony to how far Jews and Gentiles were separated culturally. Peter has no problem staying in the home of a tanner who was unclean, yet will not enter the home of a Gentile God-fearer, someone who was likely more “clean” than the tanner, with respect to the Law. The difference, of course, is that even if Cornelius was a God-Fearer, he was still an uncircumcised Gentile. - Phillip J. Long has taught full time at Grace Christian University since 1998, specializing in Bible and Biblical languages.

A tanner. Showing that the strictness of the Jewish law was losing its hold on Peter; since the tanner’s occupation was regarded as unclean by strict Jews, and the tanners were commanded to dwell apart. “If a tanner married without mentioning his trade, his wife was permitted to get a divorce. The law of levirate marriage might be set aside if the brother-in-law of the childless widow was a tanner. A tanner’s yard must be at least fifty cubits from any town” (Farrar, “Life and Work of St. Paul”).

Marvin Richardson Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 497. – Logos Word Study

Act 10:7-8 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

These men won't have any trouble finding the tanner's house. While they are on their way, God must prepare Simon Peter.

Notice: Cornelius obedience and lack of specifics by the Lord. Have you ever notice that many blessing come after acts of faith and obedience?

Peter's Vision

Act 10:9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

It is absolutely necessary for God to prepare Simon Peter. You see, Simon Peter didn't have the breadth that Paul had. Although he didn't have the background or the training that Paul had, God can use him differently. I believe it is a tremendous mistake to think that every person has to be poured into the same mold for God to use him. - McGee

Act 10:10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance

Act 10:11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.

Act 10:12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

Act 10:13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

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Act 10:14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

The next day, at about noon, Peter went up on the flat roof of Simon's house in Joppa to pray. He was hungry at the time and would like to have eaten, but the meal was still being prepared down below. His hunger, of course, provided a fitting preparation for what was to follow. Falling into a trance, he saw a sheet ... let down from heaven by its four corners, with all kinds of four-footed animals ... , birds, and reptiles in it, clean and unclean. A voice from heaven directed the hungry apostle to "Rise, ... kill and eat!" Remembering the Law of Moses which forbade a Jew to eat any unclean creature, Peter uttered the historic contradiction, "Not so, Lord!" Scroggie comments, "Whoever says 'not so' should never add 'Lord,' and whoever truly says 'Lord' will never say 'Not so.'" – Believers Bible Commentary

While Peter is wondering what this means, a voice speaks to him. Isn't it interesting that he calls Him, "Lord," but he doesn't obey what the Lord tells him to do?

Now don't miss this. Here is a man who is on this side of the Day of Pentecost. He is living in this age of grace when it makes no difference whether we eat meat or whether we don't eat meat. However, Peter is still abiding by the Mosaic system and he is not eating anything that is ceremonially unclean. He is sincere and honest about it. Someone may say that he ought to be broad-minded and eat everything. Well, you see that the Lord is teaching him that he is no longer under the Mosaic system and is free to eat anything. Today the big problem is that some people decide they don't want to eat meat and then they try to put everyone else under that same system. My friend, under grace you can eat meat or not eat meat. That is your business. Eating some certain food may give you indigestion, but it certainly will not change your relationship with the Lord. – McGee

Is this really about what type of meat we eat? Can food really impact your relationship with the Lord?

Act 10:15-16 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

It is clear that the vision had deeper significance than the mere matter of eating foods, clean and unclean. True, with the coming of the Christian faith, these regulations concerning foods were no longer in effect. But the real significance of the vision was this: God was about to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. As a Jew, Peter had always looked upon the Gentiles as unclean, as aliens, as strangers, as far off, as godless. But now God was going to do a new thing. Gentiles (represented by the unclean beasts and birds) were going to receive the Holy Spirit the same as the Jews (clean beasts and birds) had already received Him. National and religious distinctions were to be dissolved, and all true believers in the Lord Jesus would be on the same level in the Christian fellowship. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:17-22 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?" And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you."

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While Peter was pondering this vision in his heart, the servants of Cornelius arrived at the gate and inquired for him. Directed by the Spirit, he went down from the housetop to greet them. When he learned the purpose of their visit, he invited them in and gave them accommodation for the night. The servants paid high tribute to their master as “a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews.” – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:23-25 Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

On the next day Peter set out for Caesarea with the three servants of Cornelius and some brethren from Joppa. They apparently journeyed all day, because it was on the following day that they reached Caesarea.

In anticipation of their arrival Cornelius ... had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter arrived, the centurion fell down at his feet as an act of reverence. The apostle refused such worship, protesting that he was only a man himself. It would be fitting if all self-appointed “successors” of Peter would imitate his humility by forbidding people to kneel before them! – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:26-29 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

Finding a crowd assembled inside the house, Peter explained that as a Jew he would not ordinarily have come into a Gentile house like this one, but that God had revealed to him that he should no longer think of the Gentiles as being untouchables. Then he asked for what reason they had sent for him. – Believers Bible Commentary

This amazes me. Why would Simon Peter ask that question? Why didn't he immediately begin to tell them about Jesus Christ? Well, you see, the Spirit of God is in charge here, and He keeps Peter from rushing right into this.

This should be an important lesson for us. So often we are rather brisk and even crude in our witnessing. Because we find it difficult to witness, generally when we do it, we are very amateurish about it. We do it so abruptly and in such a way that often it offends people.

We need to be led by the Spirit of God. I personally believe that the finest kind of evangelism today is prayer evangelism. I mean that we should begin by praying for an individual. Then the day will come when we need to put legs on the prayer. Ask God to lead you. Friend, I know that He will lead you. If you have been praying for a loved one, or a friend, or a stranger, don't just go to him in your own strength and in the power of the flesh. If you do, you will fail. Let God be the One to lead you.

Let me share with you one of my first experiences of witnessing. When I was a student in college, I was very zealous to be a witness for God, but I was rather timid about it, and, very frankly, I wanted to be sure I had the leading of the Holy Spirit. I didn't have any money for bus or train fare, so I did a lot of

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hitchhiking. One time when I was out on the highway, a man in a brand new Model A Ford drove by and stopped fifty yards past me. Then he motioned for me to come on and get in. He said that he always looked over a hitchhiker before he picked one up. He introduced himself and told me he was a salesman for drug companies. He asked where I was going and I told him it was to Memphis. Well, he was going all the way to Memphis and he would be glad to take me all the way, but he did need to stop at several drug stores on the way to get his orders from them. Obviously, that was fine with me.

As we rode along, we talked of everything under the sun. Under my breath I was praying, "Lord, I'd like to witness to this man, but You will have to open the door for me. I'm not going to broach the subject because if I do, he'll think he has some religious nut in the car with him. If I open the door, he will probably open the car door and tell me to get out." So we rode along some more and just talked and talked. Finally he asked me whether I'd mind driving for him. Of course, I would love to drive that new car; so I did. He sat there and relaxed.

We got about sixty miles from Memphis and we had run out of conversation. There was a lull, and I was still praying, "Lord, we're getting near Memphis and there still hasn't been a door open for me. I'm not going to open it because I'm afraid he'll throw me out. You open the door for me if You want me to witness." We rode on for about ten more minutes, and then out of a clear sky he said, "You know, my wife and I went to church yesterday." He looked at me and laughed, and I laughed. Then he said, "I don't go very often. But that preacher said the funniest thing. He said Jesus was coming to this earth again. What do you think about that?"

Well, friend, I told him. Then I told him all about the first coming of the Lord Jesus. Finally I said, "The second coming of Christ means nothing to you now. You've got to come to Christ and accept what He did for you the first time He came if you are to have an interest in His second coming." This man was wide open. He drove me to the dormitory where I stayed at the college. He parked there and said, "I want to see you again." So I just blurted out, "Wouldn't you like to accept Christ as your Savior?" He said, "I sure would." I told him he could do that right there in the car. So we bowed our heads in prayer. I prayed and then asked him to pray, and he accepted Christ. Now I'll be honest with you, I would never have opened my mouth if the Lord hadn't prompted him to open up the conversation. We need to be led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit had prepared his heart, and his conversion was genuine. The first sermon I preached after I was ordained in Nashville, as I looked down at the congregation, I noticed this man and his wife. He just sat there and smiled. Afterward I invited him to join my church. He said they had already joined a good church over in another part of town. He and his wife had become active Christians. What a wonderful experience that was!

We ought to be very careful in our witnessing that we are being led by the Spirit of God. Simon Peter does not walk right in and begin lecturing or preaching. He first finds out what is going on. "Why have you called for me? Why did you send these men for me?" - McGee

Act 10:30-33 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'" So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

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Cornelius readily described the vision he had seen four days before when an angel assured him that his prayer had been heard and directed him to send for Peter. The hunger of the Gentile heart for the word of God is praiseworthy. He said, “Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.” Such an open and teachable spirit is sure to be rewarded with divine instruction. – Believers Bible Commentary

Gentiles Hear the Good News

Act 10:34-35 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Peter prefaced his message with a frank admission. Up to now he had believed that God's favor was limited to the nation of Israel. Now he realized that God did not respect a man's person because of his nationality, but was interested in an honest, contrite heart, whether in a Jew or a Gentile. “In every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.”

There are two principal interpretations of verse 35:

1. Some think that if one truly repents and seeks after God, he is saved even if he has never heard about the Lord Jesus. The argument is that although the man himself might not know about Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, yet God knows about it and saves the man on the basis of that sacrifice. He reckons the value of the work of Christ to the man whenever He finds true faith.
2. The other view is that even if a man fears God and works righteousness, he is not thereby saved. Salvation is only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But when God finds a man who has lived up to the light he has received about the Lord, He makes sure that the man hears the gospel and thus has the opportunity to be saved.

We believe that the second view is the proper interpretation. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:36-38 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Peter next reminds his hearers that although the gospel message was sent to the Jews first, yet Jesus Christ ... is Lord of all—Gentile as well as Jew. His audience must have heard the story of Jesus of Nazareth; it had begun in Galilee, at the time John was baptizing, and had spread throughout all Judea. This Jesus, anointed by the Spirit, had lived a life of selfless service for others, doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 10:39-40 And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

Notice carefully what Simon Peter does. He presents the facts concerning Jesus Christ, assuming there are some of the incidents which they already know. He makes it very clear to them that this Jesus was

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crucified on a tree and that He rose again on the third day. God raised Him and showed Him openly. This is the gospel. Nothing short of that will do.

This past Christmas I received many cards on which were printed the rather well-known message, "One Solitary Life." It is very fine; there is no question about that. It is very readable, but there is a strange omission—a solitary omission in it. The most important fact is not recorded. It records that Jesus died, even mentions that He was buried, but completely leaves out His resurrection. Friend, there is not a single sermon preached, as recorded in the Book of Acts, that does not mention the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the very heart of the gospel. Until that is preached, the gospel has not been preached. Jesus Christ died, He was buried, He rose again from the dead. Those are the historical facts. Your relationship to a risen Savior determines your eternal destiny. He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and He was raised again for our justification (Rom_4:25). - McGee

Act 10:41-43 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

In resurrection, the Lord commissioned the apostles to proclaim Him as Judge of the living and the dead. This agrees with many other Scriptures which teach that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son (Joh_5:22). This means, of course, that as Son of Man He will judge Jews and Gentiles alike.

10:43 But Peter does not linger on a note of judgment. Instead he introduces a grand statement of evangelical truth, explaining how the judgment can be avoided. As all the prophets of the OT had taught, whoever believes in the name of the Messiah will receive remission of sins. It is not an offer to Israel alone, but takes in all the world. Would you like to know the forgiveness of sins? Then believe in Him! – Believers Bible Commentary

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Act 10:44-48 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

This incident has been called the Gentile Pentecost. Peter was astonished that the Gentiles should receive the Holy Spirit. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit was made audible by their speaking in tongues. The tongues were an evidence to Simon Peter and the others with him that God would save the Gentiles and would give to them His Holy Spirit. Peter later relates this as evidence that these Gentiles had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and that God had granted repentance unto life also to the Gentiles (Act_11:17-18). In Act_15:7-11 Peter again refers to this incident, declaring that it proves that the Holy Ghost has been given to the Gentiles and that they are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ just as are the Jews. It is hard for us to realize the great barrier that existed between Jew and Gentile. The Jews of that day simply could not believe that Gentiles were going to be saved—in spite of the fact

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that the Lord had told them this was to be so. Then the Gentiles at Cornelius' house are baptized in water.

Again let me call your attention to the fact that the Book of Acts records three representative conversions. The Ethiopian eunuch was a son of Ham. Saul of Tarsus was a son of Shem. Cornelius was a son of Japheth. In each instance the Holy Spirit moved, using a man of God and the Word of God. – McGee

The general lessons of our study are apparent of Cornelius.

1. Cornelius and Peter, Jew and Gentile, both had visions granted by God. God is no respecter of persons. Some very ignorant, uneducated man, despised in our eyes, may find the truth as well as we.
2. Christ takes what is best out of all as the foundation of advance into new truth concerning Himself. God's Spirit makes a preparatio evangelica everywhere.
3. All men need progress religiously—progress not beyond Christ, but progress deeper into the mysteries of the sublime truth given to us in Him. Let no one ever say he has no more to learn about the Son of God. (D. J. Burrell D. D.) – Biblical Illustrator

ACTS 11 – They called them Christians!

THEME: Peter defends his ministry; gospel goes to Antioch.

Peter recounts the events in connection with the conversion of Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. The news that the Gentiles had received the Word of God did not seem to bring any joy to the church in Jerusalem. They demand of Peter an explanation of his conduct, so Peter must defend his ministry—which is really difficult for Simon Peter, as he himself feels apologetic about it.

Antioch becomes the center of the gentile church.

Act 11:1-3 Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

There was doubt and division. We need to understand that to the Jews the action of Simon Peter was a terrible thing. In fact, if we could have talked to Simon Peter a month before this, he also would have said it was a terrible thing to do. Actually, Peter gives them an apology. He makes it clear that he didn't want to do it at all, but that the Spirit of God was in the whole episode. – McGee

Where is it written in the law of Moses that Jews cannot eat with Gentiles? Have you ever been accused of something that broke a tradition but never a biblical law?

Act 11:4-7 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.'

Remember this is a command not a suggestion. Yet, Peter disobeys three times. Have you ever been there?

Act 11:8-11 But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

Peter is stubborn disobeys three times, so God plans on using him anyway out of His grace. Hence, three Roman Soldiers come knocking. God must have known a subtle prompting by the Lord to spread the Gospel to Gentiles would not work, so He sent soldiers. **Have you ever been there? Disobeyed multiple times and God ups the stakes and chases after you?**

Act 11:12-14 Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'

In defending his action, Peter gave a simple recital of all that had happened—his vision of the sheet let down from heaven, the appearance of an angel to Cornelius, the arrival of the messengers from Cornelius, the Spirit's command to accompany them, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the

ACTS 11 – They called them Christians!

Gentiles. Since God had worked in so many definite and yet distinct ways, to resist or oppose would obviously have been to oppose the Lord.

In his message, Peter added several interesting details not given in the previous chapter:

1. He said that the sheet ... from heaven ... came right down to where he was (v. 5).
2. He spoke of observing it intently (v. 6).
3. Peter adds the detail that six brethren accompanied him from Joppa to Caesarea (v. 12).
4. In verse 14 we are informed that the angel promised Cornelius that Peter would tell him words by which he and all his household would be saved. This verse is one of the principal evidences that Cornelius was not a saved man before Peter's arrival. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 11:15-16 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

According to Peter's account, the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles as he began to speak. In Act_10:44 it appears that he had already been speaking some time. Apparently, he had begun to speak but was interrupted before he had proceeded very far. When the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, Peter thought immediately of Pentecost. Then his mind went back further to the Lord's promise that His disciples would "be baptized with the Holy Spirit." He realized that the promise had been fulfilled in part at Pentecost and was now being fulfilled again. - Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 11:17-18 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Then Peter faced the circumcision party with this question: If therefore God chose to pour out the Spirit on the Gentiles, as He had done previously on the Jews who believed ... , who was Peter that he should withstand God?

It is to the credit of these Hebrew Christians that when they had heard Peter's account, they recognized the hand of God in it all and did a complete about-face. All their objections were gone. In their place was praise to God for granting to the Gentiles repentance to life. - Believers' Bible Commentary

What would have happened to the spread of the Gospel if the Hebrew Christians would have been insistent on the circumcision issue? Have we ever stifled the movement of the Holy Spirit based on legalism?

The Church in Antioch

Act 11:19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

The narrative now goes back to the time of the persecution following the martyrdom of Stephen. In other words, the events described in the next verses took place before the conversion of Cornelius.

Those who were scattered after the persecution carried the gospel to:

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1. Phoenicia, the narrow coastland along the northeast Mediterranean, and including the ports of Tyre and Sidon (modern Lebanon).
2. Cyprus, a large island in the northeast Mediterranean.
3. Cyrene, a port city on the north coast of Africa (modern Libya).

However, they preached the gospel to no one but the Jews. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 11:20-22 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.

But there were certain of the believers from Cyprus and Cyrene who went to Antioch and there proclaimed the good news to the Hellenists. Blessing accompanied their preaching and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. F. W. Grant says: "It is remarkable how officialism is discredited in all this. We do not know the name of a single person used in the work."

The introduction of Christianity to Antioch was an important step in the forward march of the church. Antioch was located on the river Orontes in Syria, north of Palestine. It was considered the third city of the Roman Empire, and has been dubbed "the Paris of the ancient world." From here, Paul and his companions later went forth on their missionary journeys, taking the good news to the Gentiles. – Believers' Bible Commentary

There is a great moving of the Spirit of God in Antioch, and the church in Jerusalem hears about it. So the Jerusalem church sends Barnabas to Antioch. We are going to see now that Antioch becomes the second center of the church. In fact, the center actually shifts from Jerusalem to Antioch. - McGee

Act 11:23-24 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

This is a wonderful thing that is said about Barnabas. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of faith. And, my friend, there is no reason why every Christian shouldn't be a good person.

Barnabas became the pastor of the church there. He began "exhorting," which would be preaching and teaching. And the congregation grew, for "much people was added unto the Lord." As the church grew, it became evident to Barnabas that he needed an assistant pastor, and he knew where to get a good one. – McGee

Do you know people that will continue to claim they can do it and not ask for help? Have you ever had a job where the boss will not promote anyone who could be a threat?

How did Barnabas glorify God with this decision and how can we be like him?

Think about it. They were a lot safer choices than Saul. Also, Barnabas had to be humble enough to know he needed help and pick someone with skills better than him.

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Act 11:25-26 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Then Barnabas remembered Saul of Tarsus! It was he who had introduced Saul to the apostles at Jerusalem. Then Saul had been whisked out of the city to rescue him from the plots of the Jews. Since then he had been in his home town, Tarsus. Anxious to encourage Saul in the ministry and to give the church in Antioch the benefit of his teaching, Barnabas departed for Tarsus and brought Saul to Antioch. For a whole year this splendid team worked with the church there, teaching a great many people.

It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. Doubtless it was a term of reproach at that time, but since then it has been welcomed by all who love the Savior.

J. A. Stewart comments:

Saintly F. B. Meyer has said: "Antioch will ever be famous in Christian annals, because a number of unordained and unnamed disciples, fleeing from Jerusalem in the face of Saul's persecution, dared to preach the Gospel to Greeks and to gather the converts into a church in entire disregard of the initial rite of Judaism."

If these believers had gone from a modern congregation in which the ministry was designated to the sole responsibility of one man, this triumphant period of the Church's history could never have been written. How tragic that in the average church the ministry gifts of the Holy Spirit lie dormant and latent, because the average believer has no opportunity to minister. As long as every little group of believers has a paid pastor to take care of them, there is one thing certain, and that is, the world will never be evangelized. Thank God for all the voluntary Sunday school superintendents, Sunday school and Bible class teachers and so-called laymen. If they all had to be paid for their services very few churches would be able to function financially. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 11:27-30 And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

The incident that is recorded here is also verified in secular history. There was a general famine, but the effect was especially felt in Jerusalem where the church had been persecuted, decimated, and hurt. They were in dire need during this time. It is wonderful to see the fraternal spirit, the bond of love, that held the early church together. The other believers sent help to the troubled church in Jerusalem.

We remember that Saul had been one of those who had wasted the church in Jerusalem by his relentless persecution of them. How wonderful it is to see that by his own hands a transformed Saul now brings relief to that same church. That is Christianity in shoe leather, my friend. That is the way it ought to be. – McGee

Peter got restored three times by Jesus on the beach. Here Saul gets the opportunity to bless the very church he persecuted in a time of need. Do you believe that God will give you an opportunity to make amends? Pray for it and believe it with Kingdom faith.

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Christianity at Antioch

I. Its entrance into Antioch. Here (Act 11:19) we discover—

1. Evil overruled for good. The very efforts to crush the gospel gave it new vigour and a wider sweep. Thus it has ever been.
2. The invincibility of Christian courage. The fugitives did not flee from the cause they had espoused, nor relax their efforts to advance it. While true courage does not consist in callous indifference to danger, it demands at all risks eternal fealty to principle and duty.
3. The legitimacy of lay preaching. It is significant that the planting of Christianity here, and in numerous instances since, has been the work of private men holding no ecclesiastical office whatever: which shows—
 - (1) That it is the duty of everyone who knows the gospel to proclaim it.
 - (2) That those who would restrict preaching to the professionally ordained are opposed to the best interests of man and to the genius of the New Testament.
4. The universality of the gospel. It is a system as suited to the Greek as to the Hebrew mind, and equally essential to the highest interests of both. -Biblical Illustrator

ACTS 12 - Death of James; arrest of Peter

In this chapter persecution strikes through Herod Agrippa I. James is executed and Peter is imprisoned—but is miraculously delivered. Herod dies by a judgment of God. Although persecution comes, the church grows and the Word of God is multiplied. - McGee

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned

Act 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church.

“Herod the king” is Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great (who attempted to put the Lord Jesus to death at the time of His birth). There never was a family more at enmity against God. As far as we know, not a single member of the Herod family ever really turned to God.

You will recall that up to this point the persecution against the church had been largely from the religious rulers, the Sadducees in particular. Now it moves into the realm of government. Persecution swings from religion to politics. Perhaps Herod did this to gain favor with certain influential groups. We know that he stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. The word vexed is hardly adequate to describe what he did. He carried on a brutal, unfeeling persecution of the church. – McGee

Act 12:2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

The fact is stated so bluntly—he killed James with the sword. James becomes another martyr in the church. He is the second martyr who is named. I am of the opinion that there had been many others who had already died for the name of the Lord Jesus. – McGee

It was this James who had been with Peter and John on the Mount of Transfiguration with our Lord; and it was his mother who had requested that her two sons might sit beside Christ in His kingdom.

This chapter affords an interesting study of God's ways in connection with His people. James was put to death by the enemy, yet Peter was miraculously delivered. Human reason would ask why such preference should be shown to Peter. Faith rests on the love and wisdom of God, knowing that:

Ill that God blesses is our good,

And unblest good is ill,

And all is right that seems most wrong,

If it be His good will.

—Frederick W. Faber – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 12:3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

James is slain, but Peter will be miraculously preserved in all of this. Here we find an example of the sovereign will of God moving in the church. I'm sure there were many who asked, “Why in the world was James put to death and Peter permitted to live? Why would God do that?” Many ask that same question today. The answer is that this is the sovereign will of God. He still moves like this in the contemporary church. I have been in the ministry for many years, and I have seen the Lord reach in and take certain wonderful members out of the church by death. And then there are others whom He has left. Why would He do that? If He had asked me, from my viewpoint as the pastor, I would say that He took the

ACTS 12 - Death of James; arrest of Peter

wrong one and He left the wrong one! But life and death are in the hands of a sovereign God. When you and I rebel against His decision, it is simply too bad for us. This is His universe, not ours. It is God's church, not ours. The hand of a sovereign God moves in the church.

James apparently was one of the heads of the church in Jerusalem. God permits Herod to slay him. Peter must have been a leader too. God permits him to live. – McGee

Act 12:4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

The word Easter should be “Passover.” Actually, they are at the same time because you remember that Jesus ate the meal with His disciples just before He was crucified. However, the Jews in Jerusalem at this time would have been celebrating the Passover and not Easter.

He really put Peter under guard here. The guard is strengthened and enlarged. *Four quaternions* of soldiers to keep this man! Wouldn't you say that he suspected someone would try to deliver Peter- McGee

Act 12:5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

Another translation would be “but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him.” They didn't come before God with a kind of grocery-list prayer. They went before God and earnestly prayed that this man Simon Peter be delivered. Their hearts were in their prayers. - McGee

Peter Is Rescued

Act 12:6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

How could Simon Peter sleep between two soldiers? Remember that he went to sleep also in the Garden of Gethsemane. I would say that Simon Peter was not troubled with insomnia. He didn't have any difficulty sleeping. It seems he could sleep just about any place and any time. What a wonderful confidence he must have had in God to be able to sleep between these two soldiers! - McGee

Act 12:7-9 Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

The angel tells him to do a very reasonable thing—get dressed. There was nothing in the way of alarm, just sensible directions. Peter thought the whole thing was a dream, and he would have walked out of there without his shoes! – McGee

Act 12:10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

ACTS 12 - Death of James; arrest of Peter

They certainly had enough guards to keep Peter in prison. I really think that they expected something like this. You remember that the Lord Jesus had come forth from the grave. That was a source of real embarrassment to them. They do not intend to let something like that happen to them again. So they more than doubled the guard.

Remember that the church in Jerusalem is praying for Simon Peter while this is happening. As soon as Peter is out of danger, the angel lets Peter go on his own.

Let me call attention to the fact that the translation in verse Act_12:7 should be an angel of the Lord and not the angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord in the Old Testament referred to the preincarnate Christ. Jesus Christ is now at God's right hand in His glorified body. It was not the Lord Jesus who came down to deliver Peter. It was an angel whom the Lord Jesus had sent. The prayers of the church are definitely answered. - McGee

Act 12:11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."

That night ... when Herod planned to bring him out, Peter was sleeping soundly, manacled between two soldiers. Someone has called his slumber a triumph of faith. He probably remembered the Lord's promise that he would live to be an old man (Joh_21:18), and so he knew that Herod could not kill him prematurely. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and the cell was flooded with light. Tapping Peter on the side, the angel ordered him to get up quickly.

Immediately the handcuffs fell off. Then with short, crisp sentences, the angel told Peter to dress, to tie on his sandals, to throw his cloak around him, and to follow. Though in a daze, Peter followed the angel past the first and second guard posts of the prison. When they came to the iron gate, it opened automatically, as if by an electric eye. It was only after they had passed through one street of the city, and the angel had vanished, that Peter came to himself and realized it was not a dream, but that the Lord had miraculously delivered him from the hand of Herod and of the Jews. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 12:12 So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

The church at this particular time, and for about a hundred and fifty years after this, did not have church buildings. Today, when we talk of a church, we usually mean a building. We say, "The First So-and-So church is on the corner of Main and So-and-So." Actually, that is not a church at all; it is a building in which the church meets. The church is the body of believers. At the beginning the church never met in a public building. They had none. They met in homes.

Now Mary, the mother of John Mark, apparently was a woman of means and had a home large enough for the church to meet there. They were gathered together praying for Simon Peter to be delivered. – MCGee

When he stopped long enough to consider, Peter realized that the disciples would be praying at the house of Mary, the mother of John ... Mark. It must have been an all-night prayer meeting, since Peter's escape from prison probably took place during the early morning hours. – Believers Bible Commentary

ACTS 12 - Death of James; arrest of Peter

Act 12:13-15 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel."

Peter knocked at the door of the gate and waited. A girl named Rhoda (Greek, "Rose") came to answer, but was so excited when she heard Peter that she failed to open the gate! She ran back to announce the good news to those who were praying. They thought she was crazy, and did not hesitate to tell her so, yet she kept insisting that the apostle was really at the gate. They said, "It must be his guardian angel," but she stated positively that it was Peter.

These believers have often been chided for their unbelieving prayers; they were actually surprised when their prayers were answered. But any such criticism is probably influenced by our own nervous self-consciousness. Instead of chiding others, we should be greatly comforted that God answers such faithless prayers. We all tend to be unbelieving believers. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 12:16 Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

Act 12:17 But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

They just couldn't believe their eyes. They just couldn't believe that their prayers had been answered.

Now Peter got out of town. Since God had miraculously delivered him, couldn't God have miraculously kept him safe in Jerusalem? Shouldn't Peter have said, "I'm just going to stick around. God has delivered me out of prison, and I know He can keep me"? Of course, God could keep him. But God expects us to use our common sense. Sometimes what looks like a tremendous faith in God is actually tempting God. Even after God has done some wonderful or miraculous thing for you and for me, He still expects us to use our common sense. - McGee

Act 12:18 -19 Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.

When morning came and Peter was missing, the hapless soldiers were thrown into a state of panic. For Herod, too, it was a traumatic experience to be so outwitted. Nothing that the soldiers could say sounded at all convincing. In fact, the lameness of their testimony probably infuriated the king all the more. So he ordered them to be executed. He then left for Caesarea to nurse his wounded pride. – Believers Bible Commentary

The Death of Herod

Act 12:20 Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country.

ACTS 12 - Death of James; arrest of Peter

For some unknown reason, Herod had become very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, two commercial ports on the Mediterranean. The people of these cities took advantage of his holiday in Caesarea to ingratiate themselves with him, because they depended on importing grain from Judea. So they befriended Blastus the king's personal aide, and through him requested restoration of diplomatic relations. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 12:21 *So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.*

Act 12:22 *And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"*

Act 12:23 *Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.*

One day Herod came forth in all his royal finery to address the people. They shouted deliriously, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" He made no effort to refuse such divine honors, or to give glory to God. Therefore, an angel of the Lord struck Him with a fearful disease and he died. This was in a.d. 44.

Thus, the one who had executed James to please the Jews is himself slain at the hands of Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Herod reaped what he sowed. – Believers Bible Commentary

Friend, God will not share His glory with anyone. "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isa_42:8). Herod refused to glorify God through the miracle of Peter's escape from prison. And now he is willing to let the people deify him! God judges him. God is jealous of His glory. What a lesson we have here!

Now one would think that with all this persecution taking place the poor church would be destroyed and disappear. - McGee

Act 12:24-25 *But the word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.*

Meanwhile, the gospel expands its outreach continually. God makes the wrath of man praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He restrains (Psa_76:10). He makes the devices of the people of no effect, but the counsel of the Lord stands forever (Psa_33:10-11). Mark, who was a nephew of Barnabas, and later wrote the Second Gospel accompanied them back to Antioch. – Believers Bible Commentary

John Mark goes back to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul. Remember that they had been down in Jerusalem with the gift to the church there.

We have come now to the end of the second period of the Book of Acts. The gospel has gone into Judea and Samaria. Beginning with the next chapter we will see the movement of the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth. We are still in that movement today. I hope that you and I are both involved in it. – McGee

Acts 13- Paul's first Missionary Journey

THEME: First missionary journey of Paul.

We come now to the final major division of the Book of Acts. It is the Lord Jesus Christ at work by the Holy Spirit through the apostles to the uttermost part of the earth. This section includes chapters 13–28.

You will remember that the key to the book is the fact that Jesus said, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Act_1:8). This was not a command to the church as a corporate body but to you and me individually. This witness was to go out to Jerusalem, then to Judea and Samaria, and then to the uttermost part of the earth. During the Jerusalem period we saw that the gospel went to the Jews, and the church was 100 percent Jewish—no Gentiles. During the next period we saw the gospel go to the Samaritans and we saw the conversion of some Gentiles. Now the gospel moves out officially on its way to the ends of the earth.

On its way to the ends of the earth the gospel came to my ancestors and to your ancestors. Today you and I are the beneficiaries of the fact that someone went down the road of this world to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. You and I ought to be in the business of taking the gospel down beyond where we are to some who have not heard.

In this surge of the gospel beyond the boundaries of Simon Peter we find that Paul becomes the dominant leader and Peter disappears from the scene. God had used him mightily. Now Paul is the dominant one whom God will use.

As you will see by the map (p. 158), Paul begins his journey with Barnabas. The first stop is the island of Cyprus, the home of Barnabas. They cross the island, then set sail from Paphos to go over to Perga in Pamphylia. Then they enter the interior of Asia Minor, which is now Turkey, and go into the Galatian country. They visit Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe; then they return through Attalia, and then sail back to Antioch. - McGee

Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

Act 13:1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

A church had been formed in Antioch, as we learned in chapter 11. Instead of having one man designated as the minister or pastor, this assembly had a plurality of gifts. Specifically, there were at least five prophets and teachers. As mentioned previously, a prophet was a man specially gifted by the Holy Spirit to receive revelations directly from God and to preach them to others. In a real sense, the prophets were mouthpieces for the Lord, and could often foretell coming events. Teachers were men to whom the Holy Spirit had given the ability to expound or explain the Word of God to others in a simple and understandable manner.

The names of the prophets and teachers are given as follows:

1. Barnabas. We have already been introduced to this splendid servant of Christ and Paul's faithful co-worker. Here he is mentioned first, perhaps because he was the oldest in the faith, or in service for Christ.
2. Simeon who was called Niger (nye-jer). We judge from his name that he was a Jew by birth, perhaps from an African Jewish community. Or perhaps he adopted the name Niger (black or swarthy) for convenience in working with Gentiles. Of course, he may have been black, as the name would suggest. Nothing else is known of him.
3. Lucius of Cyrene. He was probably one of the men of Cyrene who came to Antioch first, preaching the Lord Jesus (Act_11:20).

Acts 13- Paul's first Missionary Journey

4. Manaen (same as the OT name Menahem). He is listed as one brought up with Herod the tetrarch. It is interesting to think of one who had lived in such close relationship with the wicked Herod Antipas being one of the earliest converts to the Christian faith. The title, tetrarch, indicates that Herod ruled over a fourth part of his father's kingdom.

5. Saul. Although mentioned last in this list, Saul was to become a living embodiment of the truth, "The last shall be first."

These five men illustrate that the early church was integrated and color-blind as far as man's skin is concerned. "A new measuring stick has been brought into being it is not who you are but whose." – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

These prophets and teachers had gathered together for a time of prayer and fasting, probably with the entire church. From the context, it appears clear that the expression, they ministered to the Lord, means they spent time in prayer and intercession. By fasting, they denied the legitimate claims of the body so as to give themselves more undistractedly to spiritual exercises.

Why had they come together to pray? Is it unreasonable to believe that they convened this meeting because of a deep burden for the evangelization of the world? The record does not indicate that it was an all-night prayer meeting, but the implication certainly is that it was of a more serious and prolonged nature than the usual "prayer meeting" of today.

As they prayed, the Holy Spirit definitely instructed them to separate ... Barnabas and Saul for the specific work which He had in mind. This, incidentally, is a very definite proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit. If He were nothing but an influence, it would be inconceivable that such language as this could be used. How did the Holy Spirit convey this message to the prophets and teachers? Although no definite answer is given, it is likely that He spoke through one of these men who were prophets —either Simeon, Lucius, or Manaen.

Barnabas is mentioned first here, then Saul. But when they returned to Antioch, the order was reversed.

This verse is of tremendous practical importance in emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in the guidance of the early church, and the sensitivity of the disciples to His leading. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 13:3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

After the Holy Spirit had thus revealed His will, the men continued to fast and pray. Then the three (Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen) laid hands on Barnabas and Saul. This was not an official act of "ordination" as is practiced in Christendom today where a church official confers ecclesiastical status on a subordinate. It was simply an expression of their fellowship with these two men in the work to which the Holy Spirit had called them. The idea of ordination as a rite which confers exclusive authority to administer the "sacraments" and perform other ecclesiastical duties is unknown in the NT. Barnhouse comments:

A great error in our modern way of doing things is to expect one man to possess all the necessary gifts for leadership. Thus, a church may have several hundred members but only one pastor. He is supposed to be able to preach, comfort and so on. In fact, of the eight gifts mentioned in our text (Rom_12:6-8) seven are usually

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considered to be the functions of the ordained minister, while the eighth is the function of the congregation. And what one gift is left to the congregation? It is that of paying the bills. Something is out of order here.

Someone may ask if I am suggesting that laymen should preach. Without question, when a layman has a grasp of the Scriptures, he should exercise his gift and preach at every opportunity. The growth of laymen's movements is significant and is a step in the right direction—back to the New Testament way of doing things.

It should be remembered that Barnabas and Saul had already been in the work of the Lord for about eight years before this time. They were not novices in the service of Christ. They had already experienced the “ordination of the Pierced Hands.” Now their fellow-servants at Antioch were simply expressing their identification with them in this special commission to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

The words, they sent them away, are more literally, “they let them go” or “set them free” for the work. – Believers Bible Commentary

Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus

Act 13:4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

The important thing is that they are sent forth by the Holy Spirit. They were led by the Holy Spirit of God. They went down to the seacoast town of Seleucia and sailed from there. – McGee

With this verse begins what has commonly been known as Paul's First Missionary Journey. The record of this journey extends to Act_14:26. It was concerned chiefly with evangelizing Asia Minor. The Second Missionary Journey carried the gospel to Greece. The Third Missionary Journey included return visits to the churches of Asia Minor and Greece, but it was chiefly concerned with the Province of Asia and the city of Ephesus. Paul's missionary labors covered a period of about fifteen years.

(In tracing Paul's journeys, we shall indicate the places visited by printing the entire name in capital letters the first time it is mentioned on any particular journey.)

From Antioch in Syria the two intrepid servants of Christ first went down to SELEUCIA (pronounced sel-you'-shi-a), a seaport about sixteen miles from Antioch. From there they sailed to the island of CYPRUS.

Act 13:5 And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.

After landing at SALAMIS (sal'-a-mis), on the east coast of Cyprus, they visited various synagogues and preached the word there. It was a custom in the synagogues for any Jewish man to be given the opportunity to read or expound the Scriptures. John Mark, at this time, was serving as their assistant (not “minister,” as in the KJV). In going to the synagogue first, Barnabas and Saul were fulfilling the divine injunction that the gospel should go to the Jew first, then to the Gentiles. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 13:6-8 Now, when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

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From Salamis they worked their way across the entire length of the island to PAPHOS on the west coast. Salamis was the chief commercial city of the island. Paphos was the capital.

There they met a Jewish false prophet and sorcerer named Bar-Jesus (meaning Son of Jesus or of Joshua). Somehow this sorcerer had become closely associated with Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul or administrative officer of the island. The latter is described as an intelligent man. When this man ... called for Barnabas and Saul to come to him so he could be instructed in the word of God, the sorcerer tried to interfere; he was probably satanically inspired to hinder the gospel.

In verse 8 his name is given as Elymas, meaning "wise man." It was, of course, a dreadful misnomer. – Believers' Bible Commentary

It would appear that their ministry didn't have much success at Salamis. At least no record is given of any fruit from their ministry. They cross over the Isle of Cyprus to the other side of the island. In Paphos they encounter this opposition, which is actually satanic, through a sorcerer who had a tremendous influence on the Roman deputy, the governor of that island, Sergius Paulus.

This is satanic opposition. This man had the governor under his influence. Unfortunately, there are a great many rulers today who are under the influence of all kinds of cultism which is in opposition to the Word of God and in opposition to the gospel. – McGee

Do we as believers get discouraged too easily? Not it appears they had little success at the first stop, and now Satan's attack is coming. It would have been easy to doubt their calling and fear of rejection cripple their ministry before it gets going.

Act 13:9-10 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?"

Here his name is changed. Why was he called Paul? The name Paul means "small or little." Some think that he took that name as an act of humility, that he no longer wanted to bear the proud name of Saul. It is possible he took the name of the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was his first convert. – McGee

Note that in this narrative (v. 9) Luke begins using Saul's Gentile name, Paul, rather than his Jewish name, Saul. The use of the name, Paul, signals the increasing outflow of the gospel to the Gentiles. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Realizing that Sergius Paulus was an earnest seeker of truth, and that the sorcerer was an enemy of the truth, Saul openly rebuked him in unsparing terms. Lest anyone might suspect that Saul was speaking in the energy of the flesh, it is explicitly stated that he was filled with the Holy Spirit at the time. Fixing his eyes intently on the sorcerer, Saul accused him of being full of all guile and all fraud. Nor was Saul deceived by the name Bar-Jesus; he tore away that mask and labeled Elymas as a son of the devil. The magician was an enemy of all righteousness, working ceaselessly to distort the truth of God. – Believers' Bible Commentary

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Act 13:11 *And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.*

Then, speaking with the special disciplinary authority vested in him as an apostle, Saul announced that Elymas would be stricken with blindness for a time. Because he had tried to keep others, such as the proconsul, in spiritual darkness, he himself would be punished with physical blindness. Immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he groped his way around, trying to find someone willing to lead him by the hand.

Elymas might be taken as a picture of the nation of Israel, not only unwilling to accept the Lord Jesus, but seeking to prevent others from doing so as well. As a result, Israel has been judicially blinded by God, but only for a time. Eventually a repentant remnant of the nation will turn to Jesus as Messiah and be converted. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 13:12 *Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.*

I call your attention to the fact that Paul had the sign gifts of an apostle. When he went over there to Paphos, he couldn't ask them to turn to the New Testament. There was no New Testament for him to preach from or for them to turn to. He couldn't preach from the Epistle to the Romans because he hadn't written it yet. They couldn't turn to the Gospel of John because John hadn't written it yet. So how will they recognize his authority? It is by the sign gifts. Today, the New Testament is written. We are now given a different way to recognize authority. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2Jn_1:10). This doctrine is in the Word of God, in the New Testament.

Probably the sorcerer had been doing some fancy tricks by the power of Satan. In that day a false prophet could probably heal and perform other miracles by the power of Satan.

Paul has his authority from the Lord Jesus Christ. He absolutely dominates the sorcerer by his message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sergius Paulus comes to the light. He has been in spiritual darkness but now believes and is astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. – McGee

The proconsul was obviously impressed by the miraculous stroke from God, but he was even more impressed by the teaching which had been given to him by Barnabas and Saul. He became a true believer in the Lord Jesus, the first trophy of grace on the first missionary journey. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia

Act 13:13 *Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.*

The fact that Paul has now taken the place of prominence is indicated by the words Paul and his party. From Paphos they sailed northwest to PERGA in PAMPHYLIA (pam-fil'-i-a). Pamphylia was a Roman province on the southern coast of Asia Minor. Perga was its capital and was located seven miles inland on the River Cestros (Kestros).

It was when they reached Perga that.

John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. Maybe he didn't relish the thought of taking the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul considered his withdrawal such a defect in service that he refused to allow Mark to accompany

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him on the second journey. This caused a sharp cleavage between Paul and Barnabas, resulting in their taking separate paths as far as future Christian service was concerned (cf. 15:36-39). Eventually, Mark regained the confidence of the Apostle Paul (2Ti_4:11).

No further details are given as to the visit to Perga. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 13:14-15 *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."*

Paul follows his method of going first to the synagogue. Jews were scattered throughout the Roman Empire, and they established synagogues in the cities in which they had settled. When visitors would come from Jerusalem, since they would want word from the religious center, they would invite the visitor to say something. This always afforded a marvelous opportunity for the apostle Paul. He certainly took advantage of it here.

This sermon which Paul preached in Antioch of Pisidia is one of the great sermons, in my opinion; yet it is generally passed by today. It is the first recorded sermon of Paul, preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. When they asked Paul whether he would like to say something, you can be sure that he wanted to say something. That was his whole reason for being there. - McGee

Act 13:16-20 *Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment. "After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.*

One would conclude from this introduction that there were some visitors there—probably Gentile proselytes. Notice that Paul is doing the same thing that Stephen did before the Sanhedrin. He recounts Israel's history as a nation. - McGee

Act 13:21-28 *And afterward they asked for a king; so, God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID THE SON OF JESSE, A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART, WHO WILL DO ALL MY WILL.' From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus— after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.' "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.*

After recounting their history, he will present to them the person of the Savior.

These people apparently had heard of John the Baptist. Now Paul will get down to the nitty-gritty.

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As Paul is reviewing their history, he is pointing out that all this was done as a fulfillment of prophecy. They were fulfilling the prophets at the very same time they were reading them! They read without understanding what they were reading. - McGee

Act 13:29-31 *Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead. He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.*

You will notice that the core, the heart of every sermon preached in the New Testament, is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the message. Simon Peter preached it; now Paul the apostle preaches it. There is not the slightest disagreement in the message of these two men. Don't tell me these two men disagreed. They did not! - McGee

Act 13:32-33 *And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'*

This Old Testament reference, Psa_2:7, does not refer to the birth of Christ; it refers to the resurrection of Christ. "This day have I begotten thee"—not begotten in the virgin birth but actually in the resurrection from the dead. - McGee

Act 13:34-35 *And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID.' Therefore, He also says in another Psalm: 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.'*

Paul enlarges upon the Resurrection. He is citing the same thing that Simon Peter did on the Day of Pentecost. - McGee

Act 13:36-39 *"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

Now he is pinning this thing down. He is explaining the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is actually asking them for a decision to believe on the Lord Jesus. - McGee

Act 13:40-45 *Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 'BEHOLD, YOU DESPISERS, MARVEL AND PERISH! FOR I WORK A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL BY NO MEANS BELIEVE, THOUGH ONE WERE TO DECLARE IT TO YOU.' " So, when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now, when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost, the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.*

Here is his appeal to them. He urges them not to reject the message. There were Gentiles there who said, "We would like to hear this same message." There must have been much discussion of Paul's message. The next Sabbath Day almost the entire city was there to hear Paul preach. This time there was a big commotion because the leading religious rulers of the synagogue opposed Paul and Barnabas. - McGee

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Act 13:46-49 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I HAVE SET YOU AS A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, THAT YOU SHOULD BE FOR SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.' " Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

Here is the recurring pattern. The gospel is preached to the Jews first; they reject it; so, they turn to the Gentiles with the good news. - McGee

Act 13:50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

In spite of the opposition of the Jews, the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the surrounding region. This further aroused the opposition party to hinder and obstruct. The Jews stirred up some devout ... women who had become converts to Judaism and were prominent in the community to agitate against the missionaries. Also, they used the chief men of the city to further their wicked purposes. Such a storm of persecution was stirred up that Paul and Barnabas were forcibly evicted from the area. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 13:51-52 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

In accordance with the instructions of the Lord (Luk_9:5; Luk_10:11), they shook off the dust from their feet and moved on to ICONIUM. However, the incident was not interpreted by the Christians as a defeat or a retreat, for we read that they were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Iconium, located east and south of Antioch in Asia Minor, today is called Konya. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 14: Paul's first Missionary Journey is Rocky!

GALATIAN COUNTRY

Now in chapter 14 Paul and Barnabas face the almost impenetrable paganism of Galatia. I personally believe that the Galatian field was the hardest mission field that Paul ever entered. You need only to read the Epistle to the Galatians to discover that. Galatians was the harshest epistle that Paul wrote. He wrote it to a group of people who had a spiritual bent in the wrong direction. They were constantly going off the track. He visited those churches more than any others.

Let me give you this brief background of the Galatian country which Paul is entering on this first missionary journey. The people for whom the province was named were Gauls, a Celtic tribe from the same stock which inhabited France. In the fourth century A.D. they invaded the Roman Empire and sacked Rome. Later they crossed into Greece and captured Delphi in 280 A.D. At the invitation of Nikomedes I, king of Bithynia, they crossed over into Asia Minor to help him in a civil war. They were a warlike people and soon established themselves in Asia Minor. In 189 A.D. they were made subjects of the Roman Empire and became a province. Their boundaries varied, and for many years they retained their customs and language. The churches which Paul established on this first missionary journey were included at one time in the territory of Galatia, so this is the name which Paul would normally give to these churches.

The people were blond orientals. These Galtic Celts had much of the same temperament and characteristics of the majority of the American population, which came out of that same stock in Europe and the British Isles. Caesar had this to say of them: "The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted." Another writer of that period described them as "frank, impetuous, impressible, eminently intelligent, fond of show, but extremely inconstant, the fruit of excessive vanity." Paul wrote them a very harsh letter because they needed that kind of letter. The majority of the people in the United States are like them. That is the reason so many cults and "isms" have begun in this country. We are a fickle people. One day we follow one leader, and the next day we follow someone else. It is amazing to watch the polls of our political candidates. If they make one statement, one slip of the tongue, the entire population shifts from them to someone else. We are a fickle people—very much like the Galatians.

All of this should make this section especially interesting to us. Martin Luther used the Epistle to the Galatians for the Reformation because it was written to folk who are like we are. - McGee

Paul and Barnabas at Iconium

Act 14:1-2 Now, it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.

In Iconium, as in other places where there was a synagogue, Paul and Barnabas were permitted to preach, in accordance with the custom prevailing among the Jews at that time. The Spirit of God accompanied the word with such power that a great number of Jews and Gentile proselytes accepted the Lord Jesus. This aroused the ire of those Jews who refused to obey the gospel, and they in turn stirred up the Gentiles ... against the brethren. In the Book of Acts the unbelieving Jews were the instigators of much of the persecution of the apostles, though they themselves did not necessarily administer the punishment. They were masters at persuading the Gentiles to carry out their wicked purposes. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 14:3 Therefore, they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

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Although they knew trouble was brewing, the preachers continued to speak boldly in the name of the Lord, who confirmed the divine nature of the message by empowering them to perform signs and wonders. Signs and wonders are two different words for miracles. The word "sign" simply means that the miracle conveys a lesson, whereas the word "wonder" suggests that the miracle creates a sense of awe. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 14:4-7 But, the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. And they were preaching the gospel there.

As tension built up in the city, sides were naturally formed. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. Finally, the unbelieving Gentiles and Jews made a determined rush to assault the apostles. To escape stoning, they fled to LYSTRA (lis'-tra) and DERBE, both cities of LYCAONIA (lye-kay-own'-ia), a district in the center of Asia Minor. With no lessening of ardor, they continued preaching the gospel in that entire region.

When Paul and Barnabas were threatened with stoning, they fled to Lycaonia. At other times in their missionary labors, they seemed to remain in a place, in spite of danger. Why did they escape at some junctures and stand their ground at others? There does not seem to be any neat explanation. The great controlling principle in Acts is the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These men lived in close, intimate communion with the Lord. Abiding in Him, they received marvelous communications of the divine mind and will. To them, this was the important thing, rather than a well-arranged set of rules of conduct. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul and Barnabas at Lystra

Act 14:8-10 And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.

As we have seen, Paul and Barnabas had the gifts of an apostle, the sign gifts. They came into these places without any New Testament with the message of the gospel. What were their credentials? How could they prove their message was from God? The sign gifts were their credentials—they needed them. Today we have the entire Bible, and what it has to say. If only we could get people to do that!

The other day I played golf with a very affable, generous, bighearted man. He is an unsaved man, and he told me very candidly that he was chasing around. Mutual friends had asked me to play with him. I attempted to talk with him about the gospel. He knew the facts of the gospel as well as I do. And you know something else? He believed them. He said he believed that Jesus died and rose again, and he believed that if he put his trust in Jesus, He would save him. So I asked him why he didn't do that. Then he began to mention names, names of certain men whose lives just didn't measure up to their profession of faith. So I said to him, "For goodness sake get your eyes off men. In the first century the apostles performed miracles, and men got their eyes on the apostles. So it was necessary to get their eyes off the apostles and turn them to the Book which presents the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to get your eyes on the Word of God and learn what God says today. He tells us that the important thing is our personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. All those other men you mention will not even enter into the picture when you stand before the Lord Jesus someday. The only question will be your personal relationship to Jesus Christ as it is revealed in the Word of God. Go to the Word of God." I'll be very frank with you; I didn't really get very far with this man. He did say that I had given him a new approach; he had

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never heard it that way before. He thought maybe he would try it. I encouraged him again to get his eyes off other Christians because we all have feet of clay.

The people at Lystra were looking to Paul and Barnabas. – McGee

What was the criteria Paul used to see if the Lord would heal this man? Why is this important to us today?

Act 14:11-12 Now, when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

As soon as Paul commanded the man to get up on his feet, ... he leaped and walked. Since the miracle had been performed openly, and since Paul had undoubtedly attracted considerable attention by speaking with a loud voice, the people were greatly impressed. In fact, a popular movement began with the purpose of worshiping Barnabas as Zeus, and Paul as Hermes. The people actually believed that their gods had paid them a visit in the person of the two missionaries. For some reason not stated, they looked on Barnabas as being the chief god. Because Paul had done the speaking, they designated him as Hermes, the messenger of Zeus. – Believers Bible Commentary

If our eyes are on man or even ourselves, we have missed the point. Jesus is our High Priest, through Him we access not only the Father, but we have the Holy Spirit, and we shall do greater works.

John 14:12-14 "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

Act 14:13 Then, the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.

Even the priest of Zeus became convinced that a divine visitation had taken place; he rushed out of the temple that was at the gateway of their city with oxen and garlands for a great sacrifice. This entire movement was a more subtle form of danger to the Christian faith than all the other forms of opposition recorded. For a successful Christian worker a greater peril than persecution is the tendency for people to center their spiritual attention, not on Christ, but on His servant. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 14:14-16 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.

Paul and Barnabas are not only startled and amazed that these people want to worship them, but they are completely shocked. They rush in among them, shouting, "We are human beings like you are!" You will remember that Peter had to say the same thing to Cornelius when Cornelius bowed down to him to worship him.

Certainly, none of us is to bow down to worship any man. A Christian is not to be so obsequious that he gets down to lick the boots of anyone. Unfortunately, even in Christian work, we find some people who want others to bow to them. How tragic that is. – McGee

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Act 14:17 Nevertheless, He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

It is noticeable that Paul and Barnabas did not quote the OT to these Gentiles, as they did to the Jews. Rather, they began with the story of creation, a subject of immediate interest to Gentile peoples in all countries and in all ages. The missionaries explained that in bygone generations God allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Even then, however, they had evidence of the existence of God in creation and in providence. It was He who lovingly provided rain ... and fruitful seasons for them, filling their hearts with food and gladness. This latter expression is a figurative way of saying that in providing food for their bodily means, God filled their hearts with the gladness that comes from the enjoyment of food. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 14:18 And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.

The message had its desired result. The people reluctantly desisted from their intention of sacrificing to these servants of the Lord. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul Stoned at Lystra

Act 14:19-20 Then, Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

How amazing this is. Such fickle people! One day they are ready to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. The next day they stone Paul to death.

(How like Americans—we follow fads. One time it is the hula hoop. Then it is the miniskirt. We simply follow one fad after another.)

They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city "supposing he had been dead." Do you think he was dead? I'll tell you what I think. I think he was dead. Later Paul writes of the experience he had: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2Co_12:2-4). Who was that man? It was Paul himself. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2Co_12:7). I don't think that crowd left him there half dead; I think they left him dead. I believe that God raised him from the dead.

Why would God permit this stoning? Gal_6:7 tells us: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Paul reaped what he had sowed. He had ordered the stoning of Stephen. Maybe someone will object that now he is converted. Yes, but even after conversion we will reap whatsoever we have sown. This is a law of nature as well as a law operating in our lives. We shall reap whatever we sow. Because Saul took part in the stoning of Stephen, years later the same thing happened to him. - McGee

Act 14:21-22 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Acts 14: Paul's first Missionary Journey is Rocky!

Considerations of personal safety were not uppermost in the minds of the missionaries. This is seen in the fact that when they had preached the gospel at Derbe, they returned to LY STRA, the scene of Paul's stoning. This illustrates what has been called "the power of comeback and quick recovery."

Although Timothy is not mentioned here, he may have been saved at this time through the preaching of Paul. When the apostle next visited Lystra, Timothy was already a disciple, and was highly regarded by the brethren (Act_16:1-2). However, the fact that Paul later spoke of him as his true child in the faith (1Ti_1:2) does not necessarily mean that Paul had won him to Christ. He may have been a "true child" by following the example of Paul's life and service.

When their work at Lystra was completed, the missionaries revisited ICONIUM and PISIDIAN ANTIOCH, where churches had already been established. Their purpose at this time was what we call "follow-up work." They were never satisfied merely to preach the gospel and see souls won to the Savior. For them, this was only the beginning. They then sought to build up the believers in their most holy faith, especially by teaching them the truth of the church and its importance in God's program.

Erdman points out:

A proper missionary program has as its aim the establishing on the field of self-governing, self-sustaining, self-propagating churches. This was ever the purpose and the practice of Paul.

The exact nature of their follow-up work was strengthening the souls of the disciples and establishing the Christians in the faith by instructing them from the word of God. Paul described the process in Col_1:28-29 : "We warn everyone we meet, and we teach everyone we can, all that we know about him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ Jesus. This is what I am working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me" (JBP).

Second, they exhorted them to continue in the faith, an exhortation especially timely in view of the widespread persecution then prevalent. With this exhortation went a reminder that we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. This refers to the kingdom of God in its future aspect, when believers will share Christ's glory. A person enters the kingdom of God in the first place through the new birth. Persecutions and tribulations do not have any saving value. However, those who enter the kingdom of God by faith at the present time are promised that the pathway to future glory is filled with tribulations. "If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom_8:17 b). – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 14:23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

At this time, the missionaries also appointed elders in every church. In this connection, several observations should be made:

1. New Testament elders (presbyters) were godly, mature men who exercised spiritual leadership in the local church. They are also spoken of as bishops and overseers.
2. In the Book of Acts, elders were not appointed when a church was first founded. Rather, it was when the apostle revisited the churches that this was done. In other words, during the intervening time there was opportunity for those who had been made elders by the Holy Spirit to become manifest.

Acts 14: Paul's first Missionary Journey is Rocky!

3. Elders were appointed by the apostles and by their delegates. At this time the NT was not yet written to give explicit instructions concerning the qualifications of elders. The apostles knew what these qualifications were, however, and they were able to single out the men who met the scriptural requirements.

4. We do not have apostles today to appoint elders. However, we do have the qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Therefore each local assembly should be able to recognize those men in it who meet God's requirements as undershepherds of the sheep.

After Paul and Barnabas had prayed with fasting, they commended the believers to the Lord. It seems extraordinary to us that assemblies could be started in such a short time, that they should receive such brief periods of instruction from the missionaries, and yet that they should go on brightly for the Lord, functioning as autonomous churches. The answer ultimately lies in the mighty power of the Holy Spirit of God. However, the power was manifest in the lives of men like Paul and Barnabas. Everywhere they went they exerted a mighty influence for God. People detected reality in their lives. Their public preaching was backed up by the example of their own lives, and the influence of this twofold testimony was incalculable.

Verses 21 to 23 give the apostolic pattern—preaching the gospel, teaching the converts, and establishing and strengthening churches. – Believers Bible Commentary

Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch in Syria

Act 14:24-26 And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Now, when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.

After they had passed through the district of Pisidia, they traveled south to PAMPHYLIA. There they revisited PERGA, then they went down to the seaport city of ATTALIA where they boarded a ship and sailed to ANTIOCH in SYRIA. This brought them to the end of their first missionary journey. It was from Antioch that they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had just completed. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 14:27-28 Now, when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch to give a report of the work because this is the church that had sent them out. They revealed that God had now definitely opened the door of the gospel to Gentiles. When the gospel started out, the churches were comprised entirely of Hebrews. Then they became partially Gentile. And now the gospel is going definitely to the Gentiles. Now the churches in Asia Minor are comprised entirely of Gentiles. Although there may also have been some Jews in these churches, it seems that in most places the Jews rejected the gospel and the Gentiles received it. – McGee

They stayed in Antioch **a long time with the disciples**. Estimates vary between one and two years. – Believers Bible Commentary

Acts 15 - How did the Early Church and Apostles respond to division in the body?

The Jerusalem Council

Now that the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas has been completed and the churches which they established in the Galatian country are 100 percent Gentile, the church faces its first great crisis.

In Judea many of the Hebrew converts are Pharisees who have no intention of giving up the Mosaic system. They assert that the Gentiles must also come into the church through the Mosaic system. In fact, they believe that Gentiles are not saved until they are circumcised.

The news of this contention reaches the church in Jerusalem. The apostles must now face up to the question. What course is the church to take? So, in Jerusalem the first church council convenes to resolve the matter.

Down through history you will find that there have been other church councils that have decided other great issues, such as the validity and the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Another council decided upon the deity of Christ and the fact that He is both God and man. And there have been other important councils when differences arose in the church. Some folk may think that we need a council in our day. We certainly do. However, I am afraid there could never be an agreement because too many churches are far removed from the person of Christ. A council that cannot meet around the person of Christ is not actually a church council because the Lord Jesus Christ is the very center of the church. The issue is not one of ritual, or of membership, or of ceremony. The central issue is that of one's personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, people who are personally far removed from Christ and who do not experience fellowship with Him want to argue about ritual. Oh, they may carry a big Bible under their arm, go to church on Sunday and sing the hymns lustily, but on Monday the Lord Jesus is far removed from them.

Friend, the Lord Jesus should occupy the very center of our lives. We should think of Him constantly. We should not see a sunset without thinking of the One who made it. He should be brought into our daily living, into all situations of life, our tensions and our anxieties.

Now let's turn our attention to this council at Jerusalem. An outstanding group has come together here. These men have convened in order to consider this great issue: law versus grace, or law versus liberty. - McGee

Act 15:1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Here is the crux of the issue. It is not simply a question of whether one should be circumcised or not, whether one should eat meat or not. The question is: Must one do any of these things in order to be saved? Now we will move on and penetrate a little deeper into their problem. - McGee

Act 15:2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

Again I call attention to Dr. Luke's use of the diminutive. "No small dissension" really means they had a regular donnybrook! It was a heated debate.

We need to realize here that it is really the gospel which is under question at this council. The Epistle to the Galatians gives us a full explanation of the council.

The gospel is used in two senses in the New Testament. First of all, there are the facts of the gospel. These are absolutely basic and essential. Paul gives those facts in the first five verses of 1 Corinthians 15. It is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in

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memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." These are the facts of the gospel, and they concern the person of Christ. I move on down to 1Co_15:15-17 : "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Face up to it, my friend; if Christ is not raised from the dead, then there is no gospel at all. But thanks be to God, "... Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1Co_15:20). The facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The second sense of the gospel is the interpretation of the facts. It is this interpretation which is the basic truth in the Epistle to the Galatians. That is the crux of the whole matter at this first council at Jerusalem. Thus the gospel also hinges on this fact which Paul states in Gal_3:22 : "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." What must one do to be saved? Nothing more nor less than believe. Again in Gal_2:15-16 : "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." That is important to see.

The Judaizers of that day were different from the liberals of today. The liberal will actually deny the facts of the gospel. He will deny the physical resurrection of Christ. Some go so far as to say that Jesus Christ is just a myth, that He never lived or died. Most of them do not try to upset history quite to that extent. However, they deny that Jesus died for our sins.

In the first century the Judaizers did not deny the facts of the gospel—there simply were too many witnesses. Paul says that over five hundred people saw the risen Christ at one time. My friend, if you get five hundred witnesses into any law court, you will win your case! Also, the apostles were witnesses to the risen Christ. They were there to testify to it. The facts of the gospel were not under question by the Judaizers.

The contention arose over the interpretation of those facts. What did Christ do for you on the Cross? Is the work of Christ adequate to save you? Do you need to go through some ritual or something else in order to be saved? Must you go through the Law? These are the questions they were asking. - McGee

Act 15:-4 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

Paul and Barnabas vigorously opposed these Judaizers, knowing that they had come to rob the Gentile believers of their liberty in Christ Jesus.

Here in Acts 15 we learn that the brethren in Antioch decided to send Paul and Barnabas and certain others ... to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders there. In Gal_2:2 Paul says that he went to Jerusalem by revelation. There is no contradiction, of course. The Spirit of God revealed to Paul that he should go, and also revealed to the church in Antioch that the brethren should send him. En route to Jerusalem the group stopped at various points in Phoenicia and Samaria, giving an account of the conversion of the Gentiles, and causing great joy wherever the story was told.

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When he first arrived in Jerusalem, Paul went to the apostles and the elders privately and gave them a full account of the gospel which he had been preaching to the Gentiles. They had to admit that it was the same gospel which they had been preaching to the Jews. – Believers Bible Commentary

Paul and Barnabas give a report to the church in Jerusalem just as they had done to the church in Antioch. They tell them, “We have preached the gospel, and men and women over in the Galatian country have trusted Christ. They know nothing about Mosaic Law. They trusted Christ and were saved.” - McGee

Act 15:5-6 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

Apparently, it was in an open meeting of the entire church that certain of the Pharisees who were believers rose up and contended that Gentiles must be circumcised and must keep the law of Moses in order to be disciples in the truest sense. From verse 6 it might appear that only the apostles and elders were present when the final decision was made. However, verse 12 seems to indicate that the entire church was there as well. – Believers Bible Commentary

They wanted to add something to the gospel. Friend, whenever you add something to the gospel, you no longer have the gospel but you have a religion. You no longer have the gospel of Jesus Christ. The only approach that you can make to Jesus Christ is by faith. We must all come to Him by faith. He won't let us come any other way. Jesus said, “... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Joh_14:6). He's bottled the whole world into this. There is only one question God asks the lost world: “What do you do with My Son who died for you?” God doesn't give us some little Sunday school lesson by saying, “I want you to be a good boy. I want you to join a church. I want you go through this and that ritual.” That kind of teaching is only for an insipid religion. It does not come from God. God is saying, “My Son died for you. What will you do with Him?” The answer to that question will determine your eternal destiny. This is the issue being discussed at the council in Jerusalem. This is really exciting. – McGee

Jesus + 0 = Salvation. Adding or subtracting anything from believing in the miraculous birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus for your sins is another Gospel altogether. Works have to do with sanctification, rewards, fellowship, and the abundant life here, and nothing to do with salvation! However, true belief will result in fruit and works.

Act 15:7 And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

I don't think that this is the first time Peter spoke. If he had been quiet through all that time of disputing, it certainly would not have been consistent with his character. No, I'm of the opinion that he had already put in his two bits worth before this. But now he is going to sum up the whole thing. This is not a new decision for Peter. Peter had already declared this same thing at the time of the conversion of Cornelius. Remember that Peter himself had been shocked by the truth of it. He was told to go into the home of a Gentile and preach the gospel without the Law. The people were uncircumcised, they didn't follow the Mosaic system, they ate pork—and yet they were saved!

The council would listen to Simon Peter because he was narrow-minded—I don't say this in an ugly way—I mean that he was a Jew of the Jews. He himself said he had never eaten anything unclean, and he wouldn't have thought of entering the home of a Gentile. He stuck as close to the Mosaic system as any man could. So if Peter spoke up, they would listen.

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Now he testifies that the Gentiles had heard the gospel from his mouth and had believed. You mean they were actually saved? Yes, they were saved by grace. Peter himself had to learn that salvation is not decided by whether one eats meat or doesn't eat meat, whether one eats pork or doesn't eat pork. Salvation is not dependent on our observation of the Sabbath, or Sunday, or any other day. Salvation is by grace through faith. We are free to choose what we wish to do about these other things. We have freedom in that connection. - McGee

Act 15:8-9 So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Does Peter say that God purified their hearts by keeping the law? No! By going through a ceremony? No! By joining a church? No! By faith. Peter said, "I went into the home of Cornelius. I gave them the facts of the gospel. They believed and were saved—the Holy Ghost came upon them just as He had come to us in Jerusalem."

My friend, this is always the only way of salvation. It is by faith. You don't have to do anything to merit your salvation. Jesus Christ did it all for you nineteen hundred years ago. All God asks you to do is to accept His Son who died for you. - McGee

Act 15:10 Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

Simon Peter makes a tremendous admission here. He says that neither they nor their fathers kept the Law. I have said this many times before, and I will say it many, many times more: God has never saved anybody through the keeping of the Law. Do you know why? There has never been a person who has kept it. God saves on one basis and one basis only: faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before the time of Christ, men brought a sacrifice to God. They brought that sacrifice by faith. Abel understood that the little lamb could never take away sin. He understood that the little lamb pointed to the One about whom God had told his mother. He had said that the Seed of the woman would come and would bruise the head of the serpent (Gen_3:15). Abel believed that. He believed God. He was saved by faith.

So Simon Peter says, "To tell the truth—why don't we admit it—we can't keep the Law." You see, there is nothing more hypocritical than to pretend that you are living life on a high spiritual plane, that you are living by the Sermon on the Mount and you are keeping God's Law. There is no use pretending.

I wish I could look you in the eye and ask you, "Why don't you admit that you are a lost sinner? Why don't you confess that you do not please God, that you have no capacity for Him? Why don't you come to God as a sinner and trust Christ as your Savior?" He will receive you! "... Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Joh_6:37). That is the way I came to the Lord. Everybody I have ever met who has been saved has come to Him in that way. Saul of Tarsus came like that. The Ethiopian eunuch came like that. All who have come to Christ have come like that. - McGee

Act 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Simon Peter puts it so nicely. The Jews must be saved in exactly the same way that the Gentiles are saved. I'm pretty sure that Simon Peter still didn't eat pork at this time, but he implies, "I'm not saved because I don't eat pork; I'm saved because I have trusted Christ." He is saved by the grace of God. - McGee

Act 15:12 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

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What a story they had to tell! I wish I could have sat in on the council of Jerusalem. Especially I wish I could have heard these two men tell their experiences in the Galatian country.

The next man to get up to speak will be James. I want to stop here for a moment to explain that this was not James, the brother of John, as he had already died a martyr's death (Act_12:2). There is some question as to who this James was. We know that he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. He has already been mentioned as a leader by Peter in Act_12:17. This may have been James, the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve (Mat_10:3). However, the tradition of the church from the early church fathers has identified this man as James, the half brother of our Lord (Mat_13:55), the same one who wrote the Epistle of James.

I should stop here to make another remark. I believe that the proper way to study the Book of Acts is to study it along with the Epistles. For example, we have already mentioned the Epistle to the Galatians, and during the study of Acts 13 and 14 would be a good time to read that Epistle. At this point in Acts 15 it would be appropriate to study the Epistle of James.

James is going to sum up the thinking of this council at Jerusalem, and He will put down God's program for the future.

We need to remember that these men stood with their noses pressed right up to the window of the opening of a new dispensation. The church had been brought into existence at Pentecost; it was still very new, in its infancy. Some people still do not understand that we live in the age of grace, the period of the church. So let us not be too critical of these men who stood on the threshold of this new age.

Act 15:13-14 And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

I take it that after Simon Peter spoke and after Paul and Barnabas gave their report, there was silence because no one had anything to say. Even the Judaizers were silenced by the reports of what had taken place.

When James speaks to the crowd on that day, he asks them to "hearken," that is, to really listen. What he has to say is very important. So, he means that you and I should listen to him, too. Probably all of us should spend more time listening to God and less time doing the talking. Well, now let's listen.

James completely agrees with Peter. They state the plan of God for today. Is God saving the whole world? No. Is God bringing in His Kingdom? No. Then what is God doing today? He is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. We learn in Revelation that standing before the throne of God there will be those of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. The Word of God is to go out into the world. There will be opposition to it and there will be apostasy, but the Word of God is to go out to all the world because God is calling out a people for His name.

This is why I am so anxious to get out the Word of God. Right now, there are people of every color, every clime, every condition, every race, and practically every nation who hear Bible teaching by radio. We broadcast on stations that pretty well circle the globe. Thank God we can use this means to get out the Word of God. What does God do with that Word? He is calling out a people for His name. Not everyone who hears believes the Word. Not everyone accepts the good news of Jesus Christ. But of those who hear, God calls out a people for His name. Underline verse Act_15:14 in your Bible—I have it circled in mine. God is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. I am so thankful that He has given me the opportunity to tell people about salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and to teach them the Word of God. - McGee

Act 15:15-19 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'AFTER THIS I WILL RETURN AND WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID, WHICH HAS FALLEN DOWN; I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I

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WILL SET IT UP; SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, EVEN ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, SAYS THE LORD WHO DOES ALL THESE THINGS.' "Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore, I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

Then James quoted from Amo_9:11-12. Notice that he did not say that the calling out of the Gentiles was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos, but rather that it agreed with the words of the prophets. The assembly should not think it a strange thing that God should visit the Gentiles with salvation, because this had been clearly predicted in the OT. God had foretold that Gentiles would be blessed as such, and not as believing Jews.

The quotation from Amos looks forward to the Millennium, when Christ will sit upon the throne of David and when the Gentiles will seek after the Lord. James did not intimate that this prophecy was being fulfilled at the time he spoke. Rather, he said that the salvation of Gentiles which was then taking place was in harmony or agreement with what Amos said would take place later.

James' argument was this: First God would visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. This is what was then happening (and is still happening). Converted Gentiles were included in the church with converted Jews. What was then happening on a small scale (the salvation of the Gentiles) would later happen on a larger scale. Christ would return, restore Israel nationally, and save all the Gentiles who would be called by His name.

James looked on contemporary events as God's first visitation of the Gentiles. He felt this first visitation was in perfect harmony with what Amos predicted—the future visitation of the Gentiles when Christ returns as King. The two events agree though they are not identical.

Notice, then, the order of events:

1. The taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name (v. 14) during this present Age of Grace.
2. The restoration of the believing portion of the nation of Israel at Christ's second advent (v. 16).
3. The salvation of Gentile nations following the restoration of Israel (v. 17). These Gentiles are referred to as all the Gentiles who are called by My name.

James' quotation of Amo_9:11-12 is quite different from the rendering in the OT. Part of this difference is explained by the fact that James apparently quoted in Greek. However, the quotation is quite different even from the Septuagint. One explanation is that the same Holy Spirit who originally inspired the words now permitted them to be changed in order to meet the problem at hand. Another is that the Hebrew manuscripts have several readings in Amos 9. Alford believes James must have quoted from a translation close to a received Hebrew text, otherwise the Pharisees would never have accepted the quotation as proof.

After this I will return (v. 16). James had already stated that God's program for this present age was to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. Not all of them would be saved, but He would take out of them a people for His name. Now James added that after this, that is, after the church has been called out from the nations, God would return and rebuild the tabernacle of David, which is fallen and in ruins. The tabernacle of David is a figurative expression describing his house or family. Its restoration is a type of the future restoration of the royal family and the re-establishment of the throne of David with Christ sitting upon it as King. Israel will then become the channel of blessing to the world. The rest of mankind will seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by His name.

The quotation from Amos closes with the statement that these are the words of the Lord who does all these things.

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Therefore, because God's present purpose is to call out from the Gentiles a people for Himself, James cautioned against troubling the Gentiles by putting them under the Law of Moses. As far as salvation is concerned, all that was needed was faith. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 15:20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

However, he suggested that in writing to the church at Antioch the saints there be advised to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. It might seem at first that James was here reversing himself. Was this not a form of legalism? Was he not now putting them back under the law? The answer is that this advice did not have to do with the subject of salvation at all. That issue had already been settled. But this advice had to do with fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers. While obedience to these instructions was not a condition of salvation, it was certainly of great importance in avoiding sharp cleavages in the early church.

The things prohibited were:

1. Things polluted by idols. In verse 29 this is explained as foods offered to idols. If Gentile believers went on eating these foods, then their Jewish brethren might seriously wonder whether they had given up idolatry. Although Gentile Christians might have liberty to eat such foods, it might prove a stumbling block to weak Jewish brethren and would therefore be wrong.
2. Sexual immorality. This was the cardinal sin of the Gentiles. It was therefore especially important for James to include this with the other subjects mentioned. Nowhere in the Bible is the command to abstain from sexual immorality ever revoked. It is of standing application for all ages.
3. Things strangled. This prohibition goes back to the covenant which God made with Noah after the flood (Gen_9:4). Thus, it is a standing order for the human race and not just for the nation of Israel.
4. Blood. This too goes back to Gen_9:4 and thus precedes the Law of Moses. Since the Covenant with Noah was never abrogated, we take it that these regulations are still in effect today. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 15:21-22 For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Then, it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

This explains why the advice of verse 20 was given. There were Jews in every city who had always been taught that it was wrong to do these things that James warned against. It was wrong not only to commit immorality but also to eat food offered to idols, meat from strangled animals, and blood. Why then should the Gentiles offend God by committing immorality, or offend man by doing the other things?

It was thus definitely decided that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised in order to be saved. The next step was to send official notice of this in writing to the church at Antioch. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem, with the whole church, designated Judas, called Barsabas, and Silas, both leading men among the brethren, to go back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. This Silas is the one who later became a traveling companion of Paul, and who is referred to as Silvanus in the Epistles.

Acts 15:23-29 They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"—

Acts 15 - How did the Early Church and Apostles respond to division in the body?

to whom we gave no such commandment— it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

The substance of the letter is given here. Notice that the false brethren who went from Jerusalem to Antioch originally had never received the authorization or approval of the church in Jerusalem (v. 24).

The moment by moment reliance of the disciples on the Holy Spirit is suggested in verse 28: For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us Someone has spoken of this as “the senior partnership of the Holy Spirit.” – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 15:30-31 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

There is consolation and comfort in the gospel; there is nothing but condemnation in the Law. The Law condemns. The Law is a mirror. When I look in it, I say, “Oh, McGee, you are ugly! You have fallen short of the glory of God.” But the gospel says, “Come on to God. He wants to receive you. He will save you by His grace.” It is comfort, you see. - McGee

Act 15:32-35 Now, Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles. However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

It is evident that Paul and Silas got along well together. Silas must have liked Paul and enjoyed working with him. So, he stayed there at the church in Antioch. He must have been excited about working with these gentile believers. At any rate, he stayed. Paul and Barnabas were actually the pastors of the church there. - McGee

Paul and Barnabas Separate

Act 15:36-37 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Now, Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

Paul had a concern for the churches, a genuine concern for the believers. Knowing how fickle the Galatians were, he thought it would be a good idea to go back again and to visit those churches.

We know Barnabas as a very generous, gracious fellow. He is eager to give John Mark another chance. But I want to note that when he has made up his mind, he is hardheaded. Remember that both these men were human. Paul and Barnabas each took a stand and would not budge. - McGee

Act 15:38 But, Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so, Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

Paul had his convictions also. Barnabas wants to take John Mark along, and Paul will not do it. Well, I'm glad these two brethren had this little altercation because it teaches me that these men were human and that even the saints can disagree without being disagreeable. They didn't break up anything. They did not split the church

Acts 15 - How did the Early Church and Apostles respond to division in the body?

and form two different churches in Antioch. They just disagreed. It's all right to disagree with some of the brethren.

The account does not follow Barnabas any longer. He went to Cyprus and there he had a great ministry. Barnabas had come from Cyprus; it was his home. He had a desire to take the gospel to his own people. We know from tradition that he had a great ministry there, and from Cyprus a great ministry was carried on in North Africa.

At this point Barnabas sails off the pages of the Scriptures. The Bible does not give us information about his ministry. From here on we are going to follow Paul. - McGee

Act 15:40 -41 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

The church now has two great mission projects where before they had only one. Barnabas is going in one direction and Paul is going another. This is God's method. God will use both these men. Paul now has Silas with him, and the brethren recommended them "unto the grace of God." – McGee

What Satan meant to divide; God used to multiply!

Acts 16 – Paul first European Convert

Timothy Joins Paul and Silas

THEME: The second missionary journey of Paul.

The final verse of chapter 15 actually told of the beginning of the journey. Paul and Silas “went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.” From there they will go up into the Galatian country. Paul will visit the Galatian churches because that is where the problem had arisen with the Judaizers. The Epistle to the Galatians is Paul's letter to them, sternly warning them about being led astray by those who are trying to put them under the Mosaic system. It is his strongest declaration and defense of the doctrine of justification by faith. Not only is a sinner saved by grace through faith, but the saved sinner lives by grace. Grace is a way to life and a way of life.

Again let me suggest that you follow Paul's journey on the map. You will find that traveling with Paul is a very thrilling experience. On this second missionary journey we will go with him to Europe (after he has received the vision of the man in Macedonia). We will see that he arrives in Philippi where he ends up in the local jail. At midnight Paul and Silas pray and sing praises! An earthquake shakes the jail, the doors are opened, and the jailer opens his heart to receive Christ as Savior. - McGee

Act 16:1-2 Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium,

Memories must have come back to Paul like swallows to a barn when he returned to DERBE and LYSTRA. The memory of his stoning at Lystra might conceivably have raised misgivings about ever returning. But the apostle knew that God had people in this area, and no consideration of personal safety could deter him.

As suggested previously, Timothy may have been converted through Paul's ministry during the apostle's first visit to Lystra (apparently Timothy's home town. Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, were both Jewish believers (2Ti_1:5). His father was Greek and may have died by this time.

It rejoiced Paul's heart to learn from the brethren ... at Lystra and Iconium that Timothy was progressing well in the Christian faith. Paul invited him to go along on this missionary trip. We do well to notice that the early apostles not only worked in pairs, but also took along younger brethren (Mark and Timothy) for training in practical aspects of the Christian ministry. What a privilege it was for these young men to be yoked together with seasoned veterans in Christian missionary enterprise. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 16:3 so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey. In deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left, for everyone knew that his father was a Greek.

Before Paul departed, he circumcised Timothy. Why did he do this, when he had steadfastly refused to have Titus circumcised some time previously (Gal_2:1-5)? The answer is simply this: in the case of Titus it was a question of fundamental Christian doctrine, where as here it was not. The false teachers were insisting that a full-blooded Gentile, like Titus, had to be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul recognized this as a denial of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning work, and would not allow it. Here the case was entirely different. The people of the area knew that Timothy was Jewish from his mother. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were going forth on evangelistic work. Their first contacts would frequently be with the Jews. If these Jews knew that Timothy was not circumcised, they might refuse to listen; whereas if he were, there would be no possibility of offense on this score. Since it was entirely a matter of moral indifference and not of doctrinal importance, Paul submitted Timothy to this Jewish ordinance. He was made all things to all men that he might by all means save some (1Co_9:19-23).

Acts 16 – Paul first European Convert

The interpretation that Paul's circumcising of Timothy was in order to gain an audience for the gospel with the Jews seems to be strongly implied by the words, and circumcised him because of the Jews ... for they all knew that his father was Greek. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 16:4-5 Then they went from town to town, instructing the believers to follow the decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. So, the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.

As the three missionaries traveled through the cities of Lycaonia, they delivered to the churches the decrees which had been drawn up by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. These decrees were, in brief, as follows:

1. As far as salvation is concerned, faith alone is necessary. Circumcision or law-keeping should not be added to faith as a condition for being saved.
2. Sexual immorality was forbidden for all believers and for all time, but this reminder was probably addressed primarily to converted Gentiles, since this was (and is) their besetting sin.
3. Meats offered to idols, meat from animals that had been strangled, and blood were forbidden as food, not as matters essential to salvation, but to facilitate fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers. Some of these instructions were subsequently revised (see 1 Cor. 8-10; 1Ti_4:4-5).

As a result of the ministry of these men, the churches were strengthened in the Christian faith, and increased in number daily. – Believers Bible Commentary

The Macedonian Call

Act 16:6-8 Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas.

Galatia includes all this area. I am of the opinion that Paul moved into the northern part of the country at this particular point. The province of Asia is down south where Ephesus is. In fact, Ephesus was the chief city of the province of Asia. Paul may have been planning to make a circuit through Asia Minor. This was a heavily populated area in that day, and it was really the center of Greek culture. This was a great commercial area, a great political area, a great educational area. Paul would make a great circle by going through the Galatian country, then Phrygia, then south into the province of Asia, and then back again to Antioch to report to the home church.

The Spirit of God had something else in mind. We are told that the Holy Spirit forbade him to preach the Word down in Asia. That is really amazing, isn't it? Paul wanted to go there, and the Spirit of God wanted the Word of God given out, but the Spirit of God wanted Paul in a different place at this time. So Paul naturally thought that if he could not go south, he would go north. Bithynia was in the north, along the Black Sea. That also was a large population center, and there was a very heavy concentration of Hebrews in that area. This section is in Turkey today.

The Spirit forbade them to go south into the province of Asia. Then the Spirit of God forbade them to go north into Bithynia. He has come from the east. Where will he go? Well, there is only one direction left and that is west. You see, it was not Horace Greeley of The New York Sun who first said, "Go west, young man, go west." Instead it was the Spirit of God speaking to the apostle Paul!

So, Paul kept going west until he came to Troas. He had to stop there because from that point he would need a ship to continue. Paul couldn't imagine what he was to do or where he was to go from that point.

Acts 16 – Paul first European Convert

I think that if we had met Paul during the time of his delay in Troas, we could have asked him, “Paul, where are you going?” I’m sure his reply would have been, “I don’t know.” I’m afraid our next statement would have been something like this: “Now brother Paul, do you mean that the great Apostle of the Gentiles doesn’t know where he is going next? Surely you must know the will of God for your life.” Then we would have sat down for a nice long lecture on how to determine the will of God in his life. My, I’ve read so many books on that subject—it’s too bad Paul didn’t have one of those books with him at that time! Paul does not know the will of God. Why? Because the Spirit of God is leading him. Paul is simply waiting. It is going to take a mighty movement to get Paul out of Asia and move him over into Europe.-McGee

Act 16:9-10 That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” So, we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

This is Paul’s call into Macedonia. Now Macedonia is across the Aegean Sea, over in Europe. Paul is in Asia. The gospel is going to cross from Asia into Europe. The Spirit of God is moving him in that direction.

I do not know why Paul was not moved east to China. All I know is that the Spirit of God moved him west to Europe. I thank God that this is the direction he went. At that particular time my ancestors, from one side of the family, were roaming in the forests of Germany. They were pagan and they were evil, worshiping all kinds of idols. They were a low, heathen people. The other side of my family came from Scotland, and perhaps my ancestors were already in Scotland at that time or came there a little later. At any rate, I am told they were the dirtiest, filthiest savages that have ever been on the topside of this earth. I thank God the gospel went to Europe to reach my people over there.

Now maybe you are smiling, thinking that your ancestors were very superior to mine. Well, you can wipe that smile off your face because your ancestors probably were living in the cave right next door to mine! They were just as dirty and just as filthy as mine were. Thank God the gospel crossed over into Europe. This was a great and significant crossing.

Note it says “we endeavoured to go.” We have never had “we” before. It has always been “they” or “them” or “he” or “him.” What about “we”? Well, Dr. Luke has now joined the party. It is really quite a party now—in fact, it is a quartet. There may have been others along also, but we have four who are named: Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Dr. Luke. This is quite a delegation that crossed over into Europe. -McGee

The Conversion of Lydia

Act 16:11-12 We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days.

Neapolis is just a little inland from the coast. Philippi was a colony in Macedonia, which means it was a Roman colony. This would be where the Roman governor resided. These people had Roman customs and they spoke Latin. It would be a city where they would “do as the Romans do.”

This is their first destination in Europe. Paul went to a strategic center to begin his ministry in Europe. That alone makes the church in Philippi a remarkable church. For other reasons, which we will learn when we get to the Epistle to the Philippians, we will see that this church was close to the heart of Paul. This was the church which loved him; and Paul loved this church. There were wonderful saints in this church, as we shall see. -McGee

Act 16:13 On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there.

Acts 16 – Paul first European Convert

Just outside the city, down by the river, there was a prayer meeting. I wonder whether that prayer meeting had anything to do with Paul coming over to Europe and the vision of the man of Macedonia! We will find that the “man of Macedonia” is a woman by the name of Lydia who was holding this prayer meeting.-McGee

Act 16:14 One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.

Thyatira is over in Asia Minor. It is the place where one of the seven churches was located which received admonition from our Lord in the second chapter of the Book of Revelation. This woman had come from over there. She worshiped the living and true God, but she had very little knowledge.

Lydia was a remarkable person. She was a dominant person and a leader. Apparently she was the leader of the prayer meeting. She will be the first convert to Christ in Europe. - McGee

Act 16:15 She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. “If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my home.” And she urged us until we agreed.

We do not know anything about Mr. Lydia, but he must have been around there somewhere. There are families like that, you know, where the woman is the dominant one in the family. Apparently that was the way it was in the family of Lydia. Thank God she was that kind of woman because her entire household turned to God through her witness. And now we find Paul and his group staying at her home and boarding there. I would assume she was a person of means and was able to take care of them. - McGee

Paul and Silas in Prison

Act 16:16 One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes.

Don't think this was just foolish superstition. This girl was possessed by a demon. We are seeing a resurgence of demonism in our own day. I have before me now a letter from a Christian woman in El Paso, Texas. She got tied up in spiritism by just fooling around with it, not thinking that it was dangerous. She has quite a story. It was hearing the Word of God through our radio program that delivered her from it. She cried out to God, and He delivered her. Demonism is a reality. This girl in Paul's day was demon possessed. She was a slave girl and her masters were using her to make a big profit. The Mafia had already begun in those days.- McGee

Act 16:17-19 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved.” This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And instantly it left her. Her masters’ hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace.

Paul was able to cast out the demon in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This dried up the profit her masters were making, and you know that if you touch a man's pocketbook, he will begin to move. So now these men really turn against Paul and his group.-McGee

Act 16:20-21 “The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!” they shouted to the city officials. “They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice.”

Remember that Philippi was a Roman colony and practiced Roman idolatry. Paul and his men were charged with trying to change things. Of course, the real issue was that the girl's masters had lost their source of income. - McGee

Acts 16 – Paul first European Convert

Act 16:22-24 A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So, the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

The Philippian Jailer Converted

Act 16:25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.

These men are beaten, their backs are lacerated, and they are locked into the stocks. What a wonderful thing it is that these men were singing praises unto God while they were in such a miserable situation. No wonder the doors were shaken loose!

Act 16:26-27 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself.

Let's look at this Philippian jailer for a moment. He was responsible for those prisoners. He naturally assumed that if the doors were open and the chains lying loose, the prisoners would be gone. He would be responsible for their escape and would have to forfeit his own life. So he stands there, poised, ready to fall on his own sword. When a man is in a position like that, he thinks about eternity. This man did just that, as his question to Paul indicates. - McGee

Act 16:28-30 But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

He had looked into eternity. He knew that he was a lost man.

Act 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household."

How can a man be saved? By believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Could he believe for someone else? No. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and if thy household believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall be saved also. That is the meaning here. - McGee

Act 16:32-33 And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized.

What a difference! He had put the stripes on these men. Now he washes their stripes. He is a changed man. - McGee

Act 16:34 He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

All in one night they were flogged, thrown into jail, freed by the direct intervention of God, and now they are being royally entertained in the home of these rejoicing young converts! - McGee

Act 16:35-36 The next morning the city officials sent the police to tell the jailer, "Let those men go!" So the jailer told Paul, "The city officials have said you and Silas are free to leave. Go in peace."

Acts 16 – Paul first European Convert

You see, they realize that what they had done was illegal. Now they are issuing orders to free the prisoners and get them out of town. However, Paul objects. He says that he will not leave under such circumstances. - McGee

Act 16:37 But Paul replied, “They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!”

Of course Paul's reason for insisting upon a public recognition of their innocence was to protect the new believers whom he would soon be leaving there in Philippi. - McGee

Act 16:38-40 When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. So, they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city. When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town.

The magistrates did come, and rather apologetically at that! They urged Paul and Silas to depart from the city without further disturbance. With the dignity of sons of the King, the Lord's servants went out of the prison, but they did not leave the city immediately. First, they went to Lydia's house, conferred with the brethren, and encouraged them. How wonderful! The ones who should have been comforted were encouraging others.

When their mission in Philippi was accomplished, they departed with full colors flying. – Believers Bible Commentary

Acts 17 – Be a Berean!

THEME: The second missionary journey of Paul continued (Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens).

REMARKS

In this chapter we continue with Paul on his second missionary journey. In chapter 16 we were with him when he crossed over into Europe, a memorable, significant, revolutionary crossing. It brought the gospel to the ancestors of many of us, who were by no means a superior people. Actually, God chooses the weak things of this world just to let the world know that it is all because of His sovereign grace and not because of merit. We thank Him for sending the gospel over into Europe.

We went with Paul first to Philippi where he received some rough treatment. Yet, a little church came into existence in that town. When we study the epistle to that church, we will find that it was closer to the apostle Paul than any other church or any other group of believers.

Now he continues on his journey. I hope you will follow this on the map. You will notice that he goes to Thessalonica and Berea, still traveling westward into Macedonia, then south to Athens. Thessalonica will be his next significant stop for missionary activity.

Paul and Silas in Thessalonica

Act 17:1 And traveling through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

As we have noted before, Paul used the synagogue as a springboard to get into a city or a community. This would lead him to the devout Jews of the city, and some of those Jews would believe. Never did all of them believe, but some of them did. In fact, most of them would reject him, and this would push him right out to the Gentiles. Then some of the Gentiles believed. This is how a church would come into existence, a local church composed of Jews and Gentiles.

Amphipolis was also called “Nine Ways,” which suggests its importance both strategically and commercially. Most cities are built on the pattern of a square, but this was like a roundhouse, and the wall around it was round. It was an important station on the Via Egnatia, a Roman road which was the prominent thoroughfare through that area. It was five hundred miles from the Hellespont to Dyrrhachium on the Adriatic by this road. This would be the highway which the Roman army would use. This was the route the traders would travel. And now here come some missionaries on this road going to Thessalonica. Apollonia was another town on this same Egnatian Road.

Thessalonica was thirty–eight miles west of Apollonia on the Egnatian Road. It was inland but it was a seaport because three rivers flowed into the sea from there. It was a prominent city of that day, another Roman colony. Cassander rebuilt it in about 315 A.D., and it is thought that he named it after Thessalonica, the stepsister of Alexander the Great. There are some warm springs there and the earlier name of the town was Therma or Therme. Cassander was one of the generals of Alexander the Great, and he took over the rule of that area after the death of Alexander. At the time of Paul, however, the city was a Roman colony.

Act 17:2-3 And according to Paul's custom, he went in to them and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures on three sabbaths, opening and setting forth that Christ must have suffered, and to have risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach to you is Christ.

Paul followed his usual custom of first preaching in the synagogue. He was there only three Sabbaths, which means that he could not have been there longer than a month. In that limited period of time, he did his missionary work. Believers came to Christ, a local church was organized, and Paul taught them. In that brief time, he taught them all the great

Acts 17 – Be a Berean!

doctrines of Scripture, including the doctrine of the Rapture of the church—we know this from his First Epistle to the Thessalonians which was the first Epistle that Paul wrote. Paul had quite a ministry there in one month's time!

Now note his message. He was “opening and alleging”—that is, from the Old Testament Scriptures— “that Christ must needs have suffered.” He preached the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, showing that this was necessary, as set forth in the Old Testament. Friend, you will not find a message given in the Book of Acts either by Peter or by Paul in which the Resurrection is not the heart of the message.

Today we find so often that the Resurrection just doesn't seem to be the heart of the message. What we talk about today is the Cross—even in fundamental circles. But, my friend, we have a living Christ today. Someone has put it this way: “There is a Man in the glory, but the church has lost sight of Him.” The Lord Jesus Christ is yonder at God's right hand at this very moment. That is very important. It is one thing to talk about the historical death of Christ nineteen hundred years ago and His resurrection on the third day, but the question is: How are you related to it? That was Paul's great theme in the Galatian epistle. Is it meaningful to you that Christ died and that He rose again? Are you related today to that living Christ? How has this been meshed and geared into your life?

Today we have conservatism in the church, and we have liberalism in the church and, very candidly, neither group seems to be getting through to Him. Why not? Well, because every Sunday should be Easter—on the first day of the week He came back from the dead! It is important to mention the resurrection of Christ because we are talking about the Man in the glory.

Unfortunately, that just doesn't seem to be the emphasis. Pastors don't emphasize it because seminaries don't emphasize it. Take down any theology book and study it—Strong's, Shedd's, Thornwall's, Hodge's, and you will find that all of them have a long section on the death of Christ. That's very important; thank God they have a long section on that. But they have a short section, just a few pages, on the Resurrection. I think they missed the boat there. I think they should have put in a long section about the resurrection of Christ. That was the basis of New Testament preaching. I'm emphasizing this because it is very important. Paul was in Thessalonica only three Sabbath days, and the resurrection of Christ was his message.

Notice their reception of Him.

Act 17:4-7 And some of them believed and joined themselves to Paul and Silas, both a great multitude of the worshiping Greeks, and not a few of the chief women. But the disobeying Jews becoming jealous and having taken aside some wicked men of the market-loafers, and gathering a crowd, they set all the city in an uproar. And coming on the house of Jason, they sought to bring them out to the mob. And not finding them, they drew Jason and certain brothers before the city judges, crying, these who have turned the world upside down have come here too, whom Jason has received. And these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.

Some of them believed. That always happens when you give out the Word of God. Some of them believe. Also, some of them won't believe. The minority believe; the majority will not. - McGee

When Dr. Luke says, “of the chief women not a few,” he is using his usual understatement and means that a large number of prominent women came to the Lord. How wonderful!

Some of the Jews were persuaded and took their place with Paul and Silas as Christian believers. Also, many of the Greek proselytes and not a few of the leading women of the city were converted. This provoked the unbelieving Jews to decisive action. They rounded up some of the hoodlums from the marketplace, incited a riot, and besieged the house of Jason where Paul and Silas had been guests. When they did not find Paul and Silas in the house, they dragged Jason and some of his fellow believers before the rulers of the city (politarchs). Without meaning to, they paid a genuine tribute to

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Paul and Silas when they described them as men who had turned the world upside down. Then they charged them with plotting to overthrow the government of Caesar by preaching about another king—Jesus. It was, to say the least, a strange thing for Jews to be so zealous in safeguarding the government of Caesar, because they had little or no love for the Roman Empire.

But was their charge true? Doubtless they had heard Paul proclaim the Second Coming of Jesus to reign as king over all the earth. But this did not pose an immediate threat to Caesar, since Christ would not return to reign until Israel had repented nationally. - Believers Bible Commentary

Do we have a Christian nation or a pagan nation? What is the implication of the answer to this question?

Act 17:8-9 And hearing these things, they troubled the crowd and the city judge. And taking security from Jason and from the rest, they let them go.

The politarchs were troubled by these reports. They required Jason and those with him to post bail, probably adding instructions for his guests to leave the city. Then they let them go. – Believers' Bible Commentary

This was no different to our current Bond system. They held Jason as Bond until the apostles left.

Paul and Silas in Berea

Act 17:10-11 And the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. They, when they arrived, went into the synagogue of the Jews. And these were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things were so.

You would think that all this would dampen the enthusiasm of Paul, that it would slow him down. It didn't slow him down one bit; he is still going. He goes to Berea, which is a town down closer to the coast. These people were reasonable. They searched the Scriptures, and there came into existence a church in Berea. We don't hear much about that church. It is interesting that the strongest churches arose where the persecution was the greatest. One of the troubles today is that the church is not being persecuted. In fact, the church is just taken for granted. The average Christian is just a person to be taken for granted. It wasn't that way in the first century. – McGee

“Hard times create strong men. Strong men create good times. Good times create weak men. And weak men create hard times.”

— G. Michael Hopf, Those Who Remain

Act 17:12-14 Therefore many of them believed, and quite a few of honorable Greek women and men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica knew that the Word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brothers sent Paul away to go towards the sea, but both Silas and Timothy stayed there.

Here goes Dr. Luke again with his diminutive “not a few.” Why doesn't he say a great crowd of men and honorable women believed? When he says, “Not a few,” he means it was a multitude. - McGee

When word trickled back to Thessalonica that Paul and Silas were carrying on their ministry in Berea, the Thessalonian Jews made a special trip to Berea and stirred up the crowds against the apostle. The brethren thereupon sent Paul toward the seacoast, accompanied by an escort of believers. They probably went as far as DIUM and sailed from there to PIRAEUS, the port city of ATHENS. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. – Believers Bible Commentary

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Act 17:15-16 *And those conducting Paul brought him to Athens. And receiving a command to Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed. But awaiting them in Athens, Paul's spirit was pained within him, seeing the city full of idols.*

It was a long journey from Berea to Athens. It showed the true devotion of the Christians there that some of the brethren were willing to accompany Paul all the way. When it came time for them to leave Paul in Athens, he sent word by them for Silas and Timothy to join him with all speed.

While waiting for them at Athens, Paul was deeply burdened by the idolatry of the city. Although Athens was the center of culture, education, and fine arts, Paul was interested in none of these things. He did not occupy his time with sightseeing trips. Arnot comments:

It was not that he valued marble statues less but living men more. ... He is not the weak but the strong man who regards immortal souls as transcendently more important than fine arts. ... Paul did not consider idolatry picturesque and harmless, but grievous.

Act 17:17-18 *Then indeed he addressed the Jews in the synagogue, and those worshiping, and daily in the market, to those happening to be there. And certain philosophers from the Epicureans and from the Stoics met him. And some said, what will this babbling say? And others said, He seems to be an announcer of foreign demons (because he preached Jesus and the resurrection to them).*

When I was in Athens, I went down to that market. It is right at the foot of the Acropolis. I can imagine Paul walking up and down there. He was a tentmaker, you know, and I think he sold a few tents while he was there. While he was selling the tents, he was talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. The people began to get interested.

The philosophy of the Epicureans was more or less hedonistic. The Stoics, a group who believed in restraint, were what we today call stoical. The Epicureans believed that you go the limit, and in that way, you could overcome the flesh. They thought that you should give the flesh all that it wants. If it wants liquor, drink all you can hold. Concerning sex, believe me, the Epicureans could really join in the “new morality,” which was nothing new for them. By contrast, the Stoics believed that the body should be held under control.

Philosophers of both groups come to Paul to hear what he has to say. Paul has been doing a lot of talking and they call him a babbling. His subject is something new to them. Jesus and the idea of resurrection are to them “strange gods.”

I hear people say today that Paul got his idea from Platonism. They say he didn't really believe in bodily resurrection but in a platonic idea of a spiritual resurrection. It was more or less the influence of an individual permeating through society. This is the life after death. One still hears that type of thing today. It is found in liberalism, and it is nothing in the world but old Greek philosophy. But these Greeks, philosophers as they were, didn't quite understand Paul. I think Paul was a little too deep for them. Philosophy had gone to seed in Athens at this particular time. However, they wanted to hear him. - McGee

Act 17:19 *And taking hold of him, they led him to the Areopagus, saying, are we able to know what is this new doctrine of which you speak?*

The Areopagus is a very peculiar formation of rock on top of which the Parthenon and the buildings connected with it stand. Frankly, it is a very lovely setting, beautiful buildings and beautiful statues, but a city wholly given over to idolatry. It is up from the marketplace of the city and Paul is brought there to speak. Probably every preacher who visits there reads Paul's sermon from the top of Mars' Hill. When I was there another preacher began to read it, and since I didn't

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like the way, he was reading it, I went way over to the other side of the rock. I sat with my Bible and read it silently. It was a thrilling experience.

Now these Greek philosophers say to him, “May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest is?” They want to know more about it. They are completely in the dark. They are worse off than the Galatians or the people in Philippi and Thessalonica. Why? Because they think they know something. The very hardest people in the world to reach with the Word of God and the gospel are church members because they think they don't need it. They think the gospel is for the man on skid row and for some of their friends. Some church members can be mean and sinful and yet not recognize they really need a Savior, not only to save them from sin, but also to make their lives count for God. – McGee

Let me say if you think Celebrate Recovery is for someone else because you don't have an addiction, now it is time to check yourself because we all have hurts, hangups, and issues. Don't let pride be your downfall.

Act 17:20 For you bring certain strange things to our ears, therefore we are minded knowing what these things mean.

Act 17:21 (For all the Athenians and strangers who were there spent their time in nothing else except to tell or to hear something newer.)

They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, a judicial body like a supreme court that met on the hill of Mars. In this particular case, it was not exactly a trial, but simply a hearing in which Paul would be given an opportunity to set forth his teaching before the members of the court and the multitude. This is somewhat explained in verse 21. The Athenians loved to stand around and talk, and to listen to others. They seemed to have an unlimited amount of time for this. – Believers Bible Commentary

In this same way America is going to seed today. Have you ever listened to talk shows? They are boring to tears. Everyone is trying to come up with something new. Each one is trying to say something novel. They try so hard to say something smart, something sophisticated; yet it is the same old story. Athens tried the same thing.

There must have been quite a bunch of loafers back in Athens. They didn't work—they didn't do anything. They just talked, propounding new theories and new ideas. The human family seems to reach that place of sophistication. They think they know something when they don't. They don't know the most important fact in the whole universe.

There are those who say that Paul failed on Mars' Hill, that he fell flat on his face in Athens. I totally disagree with that. I believe this was one of the greatest messages that Paul ever preached. - McGee

Paul Addresses the Areopagus

Act 17:22 And standing in the middle of the Areopagus, Paul said, Men, Athenians, I see that you are fearful of gods in everything.

He begins his message quite formally, “Ye men of Athens.” Then he says, “I perceive ... ye are too superstitious.” The word superstitious is wholly inadequate to say what Paul really means. He is saying that he perceives they are in all things too religious. The Athenians were very religious. Athens was filled with idols. There was no end to the pantheon of the Athenians and the Greeks. There were gods small and gods great; they had a god for practically everything. That is what Paul is saying. They were too religious.

I sometimes hear people ask, “Why should we send missionaries to foreign countries? Those people have their religion.” I suppose that when Paul went down to Athens, somebody said, “Why are you going down there? They have religion.” I am sure Paul would have answered, “That's their problem; they have too much religion.” A preacher friend of mine said many years ago, “When I came to Christ, I lost my religion.” There are a great many folks in our churches today who need

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to lose their religion so they can find Christ. That is the great problem. Some folks say, “People are too bad to be saved.” The real problem is that people are too good to be saved. They think they are religious and worthy and good. My friend, we are to take the gospel to all because all men are lost with Christ, which is the reason Paul went to Athens. The Athenians needed to hear the message of the gospel.

Notice that in Athens Paul did not go to a synagogue. He had no springboard in Athens. He begins his masterly address to “Ye men of Athens.” After he makes the observation that they are too religious, he continues: - McGee.

Have you ever noticed that the most religious are the hardest people group to reach?

Act 17:23 For as I passed by and saw the things you worship; I also found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Not knowing then whom you worship, I make Him known to you.

“I ... beheld your devotions.” He saw their objects of worship. He noted their altars and their idols and their temples. In fact, that very beautiful temple called the Parthenon was a temple built to Athena, the virgin goddess of the Athenians. There were idols all around. Paul said, “I observed all of this, and amidst the idols I found an altar inscribed to the unknown god.”

Now an altar to an unknown god could mean that the Athenians were broad minded. They didn't want to leave anyone out. If someone had come to Athens and said, “How is it you don't have an altar to my god?” they would have answered, “Well, this altar is really to your god.” That way any stranger could come to worship at the altar to the unknown god, believing it was built for his god.

Or it could mean that they recognized there was a God whom they did not know. Many pagan folks recognize that behind their idolatry is a living and true God. They know nothing about Him, and they do not know how to approach Him. They have traditions that back in the dim and distant past their ancestors did worship Him. This could have been the case with the Athenians.

Paul uses this as the springboard for his message. He says he wants to talk to them about this unknown God. He says he wants to tell them about the God whom they don't know. Perhaps that is not as diplomatic as his first approach. After all, the Athenians thought they knew everything. This crowd of philosophers met in Athens and talked back and forth, as philosophers do on college campuses today. And now Paul begins to talk to them about the God they do not know. Who is He? Well, first of all, He is the God of creation. - McGee

Act 17:24-25 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of Heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is served with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives life and breath and all things to all.

Missionaries tell us that the best place to begin in teaching pagans about God is the account of creation. This is exactly where Paul began with the people of Athens. He introduced God as the One who made the world and everything in it. As he looked around on the numerous idol temples nearby, the apostle reminded his hearers that the true God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He dependent on the service of men's hands. In idol temples, the priests often bring food and other “necessities” to their gods. But the true God does not need anything from man, because He is the source of life, breath, and all things. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 17:26-28 And He has made all nations of men of one blood to dwell on all the face of the earth, ordaining fore-appointed seasons and boundaries of their dwelling, to seek the Lord, if perhaps they might feel after Him and find Him, though indeed He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also certain of your own poets have said, for we are also His offspring.

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Paul next discussed the origin of the human race. All nations came from the common ancestor, Adam. Not only were the nations brought forth by God, but He also arranged the years, and determined the countries in which the various peoples would dwell. He showered innumerable mercies on them in order that they might seek Him. He wanted them to grope for Him and find Him, even though in actuality He is not far from each one. It is in the true God that we live and move and have our being. He is not only our Creator but our environment as well. To further emphasize the relationship of the creature to the Creator, Paul quoted from **some of** their Greek **poets**, who **said**, “**For we are also His offspring.**” This is not to be interpreted as teaching the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. We are the **offspring** of God in the sense that He created us, but we only become *sons* of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. – Believers Bible Commentary

This phrase “feel after him” has the idea of groping after Him. Man is not really searching for the living and true God, but he is searching for a god. He is willing to put up an idol and worship it. Man is not necessarily looking for the living and true God, but he is on a search. - McGee

Act 17:29-31 Then being offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like gold or silver or stone, engraved by art and man's imagination. Truly, then, God overlooking the times of ignorance, now He strictly commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day in which He is going to judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom He appointed, having given proof to all by raising Him from the dead.

In other words, he says we ought not to be idolaters. He has shown God to be the Creator. Now he will present Him as the Redeemer.

There was a time when God shut His eyes to paganism. Now light has come into the world. God asks men everywhere to turn to Him. Light creates responsibility. Now God is commanding all men everywhere to repent.

He has presented God as the Creator in His past work. He shows God as the Redeemer in His present work. Now he shows God as the Judge in His future work.

When God judges, it will be right. Judgment will be through a Judge who has nail-pierced hands, the One who has been raised from the dead. Paul always presents the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a declaration to all men. It is by this that God assures all men there will be a judgment. - McGee

Act 17:32-34 And hearing of a resurrection of the dead, some indeed mocked; and others said, we will hear you again concerning this. And so, Paul departed from among them. But certain men joined themselves to him and believed; among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Do you know why they mocked? Because Platonism denied the resurrection of the dead. That was one of the marks of Platonism. It denied physical resurrection. When you hear people today talking about a spiritual resurrection but denying the physical resurrection, you are hearing Platonic philosophy rather than scriptural teaching. Paul taught physical resurrection from the dead. So, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.

Some critics have said that Paul failed at Athens. He didn't fail, friend. There will always be those who mock at the gospel. But there will also be those who believe.

There was quite an aggregation of converts in the city of Athens. When Paul went to a place and preached the gospel, he had converts. He didn't fail. He succeeded. Wherever the Word of God is preached, there will be those who will listen and believe. - McGee

Acts 18 – Paul finds success in Sin City

THEME: The second missionary journey of Paul continued (Paul in Corinth; Apollos in Ephesus).

We are still on the second missionary journey of Paul. He is in Athens alone waiting for Timothy and Silas to come and join him and to bring reports from the churches in Berea and in Thessalonica. After his missionary thrust in Athens Paul goes on his journey to Corinth. - McGee

Paul in Corinth

Act 18:1 And after these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth.

For now, let me say that the city of Corinth was probably the most wicked city of that day. It was the Hollywood and the Las Vegas of the Roman Empire. It was the place where you could go to live it up. Sex and drink and all other sensual pleasures were there. In Corinth today one can see the remains of a great Roman bath. That is where they went to sober up. In the distance is the temple that was dedicated to Aphrodite (or Venus) in which there were a thousand so-called vestal virgins. They were anything but virgins; they were prostitutes—sex was a religion. Corinth was one of the most wicked cities of the day. Also, there were two tremendous theatres there. People came from all over the empire to the city of Corinth.

Paul came to Corinth on his second missionary journey and again on his third journey. I believe it was here where Paul had one of his most effective ministries. It is my judgment that in Corinth and Ephesus Paul had his greatest ministries. Ephesus was a religious center; Corinth was a sin center. Both cities were great commercial centers.

Now notice what Paul does on his first visit to Corinth. - McGee

Act 18:2-3 And finding a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome) Paul came to them. And because he was of the same trade, he stayed and worked with them; for they were tentmakers by occupation.

At Corinth, Paul formed a friendship with a couple named Aquila and Priscilla which was to continue through his life. Aquila was a Jew from Pontus, the northeastern province of Asia Minor. He and his wife had been living in Rome, but they had been driven out by an antisemitic decree of Claudius Caesar. Since Corinth was located on the main route from Rome to the East, they had stopped here and set up shop as tentmakers. Paul was also a tentmaker by trade, and he became acquainted with them.

Life's best revelations flash upon us while we abide in the fields of duty. Keep to your daily breadwinning and amid your toils you shall receive great benedictions and see glad visions. ... The shop or office or warehouse may become as the house of God. Do thy work and do it diligently: In it, thou mayest find rare soul fellowships, as did Aquila and Priscilla.

It is not clear from the narrative whether Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians when Paul met them, or whether they were saved through his ministry. Perhaps the burden of evidence is on the side of their being believers when they came to Corinth. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 18:4-5 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Gentile proselytes that Jesus was indeed the Christ of God.

Acts 18 – Paul finds success in Sin City

Paul had left Silas and Timothy in Berea when he moved on to Athens. At Athens he had sent word for them to join him. They caught up with him in Corinth.

After their arrival, Paul was compelled by the Spirit. This may mean that the burden of the Lord was upon him to preach the message with great diligence, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. There might be a suggestion that the apostle no longer spent time making tents here but gave himself entirely to preaching the gospel.

It was at approximately this time in his history that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians (about a.d. 52). – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 18:6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

The unbelieving Jews opposed Paul and blasphemed or railed. To reject the gospel is ultimately to oppose oneself. The unbeliever harms no one so much as himself.

Paul shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." The shaking of his clothing was an expressive act, signifying his dissociation from them. However, this did not prevent his going to the synagogue in another city, namely, Ephesus (Act_19:8).

The apostle's words are a solemn reminder to every believer that there is such a thing as blood-guiltiness. The Christian is a debtor to all men. If he fails to discharge that debt by proclaiming the gospel, God will hold him responsible. If, on the other hand, he faithfully witnesses for Christ and meets with stubborn refusal, then he himself is free from guilt, and the responsibility rests with the Christ-rejecter.

This verse represents another step in the setting aside of the nation of Israel, and the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. God had decreed that the good news should go to the Jews first, but throughout Acts, as the nation of Israel rejects the message, the Spirit of God sorrowfully turns aside from that people. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 18:7-8 And he departed from there and entered into the house of one named Justus, one worshiping God, whose house was next to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house. And hearing this, many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized.

Following the outburst of the Jews, the apostle went to the home of Justus, a Gentile convert to Judaism who lived next door to the synagogue. As he carried on his ministry from this base, the Apostle Paul had the joy of seeing Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, ... with all his household come to the Lord. Many other Corinthians trusted in the Savior and were baptized. Paul baptized Crispus and a few others (1Co_1:14-16), but his usual practice was to have some other believers do the baptizing. Paul feared that people would form a party around himself, instead of being undistracted in their love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: Paul delegated ministry which equipped the saints and kept the ministry focused on Jesus not who you were baptized by.

Act 18:9-10 And the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and be not silent. For I am with you, and no one shall set on you to hurt you, for I have many people in this city.

Corinth was about the last place that you would expect the Lord to "have much people." I have been through Las Vegas quite a few times. I'll be honest with you—when I look at that crowd, I wouldn't get the impression that the Lord might have people there. If the Lord were to say to me, "I have much people in this city," I wouldn't question the Lord, but it surely would be the opposite from my own impression.

Acts 18 – Paul finds success in Sin City

Paul had already been in Corinth for quite a while, and I am sure that he was wondering about that city. I'm of the opinion that when he received this opposition, he was ready to leave and go somewhere else. However, the Lord Himself steps in and detains Paul. He tells him, "I have much people in this city." - McGee

Act 18:11-13 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them. But Gallio being pro-consul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rushed against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, This one persuades men to worship God contrary to the Law.

After Paul has had several months of ministry in Corinth, again opposition will arise. This "judgment seat" is the Bema seat. It is the Bema that Paul talks about in the Epistle to the Corinthians. They brought Paul to the Bema seat, the judgment seat, and there they brought the charge against him. They didn't mean contrary to the law of the Roman Empire or contrary to the law of Corinth. They meant contrary to the law of the Mosaic system. – McGee

Act 18:14-17 And Paul being about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, If indeed then, it was anything wrong or wicked criminality, O Jews, according to reason I would endure you. But if it is a question of a word and names, and of your law, you look to it. For I do not wish to be a judge of such things. And he drove them from the judgment seat. And all the Greeks seized Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio did not care for any of these things.

I have read and heard Bible expositors condemn this man Gallio in no uncertain terms. He is pictured as an unfeeling typical judge of that day. I want to say something for the defense of Gallio. I thank God for him, and I personally think that he took the right position. I'll tell you what I mean by that. He is probably the first person who made a decision between church and state. Gallio said that if the matter was concerning religion or about some religious thing, then they should take it and handle it themselves. He was a Roman magistrate, and he was concerned with enforcing Roman law. But when the case did not involve Roman law, he would not interfere. He told them to handle religious matters themselves. He adopted a "hands off" policy. I like Gallio. He separated church and state. He would not interfere with Paul preaching in the city of Corinth. Corinth was a city of freedom, including religious freedom. Since the issue had to do with religion, he asked them to settle it themselves.

Now I want to say this: I wish the Supreme Court of the United States would adopt the same policy. I wish they would adopt a "hands off" policy when it comes to matters of religion. What right does a group of secular men have to come along and make a decision that you can't have prayer in the schools? If a community wants prayer in their school, then they should have prayer in their school. If they are not having prayer in school, then the state should not force prayer in school. We claim to have freedom of speech and freedom of religion in our land. The unfortunate thing is that our freedoms are often curtailed. They are abused and misdirected. Under the guise of separating church and state, the freedom of religion is actually curtailed. If we are going to separate church and state, then the state should keep its nose out of that which refers to the church.

If this man Gallio were running for office, I would vote for him. I think we need men with this kind of vision. It says Gallio cared for none of those things. Of course not! He is a secular magistrate. He is not going to try to settle an argument about differences in doctrine. That's not his business, and he'll stay out of it. I would vote for him. – McGee

Note: God ordained Government. The very thought of Government working without God is preposterous. Separation of Church and State began with the Danbury Baptist church. Thomas Jefferson and the founding fathers were intent on this separation, but it was a one-way separation. Government was not supposed to be involved in mandating or restricting the church or religion, but it in no way meant Government was to be free of religion. The nation itself was founded on the God-given rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence. Satan again has twisted this in the minds of many in our nation.

Acts 18 – Paul finds success in Sin City

Paul Returns to Antioch

Act 18:18 And Paul having remained many days more, taking leave of the brothers, he sailed from there into Syria. And Priscilla and Aquila were with him. And Paul had shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow.

There are a great many folks who find fault with Paul because he made a vow. They say that this is a man who preached that we are not under law, but we are under grace, and so he should not have made a vow. Anyone who says this about Paul is actually making a little law for Paul. Such folk are saying that Paul is to do things their way. Under grace, friend, if you want to make a vow, you can make it. And if you do not want to make a vow, you don't have to. Paul didn't force anyone else to make a vow. In fact, he said emphatically that no one has to do that. But if Paul wants to make a vow, that is his business. That is the marvelous freedom that we have in the grace of God today.

There are some super saints who form little cliques and make laws for the Christian. They say we can't do this, and we can't do that. May I say to you very candidly that our relationship is to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a love affair. If we love Him, of course we will not do anything that will break our fellowship with Him. Don't insist that I go through your little wicket gate; I am to follow Him. He shows me what I can and cannot do in order to maintain fellowship with Him.

If one wishes to eat meat, there is freedom to eat meat. If one wishes to observe a certain day, there is freedom to observe it. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co_10:31). The important thing is to do all to the glory of God. Eating meat will not commend you to God and neither will abstaining from meat commend you to God.

Let's not find fault with Paul here. Poor Gallio and Paul surely do get in trouble with their critics right in this particular passage. I want to defend both of them.

Paul is now returning from his second missionary journey and now he is going back to Antioch. He sails from Cenchrea, which is the seaport over on the east side. There is a canal through the Corinthian peninsula today, but there was none in that day. They would actually pull the boats overland. I have a picture taken to show the rocks that are worn by the boats which were pulled over the isthmus to the other side. Cenchrea was the port of Corinth on the eastward side. Paul goes there with Aquila and Priscilla, and they take a ship there. He is not going westward any farther; he is sailing for home. – McGee

Act 18:19-21 And he came to Ephesus and left them there. But he himself entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. And they asking him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent but took leave of them, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that is coming in Jerusalem, but I will return again to you, God willing. And he sailed from Ephesus.

You remember that when he came out on this second journey, the Spirit of God would not allow him to come down to Ephesus. Now, on his way back, he stops at Ephesus, but he does not stay there very long.

Again, someone may ask what business Paul has in keeping feasts. Remember his background. He is a Jew like Simon Peter. He has the background of the Mosaic system. He knows a lot of his friends will be in Jerusalem for the feast. He wants to go up to witness to them. He feels that he must by all means keep this feast that is coming in Jerusalem. He is under grace. If he wants to do that, that is his business.

However, he did see that there was a great door open in Ephesus. He has the heart of a missionary, and he wants to return to them. Ephesus was one of the great cities of the Roman Empire.

Act 18:22-23 And when he had landed at Caesarea and had gone up to greet the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Acts 18 – Paul finds success in Sin City

The ship's next stop was CAESAREA. From there, the apostle went up and greeted the church in Jerusalem. Then he went down to ANTIOCH for what was to be his final visit.

Thus ends Paul's Second Missionary Journey.

G. Paul's Third Missionary Journey: Asia Minor and Greece (18:23-21:26) After a fairly lengthy visit at Antioch, Paul was ready to set out on another extended missionary itinerary. The record of this journey extends from verse 23 through 21:16.

The first regions to be visited were GALATIA and PHRYGIA. The apostle went to the churches there, one by one, strengthening all the disciples.

Apollos Speaks Boldly in Ephesus

Act 18:24-26 And a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught the things of the Lord diligently, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And Aquila and Priscilla heard him, and they took him and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly.

The scene now shifts back to Ephesus where we left Aquila and Priscilla. An eloquent preacher named Apollos arrived there, one who was mighty in the OT Scriptures. He was a Jew by birth, and came from Alexandria, the capital of northern Egypt. Although his preaching was accompanied by much power, and although he was very zealous, yet he was somewhat deficient in his knowledge of the Christian faith. He had apparently been well schooled in the ministry of John the Baptist and knew how John had called the nation of Israel to repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Apparently, he did not know about Christian baptism or some other matters of Christian doctrine. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him speak ... in the synagogue, they recognized that he needed further instruction, so they lovingly took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. It is to the credit of this eloquent preacher that he was willing to be taught by a tentmaker and his wife. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 18:27-28 And intending to pass into Achaia, being encouraged, the brothers wrote to the disciples to welcome him; who, having arrived, very much helped those who had believed through grace. For he mightily confuted the Jews publicly, proving by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

As a result of his teachable spirit, the brethren at Ephesus encouraged him in his desire to go to Corinth in order to preach the word. In fact, they wrote a letter of commendation for him. As a result, he was a great help to the believers in Corinth and vigorously refuted the Jews there publicly, showing that Jesus is indeed the Christ of God. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: Humility and a teachable spirit are highly valued by the Lord. Pride always comes before the fall, and naturally is one of those things that needs to die in our old nature. However, if you are like me, it is a constant battle, and I have to be purposefully or I will naturally bend that way and seek the applause of men and not that of the Lord.

THEME: *Third missionary journey of Paul (Paul in Ephesus).*

Paul's third missionary journey began in the previous chapter at verse [Act 18:23](#) when he left Antioch. In this chapter he retraces part of his first and second missionary journeys. Then he comes to Ephesus, where he speaks daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years. Paul performs miracles which lead to the march against him led by Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths. The move is quieted by the town clerk who urges them to appeal to the law rather than resorting to violence.

Paul in Ephesus

Act 19:1-2 *And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples, he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So, they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."*

You will remember that Paul had come through Ephesus on his return trip from his second missionary journey and had told them that he would come back to them if God so willed. He had not stayed in Ephesus previously and had had no ministry there. Now he returns to Ephesus, but he has been preceded there by that great preacher, Apollos. You recall that Apollos did not know anything about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ until Aquila and Priscilla had talked to him. All he had been preaching was the baptism of John, which was as far as his knowledge went. As a result of this, the people who had heard his preaching had been instructed only as far as the baptism of John and had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul detected that.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" is a poor translation. Both verbs receive and believe are in the same tense. The American Standard Version translates the verse more accurately: "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" Paul is asking them, "When you believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?" Their response was that they had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. They had been instructed up to the baptism of John. They had not been taught about the Lord Jesus and didn't know anything about Pentecost. - McGee

Act 19:3-5 *And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So, they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized 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." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

You see that these people were baptized, but they were not saved. They had not received the Holy Spirit because they were not saved. Friend, the moment you trust Christ you are regenerated by the Spirit of God, you are indwelt by the Spirit of God, you are sealed by the Spirit of God, and you are baptized into the body of believers by the Spirit of God. This happens the moment you believe and trust Christ. Paul detected that this had not happened to these people. Now Paul explains to them that they must trust the Lord Jesus to be saved. They respond to his message, and many believe.

The baptism of John was a "baptism of repentance." It was a preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the people turn to Christ and are saved. They did not get saved under Apollos because he didn't even know about Christ when he preached to them. Some people interpret this passage to mean that they had been saved, and then later when Paul came, they received the Holy Spirit. That is not true, as you can see. - McGee

Act 19:6-7 *And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.*

These men could now speak the gospel in other languages—in tongues that could be understood. Ephesus was a polyglot city of the Roman Empire. There were many languages spoken there, just as there had been in Jerusalem on

Act 19 – Jesus and Paul I know

the Day of Pentecost. East and West met all along that coast. It was a great city of that day. These men were now able to give the good news of Christ to the entire city.

Notice there were twelve men. This was the beginning of the ministry at Ephesus. Paul had a great ministry in Corinth and an even greater ministry in Ephesus. - McGee

Act 19:8-10 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Paul had to leave the synagogue because there was a great deal of opposition to him. He moved his place of operation and did his speaking daily in the school of Tyrannus.

What was this school of Tyrannus? Well, it was a school that was conducted for the Ephesians. They had a siesta in the middle of the day, probably for two or three hours. Paul, I imagine, rented the space and at siesta time, in the middle of the day, he preached the Word of God for a period of two years. As a result, the whole province of Asia heard the Word of God, both the Jews and the Greeks.

This gives us some concept of how the Word of God was growing in that day. Apparently from this vantage point the church in Colosse came into existence. You see, Paul wrote to the Colossians as he did to the Romans before he had visited them. Yet he was the founder of those churches. How could this be? By the simple fact that from the school of Tyrannus the gospel sounded forth—it went out everywhere. When the Corinthians wanted Paul to come over to them, he wrote to them, “For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1Co_16:7-9). For two years the gospel sounded out so that everyone in the province of Asia had heard it. Probably the seven churches of Asia Minor came into existence through the preaching of Paul the apostle here at Ephesus. This may have been where he had his greatest ministry. - McGee

The Sons of Sceva

Act 19:11-12 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

There are different words used in the Greek which our Bible translates as “miracles.” Here the word for “miracle” is *dunamis* from which we get our word *dynamite*. It means “an act of power.” God wrought special powers by the hands of Paul. He is exercising the gifts of an apostle.

This was a great religious center, possibly more than Athens or any other place. The great temple of Diana was there, and the worship connected with it was satanic to the very core. Now in order to meet that kind of opposition, God granted some special powers to Paul.

What were these handkerchiefs and aprons which are mentioned here? Well, actually we could call them sweat cloths. Paul used them as he worked. Remember that he was a tentmaker, and this was in a warm climate. While he was working, he would be perspiring. He would use these cloths, these handkerchiefs and aprons, to wipe his brow. They were dirty. They had perspiration from his body on them. People would come and pick up these dirty cloths and would be healed of their diseases! In that area there were the mystery religions which used white garments and emphasized that everything must be very clean and white. Everything had to be just so. It seems that God was rebuking all of that sort of thing. He used these dirty sweaty cloths to heal people.

Act 19 – Jesus and Paul I know

This reveals the special power that was granted to the apostle Paul. As far as I know, this is the only incident like this that ever took place—including the day in which we live. It is almost blasphemous for anyone to send out a little handkerchief and claim there is power in it. Paul's handkerchief was an old sweat cloth. God used that to rebuke the heathen, pagan religions of that day. Diseases were healed and evil spirits went out of them when they picked up these dirty, sweaty cloths. - McGee

Act 19:13-15 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." Also, there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

When they saw what Paul did, they tried to duplicate it. Now a specific incident will be related. Notice that these were priests. The priests had actually gone into this type of thing. The Greek word here for “know” is ginosko. It does not imply a knowledge by faith. It means simply that the evil spirit knows who Jesus is. - McGee

Act 19:16-17 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

The attempt of the sons of Sceva to try to duplicate the miracles of Paul backfired. It backfired to their humiliation and hurt and apparently was a great embarrassment for them.

You can see the effect that this had. It caused the name of the Lord Jesus to be spread through that entire pagan city. Ephesus was a great city, and it was shaken by this.

The miracles which Paul and the other apostles performed were not the type of thing that one hears about today. For many years there have been stories of miracles being performed in Los Angeles and in Southern California, but they made no dent or impression on this great pagan city. The miracles of Paul shook Ephesus to its very foundation. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified through them. - McGee

Act 19:18-19 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

So mightily did the Spirit of God work among those who had practiced various forms of magical art that a great number turned to Christ, confessing ... their deeds. After doing so, they made a public demonstration of their faith by gathering up their books that dealt with magic and burning them in a great bonfire. The original cost of the books would have been fifty thousand pieces of silver. It is difficult to determine exactly how much that would be in our currency—perhaps between eight and ten thousand dollars. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 19:20-22 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." So, he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

“After these things were ended”—that is, these experiences which Dr. Luke has recorded here—it apparently was Paul's intention to go to Rome on this missionary journey. The interesting thing is that he did go to Rome, but not the way he had planned to go.

This is the time that he wrote Corinthians. Apparently, Timothy and Erastus took the letter to deliver it. Although it was addressed to the Corinthians, the letter would reach the people in Macedonia, which would include Philippi and

Thessalonica, and also the churches in Achaia, which would include Athens and Corinth. It was in this letter that Paul wrote that a great and effectual door was open for him in Ephesus but that there were many adversaries. We can see now that the adversaries were satanic. This was a center of pagan religion and of Satan worship. The Satan worship we see today is not something new at all. - McGee

Act 19:23-27 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover, you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised, and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."

As a result of Paul's ministry, many Ephesians turned to the Lord from their idols. The spiritual awakening in the city was so widespread that it caused a business recession among the idol-makers. Demetrius, a silversmith, was one of those seriously affected. He made silver shrines of Diana. Serving as a spokesman for the trade, Demetrius gathered together all his fellow craftsmen and sought to stir them up to take some resolute action. He reminded them how Paul had been so successful in persuading many people that there are no gods which are made with human hands. He revealed his real motive when he said that their trade was in danger, but he sought to give it a religious coloring by pretending great reverence for Diana and her temple. – Believers' Bible Commentary

When your faith starts to impact someone else's pocketbook, things start heating up. Nothing has changed today, right?

Act 19:28-31 Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" So, the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.

The meeting of silversmiths soon developed into a mob scene in which the whole city became involved. Chanting "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!", the crowd rushed into the theater (arena or coliseum), and seized Gaius and Aristarchus, two of Paul's traveling companions, doubtless with the purpose of killing them. Paul himself wanted to step in and speak to the mob, but he was prevented by the disciples, and also by the Asiarchs (officers elected by the cities who at their own expense furnished festivals in honor of the gods). These civic benefactors who had befriended Paul told him that it would be most unwise for him to enter the arena. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 19:32-34 Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

By this time the mob was completely out of control. Many did not know why they were there. Conflicting voices were heard on every hand. A Jew named Alexander sought to step forward and address the mob. Doubtless his purpose was to defend the Jews as being completely innocent in the matter. But when the crowd found out that he was a Jew, they put up a tremendous protesting roar. For about two hours they chanted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 19:35-36 *And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.*

The town clerk was, of course, a local official who told them that they were making too much out of this whole thing. He says, "Look at this great temple and at the great Diana. Nothing could happen to them. Nothing could be said against them!" Now, of course, they have been in ruins for nearly two thousand years. - McGee

Act 19:37-38 *For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.*

He is saying that if the silversmiths want to make a legal charge, the court is open.

Act 19:39-41 *But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering." And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.*

He told them that if they had some issue to bring up, they should all sit down and have an orderly meeting. They were to put down their placards and quit their shouting and running around. They were actually in danger of being accused of rioting. Riots are not something new, friend. This whole scene sounds very up to date.

He dismissed the crowd. When he called their attention to what they were actually doing, the crowd broke up and the people went home. Paul's ministry in Ephesus is over now. He leaves Ephesus and goes back to Macedonia. – McGee

The word, **assembly** (vv. 32, 39, 41), translates the Greek word, *ekklesia*, meaning a called-out company of people. It is the same word translated as *church* in other parts of the NT. Whether the word refers to a heathen mob, as here, or the congregation of Israel, as in [Act 7:38](#), or the NT church, must be determined from the context. The word, *assembly*, is a better translation of *ekklesia* than the word, *church*. The word, *church*, comes from a Greek word meaning "belonging to the Lord" (*kuriake*, cf. Scottish "kirk"). In modern usage, it commonly refers to a religious building. That is why many Christians prefer the word *assembly*; it expresses the fact that the church is a called-out group of people, not a building or even a denomination. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 20 – Paul Says final goodbye to Ephesus

THEME: Third missionary journey of Paul concluded.

After Paul's experience in Ephesus, he continues on to Macedonia, to Philippi, back to Troas, and to Miletus. The elders of the church in Ephesus meet him in Miletus and they have a tender reunion and a touching farewell. - McGee

Paul in Macedonia and Greece

Act 20:1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia.

From verse 1 it would appear that the apostle traveled directly from Ephesus to Macedonia. However, from 2 Corinthians we learn that he first went to TROAS. There he found an open door to preach the gospel but was anxious to see Titus and to learn from him how the Corinthians had received his First Epistle. When he did not find Titus in Troas, he crossed over the northeastern corner of the Aegean Sea to MACEDONIA. Undoubtedly, he landed at NEAPOLIS, then traveled inland to PHILIPPI. While in Macedonia, probably at Philippi, he met Titus and was greatly encouraged by the news from Corinth. It was probably at this time that he wrote 2 Corinthians (a.d. 56?). (See 2Co_1:8-9; 2Co_2:12-14; 2Co_7:5-7.) – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 20:2-3 Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

After ministering for some time in Macedonia, he journeyed south to GREECE or ACHAIA. Most of the three months there were undoubtedly spent in CORINTH, and it was during this period that he wrote Romans. Some also believe that Galatians was written at this time.

Originally, Paul had planned to travel straight from Corinth across the Aegean to Syria. However, when he learned that the Jews were plotting to destroy him somewhere along that route, he changed his plans and went northward again through MACEDONIA. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 20:4 And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

At this time, we are introduced to some of Paul's traveling companions. It is stated that they accompanied him as far as Asia, but we know that certain of them even went with him to Rome:

Sopater of Berea was possibly the same as Sosipater, a relative of Paul mentioned in Rom_16:21.

Aristarchus of Thessalonica nearly lost his life in the riot at Ephesus (Act_19:29). We later read of him as being a fellow prisoner with Paul in Rome (Phm_1:24; Col_4:10).

Secundus, also a native of Thessalonica, accompanied Paul as far as Asia, probably Troas or Miletus.

Gaius of Derbe is not to be confused with the Macedonian who was seized by the mob at Ephesus (Act_19:29). Another Gaius is mentioned as being an inhabitant of Corinth and Paul's host while there (Rom_16:23). John's Third Epistle is addressed to a man named Gaius, probably living in some city near Ephesus. Gaius was a very common name.

Acts 20 – Paul Says final goodbye to Ephesus

Timothy not only accompanied Paul to Asia but was with him in Rome during his first imprisonment. Subsequently he traveled with Paul through proconsular Asia. In his Second Letter to Timothy, Paul expressed the desire to see him again, but we do not know whether this wish was ever fulfilled.

Tychicus, a native of Asia Minor, probably journeyed as far as Miletus with the apostle. Later he rejoined Paul in Rome and is mentioned as laboring with him up to and during the time of his second imprisonment.

Trophimus was apparently a Gentile whose home was in Ephesus, in Asia Minor. He went with Paul to Jerusalem and unwittingly was the cause of the apostle's arrest. He is also mentioned in 2Ti_4:20. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 20:5 These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.

The “us” indicates that Dr. Luke stays with Paul while the others go ahead of them to Troas.

This is quite a group of men, missionaries, who worked with Paul. I take it that these men had been traveling with Paul before. When Paul would have a ministry in a place like Corinth, probably these men would radiate out and have a ministry in the countryside and the small towns. We read in the Epistle to the Colossians about the fact that the Word of God had sounded out in that day to the whole world. That sounds unbelievable, but it was true. It was no oratorical gesture. Of course, “the whole world” means the Roman world because that was the world of that day. The Word of God had spread throughout the Roman world. We get some insight here and recognize that there were other people working with the apostles. Acts traces the work of Peter and Paul as the dominant ones—Peter as the Apostle to the Jews and Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles. What we have here in the Book of Acts is a very limited account of the missionary work that was going on. - McGee

Act 20:6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

It is interesting that the trip that took them five days to make can now be made by tourists in about fifty minutes. How different transportation is today! Transportation is more efficient, but our ministry is certainly not as effective. - McGee

Eutychus Raised from the Dead

Act 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

There are several things I want to say about this verse. I want you to note that it was upon the first day of the week that they came together. Where we have a record of the day on which the early church met, it was always the first day of the week. Paul tells the Corinthians that they are to bring their gifts on the first day of the week (see 1Co_16:2). In our verse in Acts here it says that “when the disciples came together to break bread” it was “upon the first day of the week.” This means that they celebrated the Lord's Supper on Sunday. It was on this day that Paul preached to them. The early church met on the first day of the week. That was the important day because it was the day when Jesus came back from the dead. Under the old creation the seventh day was the important day, the Sabbath Day. That belongs to the old creation. On the Sabbath Day Jesus was dead, inside the tomb. On the first day of the week, He

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came forth. We meet on that day because we are now joined to a living Christ. That is the testimony of the first day of the week.

Now the other thing that interests me about this verse is that Paul was going to leave them the next day; so, he preached all the way to midnight. Now, I do not know any congregation that would listen to me until midnight. I'm of the opinion that there aren't many preachers who would preach until midnight in these days in which we live. However, this is Paul's last visit. It is a tender meeting. He is getting ready to leave and he will not be back. This gives him an excuse to preach that long.

I tell congregations very frankly that I'm a long-winded preacher. I'm known as that. I love to teach the Word of God. I have a system of homiletics that I never learned in the seminary. I picked it up myself—in fact, I got it from a cigarette commercial. This is it: It's not how long you make it but how you make it long. I believe in making it long; my scriptural authority for it is that Paul did it. He spoke until midnight. You can't help but smile at that. - McGee

Act 20:8-9 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

Comparing verses 6 and 7, it appears that the apostle purposely waited in Troas for seven days so he could be there for the breaking of bread on the Lord's Day. It is certainly clear from verse 7 that it was the practice of the early Christians to gather together on the first day of the week in order to observe the Lord's Supper.

That Paul should have spoken until midnight should cause us no shocked surprise. When the spiritual temperature of a church is high, the Spirit of God is free to work without being fettered by the bondage of timepieces. As the night wore on, it became hot and stuffy in the upper room. Perhaps the many lamps contributed to this, as well as the number of people present. A certain young man named Eutychus, sitting in an open window, fell asleep and plummeted to the ground below. It was a fall of three stories, and he was killed by it. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 20:10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."

But Paul went down and stretched himself over the body of the young man, as the prophets did of old. He then announced to the people that they should not make any more fuss about the matter since Eutychus was now alive. It might seem from Paul's words that their concern was unnecessary because the young man had not died; his life was still in him. But it is clear from verse 9 that he was actually dead. Acting with the power of an apostle, Paul had miraculously restored him to life. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 20:11-12 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

When Paul returned upstairs, they broke bread (v. 11), i.e., they observed the Lord's Supper, for which they had come together (v. 7). Then they ate a common meal, perhaps the agape or love feast. This

Acts 20 – Paul Says final goodbye to Ephesus

fellowship meal was held in conjunction with the Lord's Supper in the early days of the church, but abuses crept in (1Co_11:20-22), and it was gradually discontinued.

After an all-night meeting, never to be forgotten, the apostle bade farewell to the believers in Troas. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 20:13-15 Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus.

Now they are traveling again. Dr. Luke and the others of the group sailed to Assos, but Paul traveled on foot. Why do you suppose Paul did that? Well, I'm sure it was so that he could witness along the way. I think as he walked, there were many places along the way where he would stop to witness to people. – McGee

Sailing south along the western coast of Asia Minor, they first came to MITYLENE (pronounced mit-i-le'-ne), the chief city of the island of LESBOS. The following night they apparently anchored off the island of CHIOS (pronounced key'-os). Another day's journey brought them to the island of SAMOS, and they stayed at TROGYLLIUM. Finally, the travelers put in at MILETUS, a port on the southwest coast of Asia Minor, thirty-six miles south of Ephesus. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

Act 20:16-17 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

Paul intentionally bypassed Ephesus, because he feared that a visit there would occupy too much time, and he was hurrying to get to Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost.

Upon landing at Miletus, Paul sent word to the elders in Ephesus, asking them to come for a meeting. Undoubtedly it took considerable time for the message to reach them, and for them to make the journey south. However, they were well rewarded by the magnificent message they heard from the lips of the great apostle. In it we have a valuable portrait of an ideal servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see a man who was fanatically devoted to the Savior. He labored in season, out of season. He was tireless, indomitable, indefatigable. He was marked by true humility. No cost was too great for him to pay. His ministry was the result of deep exercise of soul. He had a holy boldness and fearlessness. Whether he lived or died was not important; but it was important that the will of God should be carried out and that men should hear the gospel. He was unselfish in all that he did. He would rather give than receive. He was undaunted by difficulties. He practiced what he preached. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 20:18-19 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

The apostle reminded the elders of Ephesus of his manner of life when he lived among them. From the first day that he set foot in Asia, and all the time he was there, he served the Lord with true humility and

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self-denial. In connection with his ministry, there was a constant strain on his emotional system; there were tears of sorrow and trials. Constantly he suffered persecution as a result of the plotting of the Jews. Yet in spite of all the adverse circumstances, his ministry was bold and fearless.

We sometimes forget Paul was no different than us. He had tears, sorrows, and trials, yet held he held strong. How are you holding up in the face of persecution, tears, and trials?

Act 20:20-21 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was a faithful witness for Jesus Christ. He pulled no punches. He could declare that he had given them the Word of God, the total Word of God. I am not the first one to have a through the Bible program—Paul taught it all. He gave to them the full counsel of God. He was faithful even in the face of opposition by the religious rulers of the Jews. – McGee

This too is our belief that teaching the whole counsel of God is biblical and fruitful as opposed to topical and cherry-picking lessons. What are your thoughts?

Act 20:22-24 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 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, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Here is a point over which many great teachers of the Bible differ. Some of my good friends in the ministry and many good, authoritative Bible teachers believe that Paul made a mistake in going to Jerusalem. They think that he should not have gone. However, this testimony which Paul gives is very clear. I believe that he was entirely in the will of God in going to Jerusalem. He is saying in effect, "I am going to Jerusalem. I am bound in the spirit because everywhere I have gone, the Spirit of God has shown me that bonds and affliction await me in Jerusalem." Now that is different from Acts 16 when he was forbidden by the Spirit of God to preach in Asia. In fact, God simply put-up roadblocks which directed him to Europe. There is no roadblock, here. Rather, the Spirit of God is revealing to Paul what he will be walking into when he reaches Jerusalem. Paul makes it clear that he realizes he will suffer if he goes to Jerusalem. He says, "I don't count my life dear. I'm willing to lay down my life for Jesus." He wanted to bring the gift to the poor saints in Jerusalem in his own hands. In his swan song Paul wrote, "I have finished my course." I think Paul touched all the bases. Jerusalem was one of those bases. - McGee

Act 20:25-27 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 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.

Paul knew that he would not see these folk again in this life. Paul also knew that he had honestly given to them the entire counsel of God.

As I write this, I am a retired preacher. I have made many blunders and have failed in many ways. But as I look back on my ministry, I can say truthfully that when I stood in the pulpit, I declared the Word of God as I saw it. I have the deep satisfaction of knowing that if I went back to any pulpit which I have held, I

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haven't a thing to add to what I have already said. I don't mean I couldn't say it in a better way, but the important thing is that I declared the whole counsel of God. I have always believed that the important issue is to get out the entire Word of God. – McGee

How about you? Have you thought about how you are going to end? Do you want to be like Paul and leave it all out of the field for the Joy of Christ that lives in you?

Act 20:28-30 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.

This is the business of the officers of the church. They are not to run the church, but they are to see that the church is fed the Word of God.

Friend, I have seen that happen. The Devil wants to get into a church where the Bible has been taught. He would like to wreck a radio ministry that is teaching the Word of God. The Devil is not our friend; he is our enemy. He wants to stop the teaching of God's Word. Paul warned them at Ephesus that this would happen to them. He tells them there will be little termites right in their midst who will really cause trouble for them. – McGee

Whenever the Word of God is taught powerfully, the spiritual attacks come. In fact, the absence of spiritual warfare in a church likely means it is not teaching or preaching the Word.

Act 20:31-32 Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

In view of these imminent perils, the elders should be on their guard, and constantly remember how for three years the apostle had warned them night and day with tears.

Paul's great resource now was to commend them to God and to the word of His grace. Notice that he did not commend them to other human leaders, or to supposed successors of the apostles. Rather he entrusted them to God and the Bible. This is an eloquent testimony to the sufficiency of the inspired Scriptures. It is they who are able to build up the believers and to give them an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Act 20:33-35 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

In closing his message, the Apostle Paul once again set before the elders the example of his own life and ministry. He could say in all honesty that he had coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. It was not the hope of financial gain that motivated him in the work of the Lord. He was essentially a poor man, as far as material things were concerned, but he was rich toward God. Holding out his hands before them, he could remind them that those hands had labored in order to provide for the necessities of life, both for himself and for those who were with him. But he went beyond that also. He labored as a tentmaker in

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order that he might have means to help the weak—those physically ill, or weak as far as moral scruples are concerned, or weak in spiritual matters. The elders should remember this, and seek in all things the good of others, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, “... It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Interestingly enough, these words of our Lord are not found in any of the Gospels. They do represent the sum of much of His teaching, but here they are given as an inspired addition to His words in the Gospels. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 20:36-38 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

At the conclusion of his message, Paul knelt on the ground and prayed with the elders. For them it was a time of deep sorrow. They showed their affection for the beloved apostle by falling on his neck and kissing him. The thing that particularly grieved them was his statement that they would see his face no more. Heavyheartedly, they accompanied him to the ship for the voyage to Jerusalem. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Acts 2 – Jerusalem God’s Will be Done!

Paul Goes to Jerusalem

Act 21:1-2 *Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.*

Are you following him? He took a ship at Miletus, and they sailed down to the southern coast of Asia Minor to Patara. There they changed ships. Now he is headed for Tyre on the seacoast north of Caesarea. It was actually on the coast of Israel in what was ancient Phoenicia. Today that is Lebanon. - McGee

Act 21:3 *When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo.*

I love the way this is expressed here. I think the translators of our Authorized Version have captured something that the modern translations just miss. They “discovered Cyprus” on the left hand is a way of saying that as they were sailing towards Tyre, Cyprus loomed up in the distance on their left-hand side. Of course, it doesn't mean that they were the first people to discover Cyprus. They saw the island and were near enough to recognize it, but they did not stop there. They were on their way to Tyre, a great commercial center which had been there since ancient times. - McGee

Act 21:4 *And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.*

This is the verse used by those Bible teachers who feel that Paul made a great mistake when he went up to Jerusalem. It shows that these men spoke to Paul through the Holy Spirit. If I understand this correctly, the Spirit of God is not going to contradict Himself. I believe He is saying the same thing here that He had said before. Paul is not to go up to Jerusalem unless he is prepared to make the required sacrifice. Paul keeps saying that he is willing to make the sacrifice. He is perfectly willing to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus. That is the way I think it should be understood.

For several reasons I do not believe that Paul stepped out of the will of God when he went up to Jerusalem. He had a sentimental reason for going there, but it was a good reason. He was carrying the offering from the gentile Christians to the suffering saints in Jerusalem. He wanted to present this to the church in Jerusalem with his own hands, because it was his hands that at one time had wasted the church in Jerusalem. He had been partly responsible for the state of penury in which the saints in Jerusalem found themselves. Paul did not want to send some representative to Jerusalem; he wanted to go to Jerusalem himself.

Another reason I do not believe that Paul stepped out of the will of God is because of his writings later on. When Paul was in prison in Rome, the church at Philippi sent to him an expression of their sympathy. They loved him and they sympathized with his condition. But Paul wrote to them, “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (Php_1:12). Because what happened to Paul did not hinder the spread of the gospel, I do not believe that Paul was out of the will of God.

Furthermore, you remember that when the Lord appeared to Ananias and told him to go to Paul after his conversion, He said to Ananias, “... Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Act_9:15-16). Up to this point in our study of Acts, Paul has not appeared before kings and rulers, but we know it is in the will of God that he should do so. In the next chapters we will find that he does go before kings. He will testify before King Agrippa. It is probable that he appeared before Nero in Rome. We know for certain that he reached those who were in Caesar's household because he sent greetings from them in his Epistle to the Philippians (Php_4:22), which was written while he was a prisoner in Rome.

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Finally, as I have already mentioned, in 2Ti_4:7 Paul writes, “... I have finished my course...” This was written at the end of his life. It seems to me that he would not say that if for a time he had stepped out of the will of God. I must confess that as I look back over my own ministry, I am confident that I stepped out of the will of God for a brief time. I didn't do it purposely. I did it ignorantly. I did it in a headstrong manner. I think the Lord has a way of making these things up to us. But I do not think that Paul at the end of his life could write that he had finished his course if he had been out of the will of God.

I have spent some time on this because there is controversy over it. I have several very good friends in the ministry who do not agree with my point of view, but we are still friends. I love these brethren in the Lord. I just tease them and say I hope they will see the light someday. As one of them said to me, “When we get in the presence of the Lord, we will all be in agreement.”- McGee

Act 21:5 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.

Again, this is a lovely thing that Paul did here. Paul and the people with him knelt down there on the shore and prayed.

Friend, the best position to be in while praying is kneeling. However, you can pray in any posture and anywhere. Since I drive a great deal, I have learned to pray in the car. (When you drive the freeways of Southern California, you had better learn to pray!) But the most appropriate posture when we come into the presence of Almighty God is to kneel. - McGee

Act 21:6-7 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home. And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.

I have often wondered why Paul didn't stay there longer than that. You will notice the marvelous reception given to him and the number of believers in all these various places at that time. There must have been millions of believers in the Roman Empire by the end of the first century. - McGee

Act 21:8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

Paul is traveling down the coastline going from one place to another. I have driven that route by bus. Since there was no bus running in Paul's day, I'm sure that he walked this route. And what a ministry he had! Think of the believers that he met on the way. He had a real ministry and a real opportunity.

As I have been going from church to church, from town to town, from city to city, from place to place, ministering the Word of God, it is a great encouragement to see what God is doing in the lives of folk. When I was a pastor, I had to keep my nose to the grindstone, and I developed an Elijah complex—“I'm the only one left. I'm all by myself. I am the only one standing for you, Lord.” Friend, if you could go over the ground, I have been over in the past year, it would thrill your heart to know the number of wonderful churches, wonderful Christian works, wonderful Christian homes, wonderful Christian believers that there are in this country and in other countries of the world. It has been a real thrill to my own heart to meet these believers. Undoubtedly this was also the experience of Paul. - McGee

Act 21:9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied. This means they were gifted by the Holy Spirit to receive messages directly from the Lord and to convey them to others. Some have inferred from this verse that it is permissible for women to preach and teach in the church. However, since it is expressly forbidden for women to teach, speak, or

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have authority over the men in the assembly (1Co_14:34-35; 1Ti_2:11-12), it can only be concluded that the prophetic ministry of these four virgin daughters was carried on in the home or in other non-church gatherings. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 21:10-11 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

The Holy Spirit is revealing to Paul what will happen to him when he goes up to Jerusalem. It is as though He is saying, “Paul, this is what you are going to face. Are you willing to do it?” God doesn't want Paul to feel that He let him stumble unwittingly into a trap. Paul knows what awaits him, and he still is perfectly willing to go. Actually, this prophet is not telling him anything new. Back in chapter 20, when he was still in Asia Minor, he already knew that bonds and afflictions waited for him. - McGee

Act 21:12-13 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Remember that this is Dr. Luke writing. He and the others didn't want to see Paul go to Jerusalem. The Spirit of God is revealing to Paul that he is going to be bound. Paul is not only willing to be bound but is also willing to die for Jesus in Jerusalem. He asks the believers not to cry and to break his heart. It is touching here to see the concern of the believers for the apostle Paul. My, how they loved him! - McGee

Act 21:14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

All their arguments proved of no value. He was determined to go, and so they simply said, “The will of the Lord be done.” – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 21:15-16 And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

From Caesarea to Jerusalem was an overland journey of more than fifty miles, a long trip in those days of slow transportation. The apostle's traveling party had been increased by the addition of some of the disciples from Caesarea and also by a Christian brother named Mnason (pronounced nay'-son). Originally from Cyprus, he had been one of the earliest disciples there. Now he was living in Jerusalem and was privileged to be host to the apostle and those who journeyed with him during Paul's last visit to Jerusalem.

Paul's missionary journeys really end with his arrival in Jerusalem. The remainder of the Book of Acts is occupied with his arrest, trial, journey to Rome, trial, and imprisonment there. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Paul Visits James

Act 21:17-18 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

Upon arrival in Jerusalem, the apostle and his friends were cordially received by the brethren. The next day a meeting was arranged with James and all the elders. There is no way of knowing for sure which James is referred to here. It could be James, the brother of our Lord, James, the son of Alphaeus, or some other person with that name. The first is the most likely. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 21:19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

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What a glorious reception by the church in Jerusalem! He is a veteran now, friend. He has been in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he bears in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. - McGee

He shares the works of Christ in the gentile lands, and they rejoice to hear it, but....

Act 21:20-22 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.

However, the Jewish brethren were apprehensive. Word had traveled around that the Apostle Paul had preached and taught against Moses and the law. This could mean trouble in Jerusalem.

The specific charge being made against Paul was that he taught all the Jews in foreign lands to forsake Moses, by telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the Jewish customs. Did Paul actually teach this or did he not?

He did teach that Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe. He did teach that once the Christian faith had come, believing Jews were no longer under the law. He taught that if a man received circumcision as a means of obtaining justification, then such a man cut himself off from salvation in Christ Jesus. He taught that to return to the types and shadows of the law, after Christ had come, was dishonoring to Christ. In view of this, it is not hard to see why the Jews should think of him as they did. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 21:23-26 Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

Now what should Paul do? He has arrived in Jerusalem and has been given a royal reception by the church. He has given them the gift from the gentile churches. They have listened to his report and rejoiced in the way God has saved the Gentiles. Now they turn to Paul and tell him that there are thousands of Jews in Jerusalem who are trusting Christ and have accepted Him as their Messiah and Savior. None of them want to have a division in the church. There is only one church of Jesus Christ, not a Jewish church and a gentile church. A Jew who comes to Jesus Christ does not stop being a Jew. So, they say to Paul, “Look, you are a Jew. That is your background. And you want to win the Jews for Christ.” Paul says, “I sure do!” So, they say, “Since you are a Jew, it wouldn't hurt you to go with these four Jewish men who have made a vow. They have shaved their heads and are going into the temple. Would you go along with them?” Paul says, “Sure.”

Paul didn't take this vow because he was commanded to do so. He took this vow because he wanted to win these people.

Friend, you don't have to take a vow. But if you want to take a vow, you can. If you want to shave your head with a vow, that is your business. If you want to take a vow and let your hair grow long, that is your business. It is all right with the Lord. Under grace you have a right to do these things. Under grace you have the right to make a vow if you want to do so—just so you understand that you are not saved by what you do but by the grace of God. - McGee

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Paul Arrested in the Temple

Act 21:27-29 *Now, when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore, he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)*

When the seven days of the vow were almost ended, Paul's attempt to pacify the Jews proved futile. When some of the unbelieving Jews from proconsular Asia saw him in the temple, they incited a riot against him. Not only did they charge him with teachings that were contrary to the Jewish people and to the law, but they also accused him of defiling the temple by taking Gentiles into the inner courts. What actually happened was this: they had previously seen Paul with Trophimus in the city of Jerusalem. Trophimus was a Gentile convert from Ephesus. Because they saw them together, they supposed that Paul had taken his Gentile friend into the inner courts of the temple. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 21:30-36 *And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then, the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So, when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"*

Although the charge was obviously false, it served its purpose. All the city was thrown into an uproar. The mob seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple area, closing the gates of the inner courts behind them. As they proceeded to kill him, word reached the chiliarch, a military commander in charge of the garrison of Antonia. He came in a hurry with some of his soldiers and took Paul from the infuriated mob, bound him with two chains, and asked who he was and what he had done. The mob was, of course, incoherent and confused. Some ... cried one thing and some another. The frustrated officer commanded the soldiers to bring the prisoner into the barracks so he could find out more definitely what was going on. Even in the attempt to do this, the mob surged forward with such determination that Paul had to be carried by the soldiers up the stairs. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul Speaks to the People

Act 21:37-39 *Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."*

Just as they were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the officer if he could say something. The officer was startled to hear Paul speaking Greek. He apparently thought he had arrested an Egyptian who had stirred up a rebellion and led four thousand men called assassins out into the wilderness. Paul quickly assured him that he was a Jew from the city of Tarsus, in Cilicia. As such, he was a citizen of no mean city; it was famous as a place of culture, education, and commerce, and had been declared a "free city" by Augustus. With characteristic fearlessness, the apostle requested permission to speak to the people. – Believers' Bible Commentary

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Act 21:40 So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,

Although Paul speaks to the captain in Greek, when he addresses this Jewish mob, he speaks in their native tongue, Hebrew. And the minute he begins to address them in Hebrew, the language they love and understand, they listen to him. - McGee

Acts 22- Paul preaches to the mob after his beating

THEME: Paul's defense before the mob in Jerusalem.

This chapter gives Paul's message before the mob. He recounts his encounter with Christ and his subsequent experience which brought him to Jerusalem. Then Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship to deliver himself from the awful whipping of a prisoner. - McGee

Act 22:1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now."

"Men?" Yes. "Brethren?" Yes, they belong to the same race. Yet these brethren want to kill him. Is he being sarcastic? No, because then he shows respect for the elder men, "and fathers." - McGee

Act 22:2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:

The minute he begins to speak in Hebrew, they become quiet. It is like a raging wind suddenly dying down, like calming the waves of the seas. They are listening to a man who is one of them. He begins with his personal history. - McGee

Act 22:3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today."

Paul is being persecuted by the Jewish leaders, by the religious leaders of that day. Paul shows them that he had been one of them—he had been a Pharisee. One of the reasons he has so much sympathy for them and is so loving toward them is that he knows exactly how they feel. He is giving them his background because he wants to win them for Christ.

Paul had a tremendous background. Tarsus was actually the center of Greek learning of that day. The finest Greek university in Paul's day was in Tarsus, not in Athens or Corinth, which had passed their zeniths. Tarsus was a thriving Greek city and an educational center.

Undoubtedly Paul had been brought up in that university in Tarsus and had a Greek background, but he had also been in Jerusalem where he had studied under Gamaliel. They are listening to him now. – McGee

Act 22:4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

Notice that Paul calls it "this way" again. He doesn't mention the church or the followers of Christ or Christians. He uses the term which they understand and which he understands. I think "this way" is still a good term to use. What is "this way"? Well, it is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is the person of the Lord Jesus.

He is saying to them, "Listen, I have the same background you folk have. I persecuted 'this way.' I know how you feel. I did the same thing." – McGee

Act 22:5 as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul began with his roots as a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia; his education at the feet of the well-known Jewish teacher, Gamaliel; and his instruction in Judaism. He then gave special emphasis to his zeal as a Jew. He had persecuted the Christian faith, filling the prisons with those who believed in Jesus. The high priest and the Sanhedrin could bear witness to the thoroughness of his methods. It was from them that he received letters authorizing him to go to Damascus and bring back Christians from there to Jerusalem to be punished. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:6-8 "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So, I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

Acts 22- Paul preaches to the mob after his beating

Up to this point in Paul's message the Jews could understand perfectly, and, if they were honest, they would have to agree that what had been said was true. Now the apostle is going to tell them of an event which changed the entire direction of his life. It will be up to them to decide whether this event was of God.

As Paul journeyed to Damascus ... a great light from heaven shone around him. The fact that it happened about noon, here recorded for the first time, indicates that the light was more brilliant and glorious than the sun at its height. Struck to the ground by the intensity of the light, the persecutor heard a voice from heaven saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Upon inquiry, he learned that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was speaking to him from heaven. The Nazarene had risen from the dead and was glorified above. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Notice that despite his great knowledge of the Torah. He chooses this occasion to reach them with his testimony. Why would the apostle use his testimony? How important is it for us to leverage our testimony?

Act 22:9 "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

The men who traveled with him saw the light and heard the sound of the voice (Act_9:7), but they did not hear the actual words that were spoken. In other words, they were conscious of noise, but not of articulate speech. - Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:10-11 So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

Having had this private audience with the Lord of Life and Glory, Paul made a complete commitment of his spirit, soul, and body to the Savior. This is indicated by his question, "What shall I do, Lord?" The Lord Jesus directed him to go into Damascus, and there he would receive his instructions. Blinded by the light of Christ's glory, he was led by the hand into the city. – Believers' Bible Commentary

While our encounter with Christ is not likely as dramatic as Paul's, regardless, every true encounter with Christ results in a life altering experience.

Act 22:12-13 "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.

In Damascus he was visited by Ananias. Paul describes him to his Jewish audience as a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there. The testimony of such a man was important in corroborating the account of Paul's conversion.

Addressing Paul as "Brother Saul," Ananias commanded him to receive his sight. It was then that Paul first looked up at him. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:14-16 Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Several points of interest and importance should be noted in these verses. First, Ananias stated that it was the God of our fathers who had ordered the events on the road to Damascus. If the Jews were to oppose and resist what had happened, they were really fighting against God. Second, Ananias told Paul that he would be a witness for the Lord to all

Acts 22- Paul preaches to the mob after his beating

men. This should have prepared the Jewish crowd for Paul's announcement that he had been sent to the Gentiles. Finally, Paul was told to arise and be baptized, and wash away his sins.

Verse 16 has been misused to teach baptismal regeneration. It is possible that the verse only applies to Paul as a Jew who needed to dissociate himself from his Christ-rejecting nation by water baptism (see comments on Act_2:38).

A simpler solution, based on the grammatical construction of the original is as follows: Unlike the KJV, which punctuates as if there are four items in a row on the same level, the NKJV, following the original, pairs the first two items and the second two items. In the Greek there is a finite verb modified by a participle in each half of the verse. A literal rendering would be: "Having arisen be baptized, and have your sins washed off (by) calling on the name of the Lord." This last clause is supported by general biblical teaching (cf. Joe_2:32; Act_2:21; Rom_10:13). – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:17-21 "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' So, I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "

Now, for the first time, we learn of an experience Paul had toward the close of his first visit to Jerusalem after conversion. While he was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance and heard the Lord commanding him to get out of Jerusalem quickly, because the people would not receive his testimony concerning Christ. It seemed incredible to the apostle that his own people would refuse to listen to him. After all, they knew what a zealous Jew he had been, how he had imprisoned and beaten the disciples of Jesus, and how he had even been an accomplice to the murder of Stephen. But the Lord repeated His command, "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles." – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul never forgot that he had been present at the stoning of Stephen and actually had charge over it. It left an indelible impression on his mind and prepared him for his own conversion. - McGee

Paul and the Roman Tribune

Act 22:22-24 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air, the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.

Up to this point, the Jews had been listening to Paul quietly. But his mention of going to the Gentiles with the gospel aroused insane jealousy and hatred. Chanting furiously in wild disorder, they cried out for Paul's life.

When the commander saw them in their mad frenzy, he concluded that Paul must have been guilty of some very serious crime. Apparently, he could not understand Paul's message since it was given in Aramaic, so he determined to extract a confession from the apostle by torturing him. He therefore ordered his prisoner to be brought into the barracks and bound with thongs in order to be scourged. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

As these preparations for the scourging were moving ahead deliberately, Paul quietly asked the centurion if it was legal to scourge a Roman citizen when he was uncondemned. As a matter of fact, it was unlawful even to tie up a Roman citizen before his guilt had been proved! To scourge him was a very serious offense. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 22- Paul preaches to the mob after his beating

Paul is being misunderstood all the way around. The Jews thought he had brought Trophimus into the temple, and he hadn't done that. The captain thought he was an Egyptian who was a riot leader, and he wasn't that man. Notice who he is. He is a Hebrew who can speak fluent Greek. Also, he is a Roman citizen. He now appeals to that citizenship to escape the scourging of a prisoner. - McGee

Notice the phrasing here. Paul carefully states this as a question and does not throw an emotional temper tantrum demanding his rights. Which do we do when our rights are violated?

Act 22:26-28 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen."

This captain, you see, was an ex-slave. He had saved his money or somehow, he got the money to buy his freedom. He advanced in the Roman army so that now he is a captain. He is amazed that he has a prisoner who is a Roman citizen who was born free. - McGee

Act 22:29-30 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

The captain finds that he has a remarkable man on his hands. He is a learned man who speaks Greek. He is not a common crook by any means. He is a Jew, but he is also a Roman citizen. The captain says, "I am not going to treat Paul like a common criminal. We will have a hearing to find out what the charges are against him." So, the captain arranged a hearing before the chief priests and all their council.

Notice that Paul had many assets which made him suitable to be the missionary to the Roman Empire. He had a world view. Greek training had prepared him as the cosmic Christian. He was trained in the Mosaic system, which prepared him to interpret it in the light of the coming of Christ and His redemptive death and resurrection. Not the least of his assets was his Roman citizenship, which finally opened the door for him to visit Rome. - McGee

Acts 23 – Paul ministers in chains Rome protects Paul

THEME: Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin.

Paul is now a prisoner, and we will follow his life as a prisoner. From this point on we find Paul giving a defense of himself and his ministry. He will appear before several rulers. Because the Jews are plotting his death, he will be taken down to Caesarea. He will spend about two years there in prison before he finally appeals and is sent to Rome.

You recall we have mentioned that there has always been some controversy, some difference of opinion, as to whether or not Paul should have gone to Jerusalem. Was he in the will of God when he did this? I contend that he was entirely in the will of God. I think that as we move on we will find again and again that Paul is in the will of God. It is true that he has been arrested, and it is true that he is having a rough time, but that does not mean that he is not in God's will.

As we go along we can see the hand of God in the life of this man. The same One who moved in the life of Paul wants to move in your life and in my life today. That is the glory and wonder of it all, friend. Right down here where you and I walk in a commonplace way, God is moving in our lives. In one way we are living a very humble existence and many of us today have a very simple, routine life. Yet God is concerned and interested in us. God wants to give us that leading and guiding that you and I need for today in the complexity that faces us in our contemporary culture. Believe me, we need that help today. There is no question that we need God on the scene.

A great many people go to extremes today. They are trying to have some great emotional or revolutionary experience such as Paul had. I don't think that we need to do that. As a matter of fact, I doubt that you or I will have some great experience. It is by simple faith that one comes to Christ. We are to trust Him and to walk with Him. He will give the leading, the guidance, and direction in our everyday lives.

We have seen how the Roman captain arrested Paul and put him in prison and was going to beat him. He refrained from doing that when he learned that Paul was a Roman citizen. He was amazed to find that Paul was a Jew who could speak Greek and was a Roman citizen. Paul was a highly educated, cosmopolitan gentleman.

Now the Sanhedrin, composed of the religious rulers, wants to try him. Paul makes a futile attempt here to explain his position and his conduct to the Sanhedrin. The Lord encourages Paul. Then we see that the plot to murder Paul leads to his transfer to Caesarea for trial before Felix. This is a remarkable section and a very thrilling account of the experiences of Paul as a prisoner for Jesus Christ. - McGee

Act 23:1-2 Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

Standing before the Sanhedrin, Paul prefaced his remarks with a statement that throughout his life he had lived in all good conscience. The high priest, Ananias, was infuriated by this statement. He doubtless looked on Paul as an apostate from the Jewish religion, a renegade, a turncoat. How could one who had turned from Judaism to Christianity claim such innocence? Accordingly, the high priest ordered that the prisoner be slapped on the mouth. This order was extremely unjust, since the case had hardly gotten underway. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 23 – Paul ministers in chains Rome protects Paul

1. We think of the preciousness of a good man. We have had here the usual variety of men—a pretentious hypocrite, his furious associates, an average heathen captain, his stupid soldiery, and besides these one man who “lived in all good conscience before God.” It is easy to see who is Master, and He rules our hearts today.
2. Yet the good man is among enemies. He did not imagine that to be on the right side is to be on the easy side.
3. But the good man among enemies has God’s care and love. (H. A. Edson, D. D.) - Biblical Illustrator

Are we any different? When we uphold righteousness and live in good conscience, should we expect an easy ride here in enemy territory?

Act 23:3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"

Under Roman law no man was to be punished until judgment had been handed in. Just because a man is arrested and accused of a certain crime does not grant liberty to those who had arrested him to abuse him. In that day the Roman law actually granted a great deal of justice. However, this incident and the trial of Jesus make us recognize that even the Roman law could be twisted and turned. Justice is dependent upon the one who is executing the law.

In our day there are a great many people who feel that if we change our form of government, or at least if we change our party from the one that is in power—whichever it may be—this will give us a solution to all our problems. It has never solved our problems in the past. The men who began our system of government had a great consciousness of God. Although a man like Thomas Jefferson was a deist and could not be called a born-again believer, he had a conviction that the Bible was the Word of God and he respected it. We don't find that in our leadership today, and yet we wonder why the system won't work. We think we need to change the system. Do you know what we need? We need to change men's hearts. It is man that needs changing, not the system.

The high priest orders Paul smitten on the mouth, and Paul speaks out against him very strongly. This should dispel the idea that Paul was some sort of partywaist. The concept that humility makes a person a sort of Mr. Milquetoast is all wrong. Actually, humility and meekness mean that you submit yourself to the will of God, regardless of the cost. Paul is a meek man and a humble man, but he is not about to take injustice lying down. He calls this man a whitewashed wall. “While you are judging me according to the Mosaic Law, you are breaking the Law yourself.” That reveals that Paul also knew the Law. A man cannot be condemned or punished before judgment has been handed down. - McGee

Meekness is not weakness. Silence in the face of injustice is consenting to evil. Do you think our country, or our culture would be where it is today if all Christians since our founding in 1776 had been as strong and courageous as Paul?

Act 23:4-5 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.'"

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The attendants were shocked by the apostle's scathing rebuke. Did he not know that he was speaking to the high priest?

For some reason unknown to us, Paul had not actually realized that Ananias was the high priest. The Sanhedrin had been assembled on short notice, and perhaps Ananias was not wearing his official robes. It may even be that he was not occupying the seat customarily assigned to the high priest. Or perhaps Paul's weak eyesight was the cause. Whatever the reason, Paul had not intentionally spoken evil of the duly constituted ruler. He quickly apologized for his words, quoting Exo_22:28 : "You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people." – Believers Bible Commentary

Paul spoke these words on the day when Nero was the King. How about us do we pray for our leaders to turn or for Heaven's rule in our government or do we simply complain and murmur?

Act 23:6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"

We are getting more of Paul's background. His father had also been a Pharisee, probably a wealthy and influential man.

Paul uses the discord between two parties to further his own defense. The issue here is not the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is simply that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and had this hope, while the Sadducees did not. So, Paul turns the trial into a theological argument between the "fundamentalists" and the "liberals." That is easy to do. There never has been a time when you couldn't get these two groups at each other's throats! That is what Paul is doing here. - McGee

Act 23:7-9 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

Whether or not he was justified, his words did provoke a dissension ... between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and caused a loud outcry. Some of the scribes of the Pharisees defended Paul's innocence, and said in effect, "What does it matter anyway, if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" – Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: This is like the Art of War. He likely knows maybe by the Holy Spirit or by common sense that their hearts are hardened to the Gospel. They already condemned Jesus, so he strategically exposes the tensions between his accusers and moves the focus of the persecution to their camp.

Matthew 10:16 (Amplified) "Listen carefully: I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves [have no self-serving agenda]."

Act 23:10 Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

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This is the first time that Dr. Luke says there was “a great dissension.” Knowing how he uses understatement, I am of the opinion that this is the worst dissension recorded in the Book of Acts concerning any group. Paul's life is so in danger again that the Roman captain reaches in and saves him from the angry Sanhedrin. While I have defended Gallio's concept of the separation of church and state, the state is protecting the apostle Paul at this point, which is quite proper. So the chief captain rescues Paul again without learning the real nature of the hatred against Paul. – McGee

Act 23:11 But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

The following night the Lord Jesus made a personal appearance to Paul in the prison, and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.” It is remarkable that in a passage where the apostle's actions have been subject to considerable criticism, the Lord should personally praise him for having borne faithful witness in Jerusalem. There was not a word of criticism or reproach from the Savior. Rather, it was a message of sheer praise and promise. Paul's service was not over yet. As he had been faithful in his ministry in Jerusalem, so he would also bear witness for Christ at Rome. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: Just because things don't appear to be going smoothly in our eyes, does not mean that the Lord is not exceedingly pleased with you. In fact, if there is too much smooth going in the evil world, the opposite is likely true.

A Plot to Kill Paul

Act 23:12-15 And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

The next day, some of the Jews banded together to kill the Apostle Paul. In fact, more than forty of them bound themselves under an oath that they would eat nothing until they had killed “this imposter.” Their scheme was as follows: they went to the chief priests and elders, suggesting that a meeting of the Sanhedrin be announced in order to hear Paul's case more thoroughly. The Sanhedrin would ask the commander to bring the prisoner to them. But the forty assassins would lie in ambush somewhere between the prison and the council hall. When Paul came near them, they would pounce on him and kill him. – Believers' Bible Commentary

A Fight to the Finish (Ephesians 6-10-12 The Message Bible)

10-12 And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So, take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no weekend

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war that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.

Act 23:16-19 *So, when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you." Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"*

In the providence of God, a nephew of the apostle overheard the plot and reported it to Paul. The latter believed in availing himself of legitimate means to insure his safety; therefore, he reported the matter to one of the centurions. The centurion personally escorted the young man to the commander. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: God is always there, but we have to sound the trumpet in times of need and praise.

Numbers 10:9-10 *When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies. Also, at your times of rejoicing—your appointed festivals and New Moon feasts—you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and they will be a memorial for you before your God. I am the LORD your God."*

Act 23:20-22 *And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."*

In this way the captain is alerted to the plot against Paul.

Let's stop to note something here. I find today that there is a group of super-pious folk, very sincere and very well-meaning, which tells me I should not go to a doctor concerning my cancer or other illnesses but that I should trust the Lord to heal me. Well, I certainly do trust the Lord; I have turned my case over to the Great Physician, and I believe He provides doctors. It would have been a simple thing for Paul to have told his nephew, "Thanks for telling me the news, but I'm trusting the Lord—so you can go back home." But we find here that Paul used the privileges of his Roman citizenship which were available to him. Obviously, the Lord provides these means and He expects us to use them. This in no way means that we are not trusting Him. Rather, we are trusting God to use the methods and the means to accomplish His purpose. - McGee

Paul Sent to Felix the Governor

Act 23:23-24 *And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor."*

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The commander quickly called for two centurions and arranged for a military escort to take the apostle to Caesarea. The guard was made up of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen. The trip was to be made under cover of darkness—at nine o'clock at night.

The great size of the military escort was not intended to be a tribute to this faithful messenger of Christ. Rather, it was an expression of the determination of the commander to maintain his reputation with his Roman superiors; if the Jews succeeded in killing Paul, a Roman citizen, then the officer in charge would be required to answer for his laxness. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Notice: God uses the pride of the commander and his desire for a good reputation with the Governor to provide Paul a honor guard escort on the trip. The Lord can use all players on the field to accomplish His Will and purposes. Therefore, there is no place for fear if you are firmly in the center of God's Will.

Act 23:25-27 He wrote a letter in the following manner: Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.

The commander identifies himself as Claudius Lysias in the letter which he wrote to the Roman governor Felix. The purpose of the letter was, of course, to explain the situation with regard to Paul. It is rather amusing to see how Lysias sought to portray himself as a hero and a defender of public righteousness. He probably was extremely fearful lest it be reported to Felix that he had tied up an uncondemned Roman citizen. Fortunately for Claudius Lysias, Paul did not tattle. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 23:28-29 And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.

It is clear that Claudius Lysias never did know exactly what the charge was against Paul. He knew it pertained to their law. Under Roman law Paul was not guilty of anything worthy of death or of imprisonment. - McGee

Act 23:30-35 And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell. Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

The trip to Caesarea was broken briefly at Antipatris, a city about thirty-nine miles from Jerusalem and twenty-four miles from Caesarea. Since there was little or no more danger of ambush from the Jews from this point on, the soldiers returned to Jerusalem, leaving the horsemen to escort Paul to Caesarea. Upon arrival, they delivered Paul to Felix, together with the letter from Lysias. When preliminary inquiry satisfied Felix as to the apostle's Roman citizenship, he promised to hear his case when his accusers had

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come down from Jerusalem. In the meantime Paul was commanded to be kept in Herod's palace or Praetorium.

The Roman governor, Felix, had enjoyed a meteoric rise from slavery to a position of political prominence in the Roman Empire. As to his personal life, he was grossly immoral. At the time of his appointment to be governor of the province of Judea, he was husband of three royal ladies. While in office, he fell in love with Drusilla, who was married to Azizus, king of Emesa. According to Josephus, a marriage was arranged through Simon, sorcerer from Cyprus.

He was a cruel despot, as is evidenced by the fact that he arranged the assassination of a high priest named Jonathan, who criticized him for his misrule.

It was this Felix before whom Paul had to appear. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 24 – Paul’s Third Defense

This chapter opens and closes with Paul, a prisoner in Caesarea. As we have seen, he was brought here secretly from Jerusalem to elude the Jews who had plotted his murder.

Candidly, Paul had failed in gaining the sympathies of his brethren for the gospel ministry in which he was engaged. I suspect that this was a time of mental depression and discouragement for him, because the Lord came to him in the night to give him encouragement (Act_23:11). He told His faithful servant that he would witness Him in Rome also. The Lord did not promise him that it would be easy. Many trying experiences and hardships were immediately before him. In fact, from here to his final martyrdom there was nothing but peril and danger—actually that had been the pattern since the day he was let down in a basket over the wall at Damascus.

In this chapter we will learn that the high priest Ananias and the elders come down from Jerusalem to accuse Paul before Felix. Paul is accused of sedition, rebellion, and profaning the temple. - McGee

Paul Before Felix at Caesarea

Act 24:1 Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.

The accusers didn't waste time. They came down after five days in order to press charges against Paul. They brought with them a man named Tertullus who would act as the prosecuting attorney. He was a clever and well-prepared man. The charge he brought was very well prepared, too. It was brief and to the point. I think he did the best he could with the charges he had. - McGee

Act 24:2-4 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and, in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.

Tertullus opened the case for the prosecution by showering the governor with flattery. Of course, there was a measure of truth to what he said. Felix had maintained rule and order by suppressing riots and insurrections. But Tertullus' words went beyond a mere acknowledgment of that fact, in an obvious effort to ingratiate his cause with the governor. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 24:5-8 For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

He then proceeded to specify four distinct charges against the Apostle Paul:

1. He was a plague, that is, a pest or a nuisance.
2. He was a creator of revolt among all the Jews.
3. He was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.
4. He tried to profane the temple. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 24:9-11 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so. Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation,

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I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

After Tertullus had expressed confidence in Felix's ability to determine the accuracy of the charges against Paul, the Jews who were present added their voice in support of Tertullus' charges.

Paul, in response to a nod from the governor, rose to his own defense. First, he expressed satisfaction at being permitted to appear before a man who, because of many years of experience, had familiarity with the customs and manners of the Jewish people. This might sound like flattery, but actually it was merely a courteous statement of the truth.

The apostle then answered the charges that were made against him, one by one.

As to his being a public nuisance, he replied that only twelve days had passed since he went up to Jerusalem, and that his purpose in going was to worship, not to cause a disturbance. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 24:12-13 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

Next, he denied the charge that he incited the Jews to rebel. At no time, either in the temple, ... the synagogues or in the city, had he disputed with the people or attempted to stir them up. These were the facts, and no one could disprove them. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

In substance he says, “I am in agreement with my nation. Only I must confess that the way in which I worship God is to them heresy.” But Paul makes it clear that the way he worships is according to the message to the fathers, that is, the Old Testament. - McGee

Act 24:15-16 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

Paul did not deny the third charge, namely, that he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. But what he did say was that in this capacity he served the God of the Jews, believing all things which are written in the OT. He shared the expectation of all orthodox Jews, especially the Pharisees, that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. In the light of that coming resurrection, he sought to preserve an unclouded relationship with the Lord and with his fellow men at all times.

Act 24:17-19 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

Far from stirring the Jews up to insurrection, Paul had come to Jerusalem to bring alms to the Jewish people. He was referring, of course, to the collection from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, earmarked for the needy Hebrew Christian saints in Jerusalem.

With regard to the fourth charge, namely, that he had profaned the temple, Paul made this reply: While he was in the act of bringing offerings to the temple, in the performance of a Jewish vow, certain Jews from Asia found him and accused him of taking unclean Gentiles into the temple. This, of course, was not true. The apostle was alone at the time and had been purified from ceremonial defilement. These accusing Jews from Asia who caused the riot against

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him in Jerusalem ought to have come to Caesarea to accuse him, if they had anything against him. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

The real accusers, if there were any at all, are not even present. The charge that Tertullus makes is that Paul had been stirring up people in the temple. Why don't the people who were being stirred up testify against Paul? They aren't there, and Paul calls attention to it. - McGee

Act 24:20-21 Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' "

“Let them tell you about my appearance before the Sanhedrin. Did they find that I had done anything evil? Let them give testimony about that.”

He tells Felix again that the real issue is the Resurrection. The Resurrection is the very heart of the gospel message. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised again on the third day. In fact, I think of Christianity as an arch supported by two pillars. One pillar is the death of Christ, and the other pillar is the resurrection of Christ. Without one or the other the arch would fall. - McGee

Paul Kept in Custody

Act 24:22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case."

Felix had been hearing about “that way”; he knew the death and resurrection of Christ was being preached. He realized that Paul was the expert, that Paul was the man who could tell him all about it. So, he deferred the Jews because he wanted to have another hearing with Paul about this matter. He told the Jews he would wait until Lysias could come down, and then he could get the real story about what had happened to Paul. Apparently, he could make no decision from the contradictory testimony that was offered here. Tertullus was making certain accusations. Paul said the real issue was the Resurrection. So, he defers judgment. - McGee

Act 24:23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.

Actually, Felix should have freed Paul. However, he was a politician, an astute politician. He does give Paul a great deal of liberty while still keeping him a prisoner. - McGee

Act 24:24-25 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time, I will call for you."

A sinner will never have “a convenient season” to hear the gospel.

This man Felix already knew something about the gospel, or “the Way,” which is synonymous with what we today call Christianity or the Christian faith. I personally would like to see the name “the Way” restored because Christianity, as it is used today, is a most abused word and has lost its real meaning.

I heard a man, actually a good preacher, say the other day that we live in a Christian nation. My friend, we don't live in a Christian nation! This country is not Christian by any stretch of the imagination. We have a lot of church members, but the number of real Christians composes a small minority today.

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Felix called Paul in to explain to him the gospel which had induced this entire situation. He called Paul in “and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.” Some Bible teachers caption this section “Paul’s Defense Before Felix.” I disagree with that. Paul was not defending himself here. What he was doing in this second appearance before Felix was witnessing to him, trying to win this man for Christ.

The scriptural record does not present this man Felix in the bad light that secular history does. I would like you to know what a rascal he really was. To know the man, we must turn to the record of that day. Felix was a freed slave who through cruelty and brutality had forged to the front. He was a man given to pleasure and licentiousness. By the way, his very name means “pleasure.” The Roman historian, Tacitus, says this concerning him: “Through all cruelty and licentiousness he exercised the authority of a king with the spirit of a slave.” This was the man into whose hands Paul was placed. Yet Scripture does not condemn him.

His wife Drusilla sat there alongside him. Again, secular history turns the spotlight on her for us. She was a daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Her father killed the apostle James—we have already seen that in Act_12:1-2. The great uncle of this woman had slain John the Baptist. Her great grandfather tried to kill the Lord Jesus Christ.

These couple of rascals, Felix and Drusilla, are in an exalted position. They probably would never have attended a church in which the gospel was preached, nor would they have gone to hear Paul the apostle if he had come to town to preach. Yet here are these two who have this great opportunity given to them under the most favorable circumstances. They have a private interview with the greatest preacher of the grace of God that the world has ever known. God gives them a private sermon. Their palace becomes a church and their thrones become almost a mourner’s bench. Oh, the wonder of the grace of God to give these two a chance! The hour of salvation struck for them. The door of the kingdom was opened, and they had their opportunity to enter. This is in fulfillment of the verse in the second psalm: “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth” (Psa_2:10). It appears that they listened to Paul with a great deal of interest. I think Felix would have liked to have made a decision for Christ. But he didn’t make that decision. He wanted to wait for a convenient season. My friend, the sinner will never have a convenient season to hear the gospel. Man does not set the time; God does.

Paul reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. This makes a very good sermon, by the way. Righteousness here is, I think, the righteousness of the Law, which man cannot attain. In other words, the Law reveals that man is a sinner, and he cannot even present a legal righteousness that would be acceptable to God. A sinner must have a standing of legal righteousness before God, and he cannot provide it for himself. So, God provides it for him in Christ Jesus. That is the “robe” of righteousness which comes down like a garment over those who put their trust in Christ. That is the righteousness “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all of them that believe: for there is no difference” (Rom_3:22). Paul reasoned with this man about the righteousness of the Law which he could not meet and the righteousness which Christ provides the sinner who puts his trust in Him. Then Paul talked of temperance, which is self-control. Felix was a man mastered by passion and cruelty. These two, Felix and Drusilla, great sinners, living in sin, did not know what real freedom was. Then Paul spoke about the judgment to come, which is the final judgment at the Great White Throne of Rev_20:11-15.

Friend, today your sins are either on you or they are on Christ. If your sins are on Christ, if you have put your trust in Him, then He paid the penalty for your sins over nineteen hundred years ago. They do not lie ahead of you for judgment in the future. But if your sins today are still on you, then there is yet a judgment to come. People don’t like to hear about judgment to come.

Felix and Drusilla did not like to hear about it either. But if your sins are not on Christ, that is, if you have not trusted Him as your Savior, then you are going to come up for judgment. You can close this book right now, but that doesn’t alter a thing. You cannot escape the fact that you are coming up for judgment.

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Very few preachers touch on this subject. Those who still teach the Bible are the only ones who mention it at all, and most preachers soft-pedal it. I received a letter from a college professor in Virginia who wrote, “I listened to you, and I was about ready to tune you out when I found out you were a hellfire and damnation preacher. But I noticed that you didn’t handle it in a crude way, and then I noticed that you did offer salvation; so, I continued to listen to you.” Hell-fire and damnation is a pretty good subject if it is used to lead one to Christ, friend. But it should never be used alone without the message of salvation which we have in Christ Jesus.

It is interesting to observe Felix here. When Paul had to appear before Felix, Ananias the high priest, the elders, and the great orator Tertullus came to bring their charges against him. Felix could immediately see that they had no real charge. He should have let Paul go free. But Felix was most of all a politician and did not want to antagonize the Jews. He did not do what was right, but did what was politically expedient. Then Felix had this private interview with Paul, and Paul apparently really touched him. Yet he delayed his decision and postponed the day.

It has been proven out in the history of the human family for nineteen hundred years that folk can keep postponing making a decision for Christ until they come to the place where they cannot make a decision for Him at all. That is the reason that most decisions for Christ are made by young people—we ought to try to reach young people for Christ. Also, this is the reason a person need not think that because he is getting older, he is becoming smarter. Older people just become more hardened to the gospel. Years ago, I heard the late Dr. George Truett, a great prince of the pulpit in Dallas, Texas, tell an incident that illustrates this fact. It was at the celebration of his fiftieth anniversary that a lawyer friend, who was not a Christian, came to him. He said, “George, you and I came here to Dallas at the same time. You were a young preacher, and I was a young lawyer. I must confess that when I first heard you, I was moved a great deal by your sermons. Very frankly, there were nights when I couldn’t sleep. As the years wore on, the day came when I could listen to you and enjoy hearing you. Your message didn’t disturb me at all. And you’re a much greater preacher today than you were at the beginning.” The lawyer chuckled about it. He didn’t realize how tragic it was. He didn’t realize the place to which he had actually come. “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee,” said Felix. That time never came for Felix. That time never came for the lawyer in Dallas. That time does not come for a great many people who postpone receiving Christ. - McGee

Act 24:26-27 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore, he sent for him more often and conversed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

He was a clever politician and also a crook, by the way. He hoped that he would be bribed and then he would let Paul go free.

Felix played politics to the very end. He left Paul in prison. Again, we say that Roman justice was no better than the men who executed it. Either Paul was guilty, or he was not guilty. If guilty of treason, he should have been put to death. If not guilty, he should have been freed. One or the other should have been done. Under no circumstances should he have been left in prison for two years. - McGee

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THEME: Paul before Festus.

Paul had been unjustly kept in prison for two years. Festus is the new governor who followed Felix. Now Paul will appear before this new governor.

We have seen Paul before the mob on the steps of the castle in Jerusalem. We have seen him before the Sanhedrin. We have seen him before Felix and then in private interview with Felix and his wife Drusilla. Apparently, there were other meetings. Now he will appear before Festus. Later he will appear before Agrippa. Paul appeared before all these rulers and it must have been a tedious time for Paul, something to try his patience. However, I'm sure that he rejoiced in the opportunity given him to testify before the high political figures of the Roman Empire. Remember that when the Lord Jesus had apprehended Paul on the Damascus Road, He had said, "... he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Act_9:15). Paul is moving according to God's plan and program.

Each time Paul talks about what the Lord Jesus had done for him, and he tells it with a great deal of conviction and enthusiasm. Paul witnesses a good confession of Jesus Christ. Although Felix trembled as he listened, the rascality and cupidity and covetousness of this man triumphed. He had his chance. He sent for Paul many times, but he wanted a bribe, not salvation.

Those two years that Paul languished in prison are silent years in the life of Paul. Perhaps he chafed under it all. We don't know. We do know that the hand of God was manifested in all this, and His purposes were carried out. How comforting this can be for us when our activity seemingly comes to a standstill. - McGee

Paul Appeals to Caesar

Act 25:1 Now, when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Porcius Festus was appointed Roman governor of Judea by the Emperor Nero in the autumn of A.D. 60. Caesarea was the political center for the Roman province of Syria, of which Judea was a part. After three days Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, the religious capital of his jurisdiction. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 25:2-3 Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.

Although it was now two years since Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea, the Jews had not forgotten him, neither had their murderous hatred subsided. Thinking that they might be able to obtain a political favor from the new governor, the high priest and principal men of the Jews filled his ear with charges against Paul and asked for him to be sent to Jerusalem for trial. Probably they meant that he should be tried before the Sanhedrin, but their real plan was to waylay him on the journey and kill him. – Believers' Bible Commentary

(1) The national importance which the Sanhedrin attached to Paul. More than two years had passed since they raised the mob against him. One might have thought that the changes which two years made in thought and feeling had almost affected his very name from their memory. Had it been merely

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personal enmity it would undoubtedly have been so. But it was the religious influence of this man, working mightily before their eyes, and sapping the very foundation of their religious system, prestige, and power.

(2) The servility and hypocrisy of religious bigotry. The arguments they employed are not given. No doubt they bowed before Festus as cringing sycophants, urging every consideration that bigotry could suggest. They pleaded for justice but meant murder. – Biblical Illustrator

Without forgiveness, anger and resentment becomes your prison and cause a root of bitterness to overtake you.

Hebrews 12:12-15 (NKJV) Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

Proverbs 17:22(Amplified) A happy heart is good medicine, and a joyful mind causes healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

Act 25:4-5 But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly. "Therefore," he said, "let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him."

But Festus had doubtless been informed of their previous plan to kill Paul, and of the elaborate preparations taken by the commander in Jerusalem to spirit him away to Caesarea. He therefore refused their request but promised them that he would permit them an opportunity to state their case against Paul if they could come to Caesarea. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Why do we worry so much? Notice: How God uses Roman to protect Paul from his enemies murderous plots. If we truly believe that God's is in control and has a future for us to prosper us and not harm us, then why do we not act that way?

Act 25:6-8 And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all."

After a stay of more than ten days in Jerusalem, Festus returned to Caesarea and convened the court the next day. The Jews hastened to the attack, bringing many serious charges against Paul, but failing to prove any of them. Sensing the poverty of their case, the apostle contented himself with a simple denial of any crime against the law, against the temple, or Caesar.

Are you able to stand confidently in front of your accusers? We as believers are in the process of being conformed to His image. What are the implications for us as His disciples?

Romans 8:29 (AMPC) For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the

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image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren.

Act 25:9-10 *But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?" So, Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.*

There are some people who think that Paul made a mistake here, that he should never have appealed to Caesar. They think he should simply have let his case rest with Festus. Friend, don't you see that Festus was going to use Paul for his own political ends? Festus was going to take Paul back to Jerusalem. Perhaps Festus was receiving bribes from the Jews who had come from Jerusalem. I am reluctant to criticize Paul. I don't think that he made a mistake here. Paul was a Roman citizen, and he exercised his rights as a citizen, which was the normal and the right thing for him to do. Going back to Jerusalem would have surely meant death for him. He doesn't purposely make himself a martyr. In fact, he did what he could to avoid martyrdom.

Friend, there are a people today who wear a hair shirt—and God didn't give it to them. In other words, they like to take the position of a martyr. I've had a number of people who have told me that I should rejoice that I have a cancer because now I can suffer for Christ and maybe die for Christ. Well, I can tell you, I don't feel that way about it. I want to get rid of the cancer. I want to live. I think a person is depressed spiritually and mentally if he wants to put on a hair shirt and lie on a cold slab. Martin Luther tried that, and he found it didn't accomplish anything.

You will remember that two years before this the Lord had appeared to Paul and had promised him a trip to Rome (Act_23:11). That's what is taking place. He went to Rome by the will of God. He was in chains—but the Lord hadn't told him how he would get to Rome. This was God's method for him. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he told them that he was praying to be able to come to Rome and he asked them to pray that he might be able to come (Rom_1:9-10; Rom_15:3-32). I believe he went to Rome by the will of God. – McGee

Note: In our day we may not be a Roman Citizen, but we can stand and know our *Bill of Rights in the united States Constitution*. God gives us a sound mind, we need to use it acting in faith, not fear, as Paul does here.

Proverbs 11:9 (NIV) *With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors, but through knowledge the righteous escape.*

2 Timothy 1:7 (Amplified) *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind, and self-control].*

Act 25:11-12 *For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar." Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"*

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The resultant circumstances (verse 12). In this “Unto Caesar shalt thou go,” we may see—

1. The triumph of justice over policy. Festus, in desiring him to go to Jerusalem, thought it a stroke of policy, but Paul’s appeal to Caesar forced him to abandon the purpose.

2. The triumph of generosity over selfishness. A generosity inspired by the gospel of Christ had awakened in Paul a strong desire to go to Rome (Act_19:21; Rom_1:11; Rom_15:23-24). This was strengthened by the years. But how had selfishness, working in the Jews, wrought to thwart it! Here, however, in the fiat, “Unto Caesar shalt thou go,” the door of Rome is thrown open to him: his way is made safe and sure and cheap.

3. The triumph of the Divine over the human. God had purposed that Paul should go to Rome (Act_23:11). The purpose of the Jews was to kill him at Jerusalem. The Lord reigns, and so controls the opposing and conflicting passions of the world ultimately to realize His own decree. As we believe, amid the darkness and desolations of the severest winter, that summer is on its march, and will cover the world with life and beauty, so let us believe, amongst all the workings of human depravity, that God’s great purpose to redeem the world to holiness and bliss is marching on in stately certainty. (D. Thomas, D. D.) - Biblical Illustrator

Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice

Act 25:13 And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

Sometime after this, King Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice came to Caesarea to congratulate Festus on his new appointment. Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa I, who murdered James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12). His sister was a woman of unusual beauty. While historians ascribe an unsavory reputation to her, including her relations with her brother, the NT is silent as to her personal character. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 25:14-15 When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.

Festus had just come into office as the new governor; so, the king comes over for a visit. I have a notion these politicians work together. They all belong to the same party.

Agrippa and Bernice stayed there quite a long time. Dr. Luke calls it “many days.” Finally, they ran out of conversation. Even a king and a governor finally run out of things to talk about. When there was a lull in the conversation, Festus said, “Oh, by the way, I should tell you about a prisoner that we have here. It’s a rather odd, unusual case. His name is Paul, and he was arrested and brought down here by Felix. Felix left him for me. I’d like you to hear him.” - McGee

Act 25:16 To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.'

I’d like to call your attention to this. We sometimes think that Roman law was not just because we have seen how it went awry in the case of the Lord Jesus and also in the case of the apostle Paul. However, this was not because of the law but because of the crooked politicians. We still operate under the

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principle of Roman law that no man is to be sentenced until he has been brought into the presence of his accusers and his crime established.

Note: Romans primarily operated under Common Law, which was intended to be the basis for the We the people to operate under. Essentially, no harm, no foul, jury of your peers, and the right to face your accusers. We now operate under Commercial Code and Administrative courts – not as the founders designed.

Act 25:17-19 *Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.*

The issue is always the same: it is the Resurrection. We see from this that Paul had witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ so that Festus knew about it. – McGee

Note: 2000 years later, the issue remains the Resurrection. The enemy goes all out to distract us from this fact of the Resurrection power of Jesus that defeated Satan and opened wide the door to the Kingdom. Word Study for Your reference (source Biblegateway.com NIV translation)

	Old Testament	New Testament	Total
Kingdom of God	28	77	105
Kingdom of Heaven	13	34	47
Salvation	122	44	166
Hell	19	16	35
Heaven	405	287	692

Act 25:20-22 *And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar." Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."*

Actually, Festus was in a sort of hot seat here. The charge against Paul was sedition and for that he should die, but he had committed no crimes. Now Paul has appealed to Caesar. What are you going to do with a prisoner like that? So, he asked Agrippa to help him out.

I'm of the opinion that Agrippa had previously heard about Paul and was actually anxious to hear him. He wanted to know more about the charges, and he wanted to hear what Paul would have to say. So, they arranged a meeting.

It is interesting to see how this meeting was arranged by a king and a governor. Yet all the while they were actually fulfilling prophecy even though they were unaware of this. Paul is to appear before kings, as the Lord had said. - McGee

Act 25:23 *So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.*

Acts 25 – Paul proclaims the resurrection in chains

What a scene this was! Wherever did a preacher have a greater audience than this man? The setting is dramatic with great pomp and ceremony. Paul appears in chains before this august company of rulers and kings. Festus is asking Agrippa to help him frame a charge against Paul to send him to Caesar. - McGee

Act 25:24-27 And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore, I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place, I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."

Once again, Festus set forth the history of the case—the insistent demands of the Jews for Paul's death, the inability of Festus to find the apostle guilty of any crime deserving of death, and then Paul's appeal to Caesar. Festus' dilemma, of course, was this: he was forced by Paul's appeal to send him to Nero, yet there was no adequate legal basis for a trial. Festus plainly stated that he hoped Agrippa would be able to help him; after all, it did seem rather unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him. These proceedings were more in the nature of a hearing than a trial. The Jews were not present to accuse the apostle, and Agrippa was not expected to render a binding decision. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 26 – Pauls Preaches to rulers and kings

CHAPTER 26 - THEME: Paul before Agrippa.

This testimony of Paul is not a defense of himself. It is a declaration of the gospel with the evident purpose of winning Agrippa and the others present to Christ. This is a dramatic scene, and this chapter is one of the greatest pieces of literature, either secular or inspired. This chapter was marvelous to me even before I was saved. - McGee

Paul's Defense Before Agrippa

Act 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So, Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself:

The appearance of Paul before Agrippa is, in my judgment, the high point in the entire ministry of this apostle. It is a fulfillment of the prophecy that he should appear before kings and rulers. Undoubtedly it was God's will that he should come before King Agrippa. I have already indicated that this made a profound impression on me when I memorized it. I must confess that it had some effect upon my decision later on to study for the ministry.

There are several features about this chapter that we ought to note before we get into Paul's message before King Agrippa. First of all, I want to make it clear again that Paul is not on trial. This is not a court trial. Paul is not making a defense before Agrippa. He is preaching the gospel. In view of the fact that this great apostle had appealed to Caesar, not even King Agrippa could condemn him, and he is certainly out of the hands of Governor Festus, as the final verse of this chapter confirms: "Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar" (v. Act_26:32). They no longer had the authority to condemn him. Neither could they set him free. They are helpless. So, Paul is not attempting to make a defense. Rather he is trying to win these men for Christ.

This was not a trial, but it was a public appearance of Paul before King Agrippa and the court so that they might learn firsthand from the apostle what "that way" really was. You see, everyone was talking about The Way. Someone would ask another, "Say, have you heard about this new thing, The Way?" The other would reply, "Well, I have heard some things about it. It is something new going around. What's it all about?" I would imagine that even Festus and Agrippa had some sort of exchange like that. Agrippa would have said, "I've been hearing about this, but I'd like to know more about it. We ought to get it from an expert." Therefore, they have this public appearance to explain The Way. I think this was one of the most splendid opportunities that any minister ever had to preach Christ. There has never again been an opportunity quite like this.

This was an occasion filled with pagan pomp and pageantry. It was a state function filled with fanfare and the blowing of trumpets. There was the tapestry and tinsel. The function was attended by all the prominent personages of that section and the prestige of Rome. There must have been a scramble for people to be able to attend this occasion. The purple of Agrippa and the pearls of Bernice were in evidence. There were the gold braid and the brass hats of the Roman Empire. The elect and the elite, the intelligentsia and the sophisticates had all turned out in full regalia. There would be the pride and ostentation and the dignity and display which only Rome could put on parade in that day.

Notice again how Dr. Luke records it: "And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth" (Act_25:23).

This stirs the imagination. I trust that somehow; we can picture this scene before us as we listen to the message of Paul. This elaborate gathering is for just one purpose: to hear from a notable prisoner by the name of Paul. He is the one who has already been over the greater part of the Roman Empire, certainly the eastern part of it, preaching The Way.

When the door of that great throne room swings open, a prisoner in chains is ushered into this colorful scene. He is dressed in the garb of a prisoner, and he is chained to two guards. He is unimpressive in his personal appearance. This is the man who teaches and preaches the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ for men because they are sinners

Acts 26 – Pauls Preaches to rulers and kings

and need a Savior. This is the one who can speak with authority about the new Way. And they will listen to this man because he knows how to speak and because he is an intelligent man. The light of heaven is on his face. He is no longer Saul of Tarsus but Paul the apostle. What a contrast he is to that gay, giddy crowd of nobility gathered there!

Festus told how the Jews had tried to kill Paul. My, how they hated him, and yet they had no real charge against him. That whole crowd looked at Paul, and I rather think that he looked over the whole crowd.

Paul is not a scintillating personality. Some liberal has called him, "Pestiferous Paul." Well, you can call him that if you want to. Maybe in the Roman Empire that is what they thought of him. Remember that the Lord Jesus had said, "If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (Joh_15:18). This man is true to the Lord Jesus, so the world will hate him.

I do not think, frankly, that Paul was physically attractive. Yet he had the dynamic kind of attraction which the grace of God gives to a man. He was energized by the Holy Spirit. Oh, that you and I might be able to say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal_2:20).

Now let's turn our eyes from the glitter and the glamour of the occasion to the two men who stand out in this assembly: Agrippa and Paul. What a contrast! One of them is in purple, the other is in prison garb. One is on a throne; the other is in shackles. One wears a crown; the other is in chains. Agrippa is a king, but in the slavery of sin. Paul is a chained prisoner, rejoicing in the freedom of sins forgiven and liberty in Christ. Agrippa is an earthly king who could not free Paul nor himself. Paul is an ambassador of the King who had freed him and who could free Agrippa from the damning effects of sin.

We need to remember that King Agrippa was a member of the family of Herod. He belonged to the rottenest family that I know anything about. It is the worst family that is mentioned in the Bible. I think old Ahab and Jezebel were like Sunday school kids compared to the Herod family. You know the old bromide about giving the Devil his due. Well, let's give the Herods their due. Agrippa was an intelligent man and a great man in many respects in spite of his background. He knew the Mosaic Law, that is, he knew the letter of it. Paul rejoiced in this because it gave him an opportunity to speak to a man who was instructed and who would understand the nature of the charges.

As I have said before, I can't help but believe that Paul was getting a little impatient during those two years of incarceration. He had appeared before the mob in Jerusalem, before the captain, then before Felix (publicly, then privately many times), then he appeared before Festus. Now he must appear before Agrippa. None of these other men fully understood the background of the charges against Paul. Neither did they understand the gospel. This is true even of the Roman captain in Jerusalem. It is amazing that these people could have lived in that area, have been exposed to Christians, have heard the apostle Paul, and still not really have understood. Yet that was the situation.

Paul's plea to Agrippa to turn to Christ is magnificent. It is logical and it is intelligent. Rather than being a defense, it is a declaration of the gospel. - McGee

Act 26:2-3 "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore, I beg you to hear me patiently.

When given his cue by Agrippa, Paul stretched out his hand and began a stirring recital of his Christian experience. First, he expressed gratitude that he was permitted to present his case before one who, being a Jew, was conversant with the customs and questions which prevailed among the Jewish people. His introduction was not mere flattery; it was a statement of Christian courtesy and simple truth. – Believers Bible Commentary

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Act 26:4-5 "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

As to his early life, the apostle was an exemplary Jew. The Jews would have to admit, if only they were willing to testify, that Paul had followed a pathway of the strictest orthodoxy, being a consistent Pharisee. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.

Now he was on trial for no greater crime than the fact that he clung to the hope of the promise made by God to the Jewish fathers in the OT. The flow of Paul's argument here seems to be as follows: In the OT God made various covenants with the leaders of Israel, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon. The principal covenant had to do with the promise of the Messiah, His coming to deliver the nation of Israel and to reign over the earth. The patriarchs of the OT died without seeing the fulfillment of this promise. Does this mean that God would not carry out the terms of the covenants? He would most assuredly do so! But how could He do it when the fathers were already dead? The answer is, "By raising them from the dead." Thus, in a very direct way, the apostle links the promises made to the OT saints with the resurrection of the dead. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 26:7 To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

The apostle pictured the twelve tribes of Israel as earnestly and ceaselessly serving God, hoping to see the promise fulfilled. This reference to the twelve tribes is important in view of the current teaching that ten of the tribes of Israel have been "lost" since the captivity. Though they were scattered among the Gentile nations, the Apostle Paul saw them as a distinct people, serving God and looking for the promised Deliverer. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 26:8 Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?

This then was Paul's crime! He believed that God would fulfill His promise to the fathers by raising them from the dead. What was so incredible about this? Paul asked Agrippa and all those who were with him. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 26:9-11 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities."

Reverting to the story of his life, Paul recounted the savage and unremitting campaign he waged against the followers of the Christian faith. With all his strength he opposed the name of Jesus of Nazareth. With authority from the chief priests, he imprisoned many of the Christians in Jerusalem. When they stood trial before the Sanhedrin, he cast his vote against them consistently. Over and over again he arranged punishment for those whom he found in every synagogue, and he did all he could to force them to deny their Lord. (When it says that he compelled them to blaspheme, it does not mean he was successful, but he tried to do it.) Paul's hate campaign against the disciples of Jesus had overflowed from Jerusalem and Judea to foreign cities. - Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: God has a way of using those that worked in total darkness in powerful ways to shows His power and glory through their redemption. For example, there is a former witch doctor now that has turned many to Christ on multiple continents and has an amazing book (*Deliverance from Demonic Covenants & Curses by Dr. James A Solmon*)

Paul Tells of His Conversion

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Act 26:12-14 *“While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’*

It was while he was on one of these foreign expeditions that a great transforming experience occurred in his life. He was en route to Damascus, equipped with official papers authorizing him to arrest the Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. At midday he was overcome by a vision of glory. A light from heaven shone upon him, brighter than the midday sun. After he had fallen to the ground, he heard a voice asking this probing question: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” The voice also added the revealing words, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” Goads were sharply pointed instruments used to force stubborn animals to move ahead. Paul had been kicking against the goad of his own conscience, but even more important, against the convicting voice of the Holy Spirit. He had never been able to forget the poise and grace with which Stephen had died. He had been fighting against God Himself. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 26:15 *So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*

Paul asked, “Who are You, Lord?” The voice replied, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” Jesus? How could that be? Hadn't Jesus been crucified and buried? Hadn't His disciples stolen His body and laid it away in some secret place? How then could Jesus be speaking to him now? The truth quickly dawned on Paul's soul. Jesus had indeed been buried, but He had risen from the dead! He had ascended back to heaven, from where He was now speaking to Paul. In persecuting the Christians, Paul had been persecuting their Master. And in persecuting Him, he had been persecuting the Messiah of Israel, the very Son of God. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Note: You can talk all about Christ to someone, but once that they actually have an experience with the Lord in a personal and real way, they come away changed forever. This was true with Paul and holds true today for us, even if our conversions are not as dramatic.

Act 26:16-18 *But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’*

Next Paul gives a condensed summary of the commission which was given him by the risen Lord Jesus Christ. He was told by the Lord to rise and stand on his feet. He had had this special revelation of Christ in glory because he was appointed to be a servant of the Lord and a witness of all he had seen that day, and of all the great truths of the Christian faith which would yet be made known to him.

The promise that Paul would be delivered from the Jewish people and the Gentiles must be understood as meaning deliverance in general until his work was done. Paul would be sent especially to the Gentiles to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Through faith in the Lord Jesus, they would receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified. H. K. Downie shows how verse 18 is an excellent summary of what the gospel does:

1. It relieves us from darkness.
2. It releases from the power of Satan.
3. It remits sins.
4. It restores a lost inheritance.

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Notice: The Lord has one flock with are all grafted in as children of Abraham. Jesus came to unify not divide the Jew and the gentile and fulfill his promises which always included Abraham blessing all nations. In *Genesis 15:6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness*. We are no different, belief, as demonstrated in actions, results in righteousness from God that we can't earn. Abaraham is asked to demonstrate this faith with Isaac, and we too are mentioned in God's response.

Genesis 22:15-18 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Act 26:19-23 *"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come— that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."*

Having been thus commissioned, Paul explains to Agrippa that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Both in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all ... Judea, and then to the Gentiles he preached to men that they should repent and turn to God, doing works that prove the reality of their repentance. This is what he was doing when the Jews seized him in the temple and tried to kill him. But God had given him protection and help, and he continued to testify to all with whom he came in contact, preaching the message which the prophets and Moses preached in the OT. The message was that the Messiah would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and that He would show light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: Paul accurately proclaims that God saved him and simply in this case worked through the Romans to accomplish it. Do you, like Paul, give God the Glory promptly and publicly?

Act 26:24-26 *Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner."*

Being a Gentile, Festus had probably failed completely to follow the flow of the apostle's argument. Thoroughly unable to appreciate a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit, he impetuously accused Paul of being crazy as the result of his much learning. With no trace of irritation or temper, the apostle quietly denied the charge and emphasized that his words were those of truth and reason. He then expressed confidence that the king knew the truth of what he had been saying. Paul's life and testimony had not been a secret. The Jews knew all about it, and doubtless the reports had reached Agrippa. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: Whenever testifying, the enemy will always try to discredit the Word of the Lord, but remember, like Paul, we have the power of the Holy Spirit and should approach this from victory to victory.

Act 26:27 *King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."*

It is possible to believe the facts without them being meaningful to you. You may know the facts of the gospel—that Jesus died for your sins and rose again—but your relationship to these facts is the thing that is essential. - McGee

Act 26:28 *Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."*

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That Agrippa felt the force of the argument is indicated by his words, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." However, there is considerable disagreement as to exactly what Agrippa meant. Those who follow the King James tradition feel that the king had actually been brought to the threshold of decision for Christ. They feel that Paul's answer in verse 29 substantiates this. Others think that Agrippa was using irony, asking Paul, as it were, "Do you think that with a little persuasion, you can make me a Christian?" In other words, he was evading the pressure of the apostle's words with a joke. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 26:29 And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

Whether Agrippa was speaking in sincerity or in jest, Paul answered with deadly earnestness. He expressed the fervent wish that, whether with little persuasion or with much, both Agrippa and all the others present might enter into the joys and blessings of the Christian life, that they might share all Paul's privileges, that they might become like him, except for the chains. Morgan writes:

He would die to save Agrippa, but he would not put his chains upon Agrippa. That is Christianity. Magnify it, multiply it, apply it. The sincerity that persecutes is not Christian. The sincerity that dies to deliver, but will not impose a chain, is Christianity. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Agrippa was an intelligent man. He answered, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Friend, do you know that you can almost be a Christian and then be lost for time and eternity? How tragic that is! "Almost" will not do. It must be all or nothing. Either you accept Christ, or you don't accept Christ. No theologian can probe the depths of salvation and its meaning. Yet it is simple enough for ordinary folk like most of us to understand. Either you have Christ, or you don't have Christ. Either you trust Christ, or you don't trust Christ. Either He is your Savior or He is not your Savior. It is one of the two. There is no such thing as a middle ground. It cannot be almost. It must be all.....

Since Jesus is back from the dead, there is another and coming judgment. There is another throne, and Jesus is seated upon it. And there is another prisoner—the prisoner is you or me. Either you have bowed to Him and accepted Him as your Lord and Savior, or you will be accountable to Him on that day. The Resurrection is very important to the unsaved man as well as the saved man. – McGee

Note: Paul proclaimed Christ in chains, so in light of that, what is our excuse for not proclaiming the Lord?

Act 26:30-32 When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains." Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

The king, the governor, Bernice, and the other officials left the room to confer privately. They were all forced to admit that Paul had done nothing deserving of death or chains. Perhaps with a tinge of regret, Agrippa said to Festus that if Paul had not appealed to Caesar, he might have been set free.

We naturally wonder why the appeal to Caesar could not be canceled. Whether or not such an appeal was unalterable, we do know that it was God's purpose that the apostle to the Gentiles should go to Rome for trial before the Emperor (Act_23:11), and there find the fulfillment of his desire to be made conformable to the death of his Lord. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 27 – Paul trusts the Lord through the storm

I. Paul's Voyage to Rome and Shipwreck (27:1-28:16)

This chapter presents the thrilling saga of the apostle's voyage from Caesarea to Malta, in route to Rome. If Paul had not been a passenger, we would never have heard of the trip, or of the shipwreck. The passage is full of nautical terms and is therefore not always easy to follow. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul Sails for Rome

Act 27:1 And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.

The journey began at Caesarea. Paul was placed in the custody of an officer named Julius. This centurion was attached to the Augustan Regiment, a distinguished legion of the Roman army. Like all the other centurions mentioned in the NT, he was a man of superior character in kindness, justice, and consideration for others. – Believers' Bible Commentary

This is the beginning of the voyage to Italy. Paul, along with other prisoners, is put in the charge of a centurion by the name of Julius. I would think it safe to say that Paul was the only one of the prisoners who was a Roman citizen. Probably the others were criminals who were sent to Rome for execution. Many of them would become gladiators and would be fed to the wild beasts. In that day there was a constant stream of human life from all corners of the empire that was being fed into the maw of this public vice there in the Colosseum in Rome. These prisoners would be utterly hopeless men. What an opportunity this gave Paul to bring the gospel of hope to this class of men. You will remember that the Lord Jesus Himself said that one of the reasons He came was to set the prisoners free—free spiritually, delivered from their sins and delivered from their guilt.

This centurion, Julius, was a very courteous pagan, as we shall see. - McGee

Act 27:2 So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.

There were other prisoners on board, who, like Paul, were being taken to Rome for trial. Also on the passenger list were the names of Aristarchus and Luke, both traveling companions of the apostle on earlier journeys. The ship on which they embarked was from Adramyttium, a city of Misa in the northwest corner of Asia Minor. It was scheduled to sail north and west, making stops at ports along the coasts of proconsular Asia, the western province of Asia Minor. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 27:3 And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

The ship sailed north along the coast of Palestine, putting in at Sidon, seventy miles from Caesarea. Julius, the centurion, kindly permitted Paul to go ashore and visit his friends and receive care. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Notice: God's has the ability to bless you even in chains and on rough journey through the storm. God has done this before blessing Joseph in prison.

Act 27:4-5 When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

From Sidon, the route cut across the northeast corner of the Mediterranean, passing Cyprus on the left, and thus taking advantage of the side of the island sheltered from the wind. In spite of the winds being contrary, the ship crossed over to the southern coast of Asia Minor, then sailed westward past Cilicia and Pamphylia till it arrived at Myra, a port city of Lycia. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 27 – Paul trusts the Lord through the storm

Act 27:6-8 *There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board. When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmon. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.*

If you check your map, you will see that Myra is sort of a jumping-off place. This was the place at which they changed ships. The centurion found a ship of Alexandria, which means it had come up from northern Africa and was sailing to Italy.

They were headed for the island of Crete. Apparently, they were still having difficulty sailing. Contrary winds were the great difficulty for sailing vessels of that day. They passed on the south side of the island and came to Lasea, which is on the south shore of Crete. - McGee

Act 27:9-11 *Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives." Nevertheless, the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.*

By now considerable time had been lost due to unfavorable sailing conditions. The approach of winter weather made further travel dangerous. It must have been late September or early October, since the Fast (the Day of Atonement) was already over. Paul warned the crew that navigation was unsafe and that if this voyage were continued, there would be the danger of losing the cargo and ship, and even the lives of some on board. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 27:12 *And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.*

However, the helmsman and the owner of the ship wanted to proceed. The centurion accepted their judgment, and most of the others agreed with them too. It was felt that the harbor was not as suitable as Phoenix would be as a place to spend the winter. Phoenix was located forty miles west of Fair Havens, at the southwest tip of Crete. Its harbor opened toward the southwest and northwest. – Believers' Bible Commentary

The Storm at Sea

Act 27:13-14 *When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.*

To them the voyage was guesswork. The south wind blew softly, so they "supposed." The captain was a man who looked to self and to the wisdom of men. Paul was looking to God. Later on, Paul would tell these men, "I believe God" (v. Act_27:25). Notice he would not say that he believed in God, but "I believe God."

Life is a great sea, and our lives are little boats. We can sail our boats by human supposition if we so choose. Friend, there is a storm blowing out there, a bit of a gale. The tragedy is that, amid confusion, world chaos, and darkness, most men are still guessing. There are a thousand human plans for building a better world. Yet everywhere we look we see failure. We need men who know God. It was Gladstone who said, "The mark of a great statesman is a man who knows the way God is going for the next fifty years." We don't seem to find many such men around today.

How about you? Do you just look outside at the conditions and go full steam ahead without inquiring or praying for wisdom first?

Acts 27 – Paul trusts the Lord through the storm

What is Euroclydon? Dr. Luke is using a very technical navigational term of that day. It has to do with the north wind, and it actually came north by east. In other words, the storm came down out of Europe. This was wintertime and the stormy season. It was a “tempestuous wind”, and it is in this storm that Paul and all those on the ship with him are caught.

Now I want to stop here to point out something very interesting. You will remember that when Paul was in Ephesus, which was a time of triumph for the gospel, he expressed a great desire to visit Rome. It was the great yearning of his heart. “After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome” (Act_19:21). The hour of darkness came for Paul in Jerusalem. It looked as if he would never see Rome at all. In that hour of darkness, despair, and defeat, God appeared to him to reassure him. “And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Act_23:11). The Lord had assured Paul that he would go to Rome. - McGee

Calm within.

1. If the world would listen to the words of God’s children warning of the nearness of danger, many an “injury and loss” even worse than this would be avoided.
2. If there is any loss, it will only be a financial and temporal and comparatively insignificant one to those who commit themselves fully to God’s keeping.
3. If we as Christians lose anything in the storms of this world, it can at worst be nothing more than the loss of the ship in which we sail, the body in which we dwell. Our souls will be saved into God’s presence. – Biblical Illustrator

Act 27:15-19 So, when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. And, running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

They were out there in the Mediterranean Sea being driven westward from the island of Crete. It looked very much as if they would be wrecked on the little island of Clauda, which, by the way, is a very small island south of Crete. They had to let the wind take the ship. They threw all the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. They completely stripped the ship of everything that had any weight. – McGee

4. If we are ever so much adrift, God can still find us. Says Matthew Henry: “Paul knows not where he is himself, yet God’s angel knows where to find him out.”
5. If God has promised that we shall in the body stand before Caesar, we need not fear the blows of the tempest. We are immortal until that promise of God is fulfilled. – Biblical Illustrator

How about you, in the midst of the storm, are you willing to throw your possessions overboard or do you possession have you so much that you are willing to go down with the ship?

Act 27:20 Now, when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

For many days they were tossed about helplessly without sight of sun or stars, and thus without the ability to take bearings and find out where they were. Hope of survival was finally given up. – Believers Bible Commentary

Acts 27 – Paul trusts the Lord through the storm

Is this not a situation many of us have either been in or know of people that are there today? Metaphorically, all they see in this world is darkness and depression, and they give up all hope.

Act 27:21-26 *But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' Therefore, take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it had told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island."*

Despair was accentuated by hunger. The men had not eaten for many days. Doubtless they spent their time working for the preservation of the ship and bailing out water. Perhaps there were no facilities for cooking. Sickness, fear, and discouragement probably robbed them of their appetite. There was no shortage of food, but neither was there an inclination to eat.

Then Paul stood in the midst of them with a message of hope. First, he gently reminded them that they should ... not have sailed from Crete. Then he assured them that though the ship would be lost, there would be no loss of life. How did he know? An angel of the Lord had appeared to him that night, assuring him that he would yet stand before Caesar in Rome. God had granted the apostle all those who sailed with him, in the sense that they, too, would be preserved. Therefore, they should cheer up. Paul believed that all would be well, even though they would be shipwrecked on a certain island.

A. W. Tozer writes insightfully:

When the "south wind blew softly," the ship that carried Paul sailed smoothly enough and no one on board knew who Paul was or how much strength of character lay hidden behind that rather plain exterior. But when the mighty tempest, Euroclydon, burst upon them, Paul's greatness was soon the talk of everyone on the ship. The apostle, though himself a prisoner, quite literally took command of the vessel, made decisions and issued orders that meant life or death to the people. And I think the crisis brought to a head something in Paul that had not been clear even to him. Beautiful theory was quickly crystallized into hard fact when the tempest struck. – Believers' Bible Commentary

6. If there is a praying Paul on board, the fact may be worth more to the ship's crew than all their labor at the pumps. Jonah, running away from duty, endangers the ship and its crew; Paul, pursuing the course of duty, is a saving companion to the ship's crew.

7. If we believe God, we shall have little to dread even in such storms as this which shipwrecked Paul. We shall believe that God will bring us through just as He has promised. "Is not God upon the ocean, just the same as on the land?" (S. S. Times.) – Biblical Illustrator

As a Christian in the storms of this world, are you more like Jonah or Paul?

Act 27:27 *Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land.*

"Adria" is the Adriatic Sea. The Adriatic Sea lies between Italy and Macedonia or Greece. Apparently, they have been driven up and down the Adriatic in the storm, passing between Crete and Sicily. They are out in the deep, out in the open sea. On the fourteenth night at about midnight, it becomes apparent that they are being driven near some land. - McGee

Acts 27 – Paul trusts the Lord through the storm

Act 27:28-29 *And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.*

When they first measured the depth, they found it was twenty fathoms (120 feet), then a little later it was fifteen fathoms. To prevent running the ship aground, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for daylight. –

Believers Bible Commentary

Act 27:30-31 *And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."*

The crew was trying to abandon the ship, you see. They acted as if they were dropping anchor, but actually they were going overboard. They were leaving a sinking ship as the rats leave it. They were doing something which they should never have done.

Paul tells the centurion that the only assurance of safety is for all to remain with the ship. Paul has put his trust in God. What a wonderful thing it is to trust the Word of God. The angel of God had told Paul that he and the men would be saved. But they couldn't be saved their way. They must be saved God's way. God's way was for them to stay with the ship. It was a question of believing that God would save them or not believing and taking matters into their own hands. Paul had told them that he believed God. And he tells them that if they want to be saved, they all will need to stay on board the ship. – McGee

Luke 17:33 (CSB) *Whoever tries to make his life secure will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.*

Act 27:32 *Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.*

Paul has given the information to the centurion. The centurion is beginning to listen to Paul now. He gives the command and the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboats. Now everyone must stay on board. - McGee

Note: Don't ever think you are lowly in rank or status to make a difference! Paul, likely in an orange prison jump suit, is giving advice and the Roman Centurion is hanging on every word at this point.

Act 27:33-34 *And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore, I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you."*

Phillips titles verses 33-37 "Paul's sturdy common sense." To appreciate the drama of the moment, we should really know something of the terror of a violent storm at sea. Then too, we should remember that Paul was not the captain of the ship but only a captive passenger.

Shortly before daybreak Paul implored the people to eat, reminding them that they had gone two weeks without food. The time had come to eat; their well-being depended on it. The apostle assured them that not a hair of anyone's head would be lost. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 27:35 *And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat.*

Acts 27 – Paul trusts the Lord through the storm

Paul gave thanks to God in the presence of them all. This again is a wonderful testimony. This is Paul's prosperous journey to Rome. Perhaps you are saying, "It doesn't sound very prosperous to me! It seems to me he is out of the will of God!" No, my friend, Paul is not out of the will of God.

Do you remember another instance back in the Gospels when the Lord Jesus put His own disciples into a boat one night and sent them across the Sea of Galilee? He told them to go to the other side, and on the way over a storm arose on the sea. He sent them right into a storm. Now don't say that Jesus didn't know the storm was coming. He deliberately sent them into the storm! He is God. He knew about the storm, and He knew what He was doing. I personally believe that oftentimes the Lord deliberately sends us into a storm. We need to remember that we can be in the storm and still be in the will of God. He has never said we will miss the storms of life, but He has promised us that we will make the harbor. And He will be right there with us through the storm. That is the comfort that should come to the child of God in the time of the storm. – McGee

Do you promptly praise God in the good times and in the bad?

Act 27:36-37 Then, they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.

Thus encouraged, they took food themselves. There were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 27:38-41 So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea. When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.

The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners to prevent escape, but the centurion, wanting to save Paul, overruled. He ordered all who could swim to make for shore. The rest were told to float in on boards or other parts of the ship. In this way, every one of the crew and passengers escaped safely to land. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 27:42-44 And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners to prevent escape, but the centurion, wanting to save Paul, overruled. He ordered all who could swim to make for shore. The rest were told to float in on boards or other parts of the ship. In this way, every one of the crew and passengers escaped safely to land. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Note: A soft landing is never promised, but if God says you are going to make it, you will even if you have to swim to get there.

Acts 28 - Paul snake-bitten but not done yet

THEME: Paul arrives in Rome.

This, our final study in the Book of Acts, follows Paul from Melita to Rome. When Paul arrives in Rome, he ministers first to Jews and then to Gentiles. The narrative is not concluded but breaks off with Paul preaching in Rome. The acts of the Holy Spirit have not been finished even in our day. - McGee

Paul on Malta

Act 28:1 Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta.

This is the island which we know today as Malta. The bay where this took place is known today as Saint Paul's Bay. This is a very interesting place to those of us who lived during World War II when this island made the headlines at the very beginning of the conflict. It was the most bombed spot of the war because it was in a strategic position. At that time General Darby was the general and the governor of the island. He was a Christian and a worthy successor to the apostle Paul. He said that he had no notion of surrendering. I think it is interesting to be reading about Paul landing at this bay and to realize that General Darby had command on that same island.

Certainly, in the incident of this shipwreck and the landing of Paul on the island of Melita we see the providence of God in the life of the apostle Paul. All of this is recorded for our learning. - McGee

Act 28:2 And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.

It may cause us to smile a little that Dr. Luke labels the natives of the island "barbarous people." The word barbarian was used to describe one who did not speak Greek. It does not imply savagery. Here we have another instance of the kindness and the courtesy of pagans. Remember that there are 276 people who have landed on this little island. Out of this crowd, many are criminals who are being sent to Rome for punishment. Yet we find this wonderful compassion and helpfulness on the part of people who are pagans. We find in the Book of Jonah another instance of this same thing when the pagan sailors tried to spare Jonah. They didn't want to throw him overboard even though he had told them they should do it. They tried to bring the ship to land but found out they couldn't do it. Sometimes pagan folk are more gracious than the folk who are religious. – McGee

Notice: Even the pagans provided hospitality to the motley crew including criminals. How much more should we provide hospitality to those in need.

Act 28:3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

You remember that at the end of the Gospel of Mark there is this promise: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mar_16:17-18). I believe that these signs were confined to that time before the New Testament was completed when the believers needed the sign gifts to substantiate the message of the gospel.

My advice to you today is not to deliberately pick up a rattlesnake. I lived in Tennessee for many years, and I have never known an authentic case where someone picked up a rattlesnake during a meeting, was bitten, and was unaffected by the venom of the snake. Most of them die. Those who live through it almost die. The venom has a tremendous effect upon them.

Acts 28 - Paul snake-bitten but not done yet

May I point out something else? Paul did not deliberately pick up this viper. Paul was not tempting God. I consider this another evidence that Paul's "... thorn in the flesh ..." (2Co_12:7) was eye trouble. (I'll develop that when we get to the Epistle to the Galatians.) Paul couldn't see very well. When he picked up some sticks, there was a viper on the sticks and Paul just didn't see it.

There is another interesting sidelight to the apostle Paul that I want you to notice here: the great apostle Paul gathered sticks. These people on the island had been very gracious to them. They had accepted 276 strangers who landed there. It was cold and rainy, and they had started a big fire to help warm these people who had come in from the sea. When the fire began to go down, Paul went out to gather a bundle of sticks. This should dispel any notion that Paul was a lazy preacher. He himself tells us that he practiced his trade as a tentmaker so that he would not be a burden to the church. Obviously, he was not afraid of work.

When Paul threw the sticks onto the fire, the viper would naturally crawl away from the fire. The viper not only bit Paul but actually fastened onto his hand. – McGee

While being bitten by a viper can't be pleasant, God uses it miraculously to spread the Gospel. How about you? Have you used your hardships and failures to proclaim the Lord to many?

Act 28:4 So, when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."

The Greek word here for "vengeance" is dike which actually would be better translated "justice." "Yet justice suffereth not to live." In other words, they felt that Paul was guilty of a great crime, and justice was catching up with him. He had escaped from the sea but now he would surely die of the venom. Very frankly, I think they sat down to watch what would happen to him. They expected that any moment he would begin to show swelling in his hand and arm, then would fall down dead. They knew by sad experience, as that is what had happened to their own people. They expected it to happen to Paul.

Notice that these pagans did have a sense of justice. They assumed that Paul was a murderer and that he deserved punishment. In such a circumstance today, folk would be helping the criminal to get back out to sea to escape being punished. This incident shows that throughout the Roman Empire there was a sense of justice. Pagan Rome made that contribution to the world. Rome was noted for justice, not mercy. Sins were not forgiven. If you broke the law, you paid the penalty. Under the iron heel of Rome, the world was crying for mercy. This was a preparation for the coming of Christ who came as the Savior from sin—that mankind might know the mercy and forgiveness of God. - McGee

Act 28:5-6 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

The promise of God in Mar_16:18 was fulfilled in Paul's experience. He suffered no ill effects from the venom. When folk today deliberately pick up snakes and claim that promise as their protection, they are far afield from what God had in mind.

When they saw that no harm came to Paul, they decided that he certainly could not be a criminal but was instead a god. Although they were equally wrong in this judgment, it did give Paul a very important contact on the island of Melita here. – McGee

Note: Nothing can prevent you from fulfilling what God has called you to do! Therefore, be on the lookout for fear, which the enemy uses to keep you from doing the Lord's Will.

Acts 28 - Paul snake-bitten but not done yet

Act 28:7-8 *In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.*

The leading citizen of the island of Malta at that time was Publius. He owned considerable land in the vicinity of the beach where the shipwrecked party landed. This wealthy Roman official received Paul and his friends courteously, and provided accommodation for them for three days, that is, until permanent quarters could be arranged in which they would spend the winter. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul was now exercising his gift as an apostle. He entered and he prayed. Apparently, he did not pray for the man; he prayed for himself. That is, he prayed to determine the will of God. Was this man to be healed through Paul? That is what he prayed to know. – McGee

Paul uses the gifts of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel in a new land with new people. Modeling what Jesus did so many times in his short ministry. What is keeping us from doing the father's will today?

Act 28:9-10 *So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.*

The question has been raised whether or not Paul preached the gospel in Melita. There are those who believe that this is one place where Paul did not preach. This is an instance where I think the Holy Spirit expects us to use ordinary common sense. Of course, he preached the gospel. We are coming to the end of the book, and the incident is related in a very brief and blunt manner. By now Dr. Luke expects us to know what Paul would do. Remember that Paul is the man who wrote, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1Co_2:2). With the apostles, healing was God's witness that the gospel they preached was from Him. It is very important for us to realize that Paul preached the gospel and that the healing was the result of it. It was the evidence of the truth he was preaching. I think it can be only a normal inference that Paul did exactly the same here as he did everywhere he went. – McGee

Paul had such great fellowship and relationship with the Lord that he was able to use the authorities and gifts given him by Jesus everywhere he went consistent with the Lord's Will.

Paul Arrives at Rome

Act 28:11 *After three months, we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island.*

After the three months of winter had passed, and navigation was safe again, the centurion, with his prisoners, embarked on an Alexandrian ship ... which had wintered at the island. The figurehead of this ship was the Twin Brothers, that is, Castor and Pollux. These were supposed, by heathen sailors, to be the patron gods of mariners. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 28:12-14 *And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so, we went toward Rome.*

From Malta they sailed about eighty miles to Syracuse, the capital of Sicily, located on its east coast. The ship stopped there for three days, then proceeded to Rhegium, on the southwest corner of Italy, at the toe. After one day a favorable south wind blew, enabling the crew to sail 180 miles northward along the west coast of Italy to Puteoli, on the northern

Acts 28 - Paul snake-bitten but not done yet

shore of the Bay of Naples. Puteoli was about 150 miles southeast of Rome. There the apostle found Christian brethren, with whom he was permitted to enjoy fellowship for seven days. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 28:15-16 *And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.*

We are not told how news reached Rome of the arrival of Paul in Puteoli. However, two different groups of brethren set out to meet him. One group traveled forty-three miles southeast of Rome to The Market of Appius. The other group traveled thirty-three miles southeast to the Three Inns. Paul was greatly cheered and encouraged by this touching demonstration of the love of the saints in Rome.

Upon arrival in Rome, he was permitted to dwell in a private home, with the soldier who guarded him. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Notice: When you are in God's favor, you can be blessed even as a prisoner in chains, so how much more should we pursue the favor of the Lord.

Paul in Rome

Act 28:17-19 *And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation.*

In accordance with his policy of witnessing to the Jews first, Paul sent an invitation to their religious leaders. When they had come together in his rented house, he explained his case to them. He told them that although he had done nothing against the Jewish people, or their customs, yet the Jews of Jerusalem had delivered him into the hands of the Romans for trial. The Gentile authorities could find no fault in him, and wanted to free him, but when the Jews cried out against it, the apostle was compelled to appeal to Caesar. In making this appeal, it was not for the purpose of bringing any charge against the Jewish nation. Rather, it was that he might defend himself. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 28:20-22 *For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."*

It was because he was innocent of any crime against the Jewish people that he had called the chief Roman Jews together. Actually, it was because of the hope of Israel that he was bound with a chain. The hope of Israel, as explained previously, refers to the fulfillment of the promises made to the Jewish patriarchs, especially the promise of the Messiah. Inherent in the fulfillment of these promises was the resurrection of the dead.

The Jewish leaders professed to know nothing about the Apostle Paul. They had not received any letters from Judea concerning him, and none of their fellow Jews had brought reports to them against him. However, they did want to hear more from Paul, because they knew that the Christian faith with which he was associated was spoken against everywhere. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 28 - Paul snake-bitten but not done yet

Act 28:23-24 *So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.*

Sometime later a great number of these Jews came to Paul's lodging to hear more from him. He availed himself of the opportunity to testify to them concerning the kingdom of God, and to persuade them concerning Jesus. In so doing he quoted to them from the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. Some believed the message he brought, and some disbelieved. (Disbelieving is stronger than a simple failure to accept the message. It indicates a positive rejection.) – Believers' Bible Commentary

Once again, Jesus came to bring the kingdom of God. He proclaimed it was now, and He was the door. Paul grasped that Jesus not alone brought salvation but also the Kingdom of Heaven.

Act 28:25-28 *So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY: "HEARING YOU WILL HEAR, AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND SEEING YOU WILL SEE, AND NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEARTS OF THIS PEOPLE HAVE GROWN DULL. THEIR EARS ARE HARD OF HEARING, AND THEIR EYES THEY HAVE CLOSED, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM." ' "Therefore, let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"*

When Paul saw that once again the gospel was being, on the whole, rejected by the Jewish nation, he quoted Isa_6:9 and 10, where the prophet was commissioned to preach the word to a people whose hearts were dull, whose ears were deaf, and whose eyes were blinded. The apostle felt again the heartbreak of preaching good news to those who did not want to hear it. In view of this rejection by the Jews, Paul announced that he was taking the gospel to the Gentiles, and he expressed the assurance that they would hear it. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul to the very kept trying to go his people the Jews first, but repeatedly he was rejected, and went to the Gentiles. Should we be surprised when we are rejected?

Act 28:29-31 *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves. Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.*

The Book of Acts tells of the beginning of the movement of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Remember that in the Garden of Eden man doubted God and that led to disobedience. The way back to God is by faith, "... for obedience to the faith ..." as Paul says in Rom_1:5. So we find in that day that some believed the gospel, and some did not.

The Book of Acts ends with Paul "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence." The record is not concluded. The Holy Spirit continues to work today. The acts of the Holy Spirit have not been finished even in our day. The Book of Acts will end with the Rapture, the coming of Christ for His own. The work of the church has not yet been completed; it is a continuing story. What you and I have done in the power of the Holy Spirit will be included in that record. – McGee

Are you like Paul preaching and proclaiming Jesus with all confidence in a pagan world?

Acts Overview – How can we walk in the Kingdom?

After 40 days of the resurrected Jesus teaching about the Kingdom, the disciples ask this question just prior to Jesus's final ascension.

Act 1:6-8 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

What are the implications to us as born-again believers today? When is His Kingdom restored?

Holy Spirit Comes on Pentecost

Act 2:1-4 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Why is it important that they were all with one accord and in one place? What is the importance for us today? Empowered by the Holy Spirit in His fullness, Peter preached and 5,000 accepted Christ in one day.

Act 2:46-47 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

They did church daily wherever they were, they broke bread and went house to house. How is this different from our church paradigm today?

Themes that are evident in Acts.

1. Expect persecution and trials for your faith (Slandered, falsely accused, in prison, stoned, beaten, and killed)
2. No Fear (the apostles and the early church operated with no fear, in spite of constant threats)
 - a. Jesus even opened the Heavens to receive Stephen (Acts 7:55-56)
 - b. After being stoned and assumed dead, Paul rises up again and goes back into the city (Acts 14:19-20)
 - c. Peter demands he be let out publicly not secretly since he was beaten publicly (Acts 16:35-40)
 - d. The Lord told Paul that He has many people in this city (Corinth – Acts 18:9-11)
 - e. Paul wants the Lord's Will not his knowing Chains await him in Jerusalem (Acts 21:8-14)
 - f. Shipwrecks (Acts 27:39-44), poisons snakes (Acts 28:1-6)
3. If you operate in God's will, man cannot overcome you. (Acts 5:38-39)
 - a. The False accusations are unfounded; yet the corrupt rulers keep him chains. (Acts 24)
 - b. He preaches to Kings and Governors in chains (Acts 26)
4. Your heart and motives and operating in truth are essential:
 - a. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11)
 - b. Simon the sorcerer – Acts 8:18-24 – Wanted the Holy Spirit for power and profit.
5. Go where the Lord sends you and be obedient for that is where His blessings are.
 - a. Desert – Phillip meets the Ethiopian Acts 8:26-39
 - b. Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9)
 - c. Ananias agrees to accept and heal Saul (Acts 9:10-19)
 - d. Peter goes to the Gentiles (Cornelius – Acts 10:24-48)

Acts Overview – How can we walk in the Kingdom?

- e. The Lord ministered to Paul wherever he was providing fellowship, encouragement, lodging, visitors, opportunities to preach the Kingdom, heal, and teach. (Acts 28:03-31)
6. Legalism brings division and kills the effectiveness and Unity of the Church
 - a. James Decree regarding the new gentiles (Acts 15:28-29)
 - b. Issues arose like dining together, circumcision, ceremonial washing etc.

Where do we let legalism divide the church today?

7. Study Scriptures daily – Be a Berean! Acts 17:11
8. Your greatest ministry maybe in the darkest places (Corinth, Athens, Rome, etc.)
9. Gospel leads to change and will upset the people who cling to this world and don't accept Jesus.
 - a. Silver smiths riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:21-41)
 - b. Jews that rejected Jesus, continually pursued Paul, yet he never failed to preach in the synagogue to the Jews first, then the Gentiles.
10. Paul preached the Kingdom of God and the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:25-27)
11. Paul relied on the Holy Spirit and his wits:
 - a. Used is Roman Citizenship (Acts 22:22-29,
 - b. He used the division among the Pharisees and the Sadducees to be acquitted (Acts 23:1-10)
 - c. The Lord uses a boy to reveal the murderous plot of Jesus against Paul (Acts 23:11-22)
12. Be a watchman on the wall! Speak-up about impending disaster. (Acts 27:9-12)
13. Walking in Kingdom authority takes a personal relationship and the in-dwelling power of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:14-18)
 - b. His kingdom is everlasting and available today:

Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Luke 1:33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

The Parable of the Mustard Seed - 31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

The Parable of the Leaven 33 Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

1. **Matthew 3:2** and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"
2. **Matthew 4:17** From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
3. **Matthew 10:7** And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'
4. **Mark 1:15** and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

John 10:7-10 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.