

The Book of Acts

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~ Introduction ~

I. **WRITER:** Luke the Physician (Author is the Holy Spirit)

II. **AUDIENCE:** To Theophilus (1:1) specifically but to the broader Christian community in general.

III. **DATE:** 63 A.D. (towards the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment)

IV. **NOTES:**

The Book of Acts is the Book of HISTORY in the New Testament. Its narrative follows on from the Gospel according to Luke. It is a Book of action, where we see Christians working in and through the churches as God intended. As Baptists, our desire should be to follow in the principles and practices of primitive Christianity taught in the New Testament and exemplified especially in this Book.

The key verse of Acts is 1:8. The theme of the book of Acts is "witness" found 21 times in Acts. A "witness" is someone who has first-hand knowledge of something, and therefore is able to verify, certify, corroborate, or authenticate it to be so. The Greek word translated 'witness' in the Book of Acts is "μάρτυς" ('martus') – from whence we get our English word "martyr." A true witness for Christ is one who is willing to put his life on the line for Jesus Christ!

The Book of Acts is a vital link between the Gospels (one church, founded by Christ) and the Epistles (many churches). The great doctrinal lesson of the Book is that every Christian and every ministry was CHURCH-CENTERED, CHURCH-SPONSORED, and CHURCH-GOVERNED. It is God's plan for this age that the Lord's work (preaching, teaching, evangelism, benevolence, etc.) be done by the Lord's people, directed by the Holy Spirit through the Lord's churches.

There have been numerous commentaries and study guides written on the Book of Acts. While many of these are very beneficial, one should note that most of them abound with the triple error of:

1. **THE UNIVERSAL, INVISIBLE 'CHURCH' THEORY:** This widely accepted belief holds that the Church is a universal, invisible, mystical entity – called "the Body of Christ" – made up of all the saved. Regrettably, many present-day Baptists hold to this theory.
2. **THE PENTECOST BIRTHDAY THEORY:** Coupled with the above error is the belief that the 'Church' was born on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. This is an extreme dispensational view, which removes the ministry of John the Baptist and much of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ in the four Gospels from the so-called Church age.
3. **THE HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM THEORY:** This theory holds that, contrary to what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, the Holy Spirit formed the 'Church' on the Day of Pentecost, and from henceforth He baptizes all believers into the (universal, invisible, mystical) 'Body of Christ.'

Each of these errors will be thoroughly dealt with and refuted in these studies in the Book of Acts.

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This chapter picks up where the Gospel of Luke leaves off. Acts 1:1 ties the two Books together (see: Luke 1:1-4). And Acts 1:1-12 gives an overlapping account of the post-resurrection ministry and ascension of the Lord (see: Luke 24:36-53).

I. THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH — vv. 1-7

READ v. 1. The “former treatise” is the Gospel according to Luke (Luke 1:3). Some have noted the change in addressing Theophilus (from “most excellent Theophilus” in Luke to “O Theophilus” in Acts), suggesting his conversion to Jesus Christ may have cost him his high ranking position.

The nature of Luke’s gospel is an account of “...all that Jesus began both to do and teach...”. Doing comes before teaching. We have a saying here in the USA that “Actions speak louder than words!” The Book of Acts tells of ‘all that Jesus continued to do’ through the Holy Spirit and His churches.

READ vv. 2-3. Details of the post-resurrection ministry of Christ are found to a greater or lesser extent at the end of each of the four Gospels. These, together with vv. 2-11, show this period of the Lord’s ministry was 40 days in duration spending the time teaching and commanding the Apostles.

RE: The many infallible proofs... The credibility of Bible Christianity rests upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His resurrection is one of the best authenticated facts of history. The evidence for the resurrection are as follows:

1. The Empty Tomb.
2. The Numerous Post-Resurrection Appearances Of Christ.
 - a. To Mary — John 20:16.
 - b. To the women — Matthew 28:5-9.
 - c. To Peter — Luke 24:24.
 - d. To two disciples on the way to Emmaus — Luke 24:13-35.
 - e. To ten apostles and others in the upper room — John 20:19.
 - f. To eleven apostles and others in the upper room — John 20:26-29.
 - g. To seven disciples — John 21:1-14.
 - h. To the eleven — Matthew 28:16; Acts 1:4.
 - i. To over 500 believers — I Corinthians 15:6.
 - j. James, Jesus’ half-brother and then the apostles — I Corinthians 15:7.
 - k. To Saul — I Corinthians 15:8; Acts 9:5.
3. The Changed Lives Of The Apostles. For example, Peter the “denier of Christ” became the great “preacher of Christ.”
4. The Resurrection Preaching Of The Apostles. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was central to the Gospel preaching recorded in the Book of Acts.

5. The first day of the week is Sunday, or the “Lord’s Day”. It is evident that the early churches began meeting on this day from the very first Sunday after the resurrection.
6. The Witness of Jesus Christ Himself — Revelation 1:18.
7. Some Bible rejecters teach that Christ’s body was removed from the grave, and a resurrection story then concocted. The facts do not support such a notion.
 - a. It was impossible for the disciples or the two Marys to remove the body. They had three obstacles preventing them from removing the Lord’s body — the “sentinels,” the “seal,” and the “stone.” Besides, the disciples were dispersed immediately after the crucifixion, and after Jesus appeared to them, they were amazed and disbelieving.
 - b. It was not possible that the Jews took it. Of all people who would want the body of Jesus, it would have been the Jewish religious leaders. Upon learning of the empty tomb concocted a story to cover for it. If they had the body, why didn’t they produce it seven weeks later when the apostles were winning thousands of converts through preaching the resurrection?
 - c. It was not possible that the Roman soldiers took it. Death without a trial was meted out to any Roman soldier who took a bribe, fell asleep at his post, or broke a seal. To save their necks, all they would have had to do was produce the body.

The only conclusion: “HE IS RISEN, AS HE SAID.”

v. 3 - ... pertaining to the kingdom of God. This is different to the disciples’ question in v. 6 – “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”. The Kingdom of God is the rule of God in the hearts of willing subjects. The Kingdom of Israel is the future millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

There are actually three entities mentioned in Acts 1. Not only do we see the “kingdom of God” and the “kingdom to Israel” but we also see the Lord’s church. While the word ‘church’ is not mentioned per se, we note that the Lord “assembled together with them” (v. 4), and the disciples “came together” with Him (v. 6), and then the disciples met together later in vv. 13-15.

Review Basic Bible Doctrine 3 if needed. A New Testament Church is an assembly of saved scripturally baptized believers that are organized to carry out the work of the Lord.

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The Greek word rendered “church” 114 times in the New Testament is (“ekklesia”), a word that means “assembly.” There are four implications inherent in an assembly. An assembly (any assembly!) must be:

- LOCAL — all the churches (assemblies) mentioned in the New Testament had a definite location.
- VISIBLE — all the churches (assemblies) mentioned in the New Testament were able to be seen.
- ORGANIZED — many New Testament epistles are concerned about church order and conduct.
- CONSTITUTED — the New Testament churches were made up of baptized believers.

Much confusion has come about because men have confused the kingdom of God with the New Testament Church including the the mystical, universal, invisible ‘Church’/Body of Christ theory.

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<u>The Kingdom of God</u>	<u>The Church of God</u>
Universal	Local
One	Many
Invisible	Visible
Entered through salvation	Entered through baptism
All members saved	Some members may be unsaved
Members permanent	Membership may be moved
Theocracy	Democracy
No officers	Pastors & Deacons
No ordinances	Baptism & Lord’s Supper
No discipline	Discipline exercised

A New Testament church is the visible, audible, tangible manifestation of the invisible, inaudible, intangible kingdom of God. Each true New Testament Church is the unique, divinely established, divinely authorized, and divinely appointed “recruiting agency” for the Kingdom of God.

READ vv. 4-5. “wait for the promise of the Father” - The subject of Holy Spirit baptism will be fully dealt with in Acts chapter 2. Preparatory to that however, it is important to note the following:

1. The promise was given through the Son. “...ye have heard of me...”
2. It refers to the sending of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.
3. It is synonymous with the prophecy of John. The prophecy of John (the Baptist) was that the Lord Jesus Christ would baptize with the Holy Ghost.

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II. THE COMMISSIONING OF THE CHURCH — v. 8

READ v. 8. This is the fifth statement of the so-called “Great Commission” given in the New Testament. Since these are the only marching orders given to the Lord’s churches, it is important to study them fully and understand them clearly. Comparing the five “Great Commission” statements in each of the four gospels plus here in v. 8, we note the commission is three-fold:

1. Evangelize – This includes teaching (making disciples), preaching, and witnessing.
2. Baptize – It always follows salvation, never before. Administer on the authority of a NT church.
3. Stabilize – It is the discipleship phase.

“To whom was the Great Commission given?” This question is often overlooked, but it is of fundamental importance, for two reasons:

(1) There are numerous denominations, religious organizations, and so-called ‘para-church’ organizations existing today, each claiming the Commission as their mandate.

(2) The second is issue of authority in baptism. Since the Commission includes the command to baptize, then only those to whom the commission was given have the authority to baptize.

The Great Commission was given to the Lord’s churches. It was not given individually, but institutionally! Only New Testament churches have the God-given authority (and responsibility) to evangelize, baptize, and stabilize. Review Basic Bible Doctrine 3 if needed.

Although every believer is to actively participate in the fulfilling of the Lord’s command, he is to work in and through the ministry of the CHURCH of which he is a member. Souls are undoubtedly saved outside of God’s plan for evangelism (because the Holy Spirit will always bless the Word of God) but God’s work done God’s way is the best way!

v. 8 – ‘ye shall receive power’. Thankfully, the Lord provides them the POWER with which to do it. This great task will never be successfully accomplished in the power of the flesh (mere human effort) – it is a supernatural work requiring supernatural power!

III. THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH – vv. 9-11

This passage contains one of the great promises of the Word of God concerning the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also gives some detail concerning the ascension of Christ back to glory.

READ v. 9. The New Testament teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended back to Heaven following His resurrection at least two times:

1. The First Ascension. Christ ascended to Heaven immediately after His resurrection on the first day of the week. This is seen by comparing “Touch me not” to Mary in the pre-dawn hour with the “Handle me” (Luke 24:39) in the evening hour of the same day. Having accomplished the great sacrifice of Himself for sin, Jesus went to Heaven in order to present His blood before the mercy seat – according to the pattern of Leviticus 16.

2. The Second Ascension recorded here in Acts 1. It occurred 40 days after the resurrection of Christ.

READ v. 10-11. Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives and, according to Zechariah 14:4, will return to the same place at His coming in power and great glory to establish His millennial kingdom on earth. From this verse we learn that His return will be:

1. A Personal Return — “...this SAME Jesus...”
2. A Visible Return — “...as ye have SEEN him...”
3. A Certain Return — “...SHALL so come...”
4. A Premillennial Return — “...in LIKE MANNER...”

IV. THE MEETING OF THE CHURCH — vv. 12-15

Much of “Christianity” teaches that ‘the Church’ (universal, invisible, etc.) did not come into existence until the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. However, as covered in Basic Bible Doctrine 3, there is ample evidence to show that the first church (local, visible, etc.) was in existence well before the day of Pentecost. Here, in Acts 1 (before Pentecost!), we find the church assembled.

READ v. 13. The apostles initially served as pastors over the Church in Jerusalem. However, by Acts 15, however, the apostles were distinguished from the pastors.

READ v. 14. They assembled in an upper room. The place of assembly is incidental to the functioning of a NT church, but the fact that there was a place shows locality. (A church is always ‘local.’ - location). What was the church doing? It was having a prayer meeting.

READ v. 15. The membership of this first church stood at around 120. Included within this number were the 11 Apostles, the women, Mary the mother of Christ and Jesus’ half-brothers.

V. THE BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH — vv. 16-26

In this passage we have the ‘minutes’ of a church business meeting called to elect a successor to Judas Iscariot. We learn some very important principles on how to conduct a scriptural church business meeting. There are seven steps to note:

1. Pastoral initiative (v. 15). It was Peter who raised the matter for consideration. The initiation of church business should come from those in God-appointed leadership positions.
2. Biblical purpose (vv. 16-20). Many problems have come about when churches conduct business meetings just for the sake of having a business meeting. Having a scriptural basis for a business meeting will do away with having to vote on numerous petty decisions which can (and ought to) be made by pastors.

3. Pastoral leadership (v. 21, 22). One of the distinctives of a true Baptist church is its form of government. Scriptural church government is neither a democracy (the rule of the people) nor a dictatorship (the rule of the pastors).

Scriptural church government may be defined as the execution of the laws of Christ by congregational rule under pastoral leadership. Pastor must give the church leadership and guidance before it makes any decision. Here, Peter instructs the people about what to vote for — not who to vote for. The same pattern is seen in Acts 6:3.

4. Qualified proposals. (v. 23). Two men who were equally qualified were put forward as candidates.

5. Fervent prayer (v. 24, 25). Prayer is the difference between a scriptural (Spirit-led) business meeting and a worldly (human wisdom) one. Church members are to pray and seek GOD'S will in each and every matter that comes before the church.

6. Congregational decision (v. 26a). This indicates a congregational vote was taken.

7. Heavenly ratification (v. 26b). Matthias was chosen (by the church) and he was numbered with the eleven apostles (by the Lord).

There are some who believe the church at Jerusalem made a serious mistake in electing Matthias, because God's true choice was Paul. The lack of any subsequent mention of Matthias by name is cited as proof that the Lord never owned him or his ministry. However:

1. Many (most of the) apostles are not mentioned by name after Acts chapter 1.

2. God evidently recognized "the twelve" in Acts 6:2 — not "the eleven plus Matthias!" In Acts 6:6, the "twelve" of verse 2 are called apostles.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ said that the decision of a church on earth would be recognized in Heaven (Matt. 18:17,18).

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This chapter covers some of the most controversial subjects in present-day Christianity concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of salvation, and the doctrine of the church. Our study will deal with four important issues: Holy Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, baptismal regeneration, and church membership.

I. THE PERSON OF PENTECOST — vv. 1-3

READ v. 1. This was the annual Jewish feast, held fifty days after Passover. It is called Pentecost only in the New Testament. In the Old Testament it is called the “feast of weeks” or “feast of harvest”. This is because Pentecost marked the traditional end of the annual harvest.

READ vv. 2-3. Holy Ghost baptism. These verses record the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of God. There are only six references in the Bible to this event. In each of these verses, ask, who does the baptizing? And what are they baptized with?

1. Matthew 3:11 - “ ... he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, ...”
2. Mk 1:8 - “ ... he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.”
3. Luke 3:16 - “ ... he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:”
4. John 1:33 - “ ... the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”
5. Acts 1:5 - “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”
6. Acts 11:16 - “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.”

There are two commonly held errors concerning Holy Ghost baptism.

1. The Pentecostal/Charismatic Error. Various holiness groups teach that Holy Ghost baptism is an on-going experience to be earnestly sought. Some refer to this experience as the “second blessing” or “entire sanctification,”. Within this broad spectrum of belief, there are those who say that Holy Ghost baptism is essential to salvation and is evidenced by so-called “speaking in tongues”. Others say that it completes the salvation process, while some believe it to be a desirable after-salvation experience.
2. The Invisible/Universal ‘Church’ Error.

Those in this group usually believe in what they call “Spirit baptism.” The idea is basically that the Holy Spirit forms the church by baptizing all believers into the body of Christ. However, a correct understanding of this important subject can be gained by simply studying the six verses carefully.

FACT #1. These six references are all referring to ONE specific event. Five of them are pointing to the future "... shall be baptized...". The last one, Acts 11:16, is looking back, "then remembered I".

Obviously, this specific event occurred somewhere between the time of John the Baptist's prophecy (recorded Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and the events of Acts 11. Acts 1:5 pinpoints the actual time with the phrase, "not many days hence,". The event was the sending of the Holy Spirit that occurred on the DAY OF PENTECOST. Implication: To seek some baptism with, in, or by the Holy Spirit as an ongoing experience is useless. The scriptural event was "once only."

FACT #2. The prophecy of John is synonymous with the promise of the Father. As covered in chapter one, the word, "For..." in Acts 1:5 connects the promise of the Father and John's Holy Ghost baptism. Implication: Holy Ghost baptism IS the sending of the Comforter. They are not two separate events.

FACT #3. The Holy Spirit Does NOT Baptize Anyone. A careful reading of each verse makes it clear that the Holy Spirit does not baptize anyone — He never has, and never will! All these scriptures clearly state that it is the Lord Jesus Christ ("he") Who baptizes with the Holy Ghost.

The Bible also explains the word "with." John baptized with water. We know this involved his immersing his subjects in water. Therefore, when Christ baptized with the Holy Ghost, He immersed His subjects in the Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ the baptizer — the Holy Spirit the medium! Implication: To say that "the Spirit forms the Church by baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ" is nonsense. He does not baptize anyone!

The chief 'proof-text' offered for this Spirit-baptism hypothesis is 1 Cor. 12:13 — "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." If that is true, then according to what Paul wrote in v. 27, he indicates that he is not saved. What this verse teaches is that after salvation, we are baptized (by immersion in water) into one church body. For example, I was baptized into the Fargo Baptist Church membership, not multiple church memberships. This is the same order found in Acts 2:41.

FACT #4. Holy Ghost baptism was a once-only event which initiated the present blessing of receiving the Holy Spirit at the instant of salvation. It is important to recognize that some things which occurred on the day of Pentecost were singular, others transitory, and some repeatable.

1. The "ONCE ONLY" Events Of Pentecost. First, God The Son Baptized With The Holy Spirit. The church was empowered to fulfill its mission. Second, God The Father Authenticated The Church Christ Established. Third, God the Holy Spirit assumed the administration of the Lord's churches.
2. The TRANSITORY Event Of Pentecost. This was the miraculous enabling of the apostles to preach in many foreign languages. The gift of tongues is one of the temporary "sign gifts," and will be studied in more detail below.
3. The REPEATABLE Events Of Pentecost. First, believers were filled with the Spirit (v. 4). Second, the Church was empowered to witness boldly (v. 8). Third, souls were saved, baptized, and added to the church.

II. THE POWER OF PENTECOST — vv. 4-13

READ v. 4a. THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. This is the “on-going commanded duty and privilege of all believers. It is synonymous with yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit.

READ vv. 4b-13. THE GIFT OF TONGUES.

The Charismatic movement, with its hallmark emphasis on “speaking in tongues” is one of the great religious phenomena of the 20TH Century. Many Christians are confused or uncertain about the issue — often basing their beliefs on what they see, rather than on what the Bible says. There are three things to take note of if we are to understand what the Bible really says about speaking in tongues:

1. The Biblical RECORD Of Tongues. True Biblical “tongues” are known earth languages — not unintelligible gibberish! In fact, Acts 2:9-11 lists 16 known languages and dialects. The term “unknown tongue” in I Corinthians 14 refers to a language unknown to the hearer. The first question which should be asked of a modern-day tongue speaker is: “In what language did you speak?”

The hyperbolic expression “tongues of angels” (I Corinthians 13:1) means the ability to speak perfectly. Angels are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:14) and as such do not have tongues. But whenever they have appeared in human form they have always spoken in the language of the hearer.

2. The Biblical REASON For Tongues. Speaking with tongues is one of the “sign gifts” listed in Mark 16:17,18. It was given for the purpose of accreditation of God’s man or God’s message. In the New Testament, tongues were a sign to unbelieving Jews authenticating the Gospel preached by the apostles and authenticating that God’s salvation was extended to Gentiles.

The second question which should be asked of a modern-day tongue speaker is: “To which group of Jews did you speak?”

Mark 16:17,18 catalogs four sign gifts — casting out devils, speaking in tongues, taking up deadly serpents (miracles), and healing. This prophetic statement made by the Lord Jesus Christ has in fact been fulfilled. Each one of the sign gifts can be seen functioning in the Book of Acts.

According to I Corinthians 13:8, “tongues shall cease.” Since the gift of tongues is one of the sign gifts, we can see that all the sign gifts were temporary. Sign gifts ceased “when that which is perfect is come” — I Corinthians 13:8-10. This refers to the completed (written) Word of God.

As the Books of the New Testament were written and circulated, the need for accreditation diminished accordingly. Today, we do not need signs to give authority to what is preached — we have the written Word of God, our only and final authority!!

The standard Charismatic interpretation of “when that which is perfect is come” is that it refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ. The word perfect is in the neuter form. If it referred to Jesus, it would have been a “P”erfect.

3. The Biblical RULES For Tongues. There are strict rules laid down in the Bible concerning anyone speaking in a foreign language in a church meeting. Even if the gift of tongues were for today (which it is not!), these same rules would apply. They are given in I Corinthians 14.

- a. Only three such persons are to speak — verse 27.
- b. Such persons are to speak in turn — verse 27.
- c. One person must interpret — verse 27.
- d. If no interpreter is present, there is to be NO speaking in foreign languages — verse 28.
- e. Women are not to speak in tongues — verse 34.

III. THE PREACHING OF PENTECOST — vv. 14-36

READ v. 14. Peter, who 7 weeks earlier denied Jesus, now boldly stands up and begins preaching.

READ vv. 16-21. Peter was answering the mockers who accused them of being drunk (v. 13). Peter pointed to the Holy Spirit activity in Joel's prophecy and explained the strange events that were taking place was the work of the Holy Spirit.

READ vv. 22-36. This is the first of seven recorded sermons in the Book of Acts. Four are addressed to Jews, one to a Gentile proselyte, and two to pagans. Of particular interest is the starting point of these sermons. Those that were preached to Jews began with David (Acts 2), Abraham (Acts 3,7), and Moses (Acts 13) — familiar ground to the hearers who knew Who God was. The messages preached to pagans, however, started with creation (Acts 14,17).

READ v. 27. Did Jesus Go To Hell?

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The Lord Jesus Christ did not enter the fires of Hell following His death. To understand this verse it is necessary to realize that, prior to Christ's resurrection, the region of the departed dead consisted of two compartments — the place of torment and Paradise, both separated by an impassable gulf as described in the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16.

Jesus went to Paradise after His death on the cross — Luke 23:43. When Christ arose, He "led captivity [souls of saved people in Paradise] captive to Heaven (Paradise is now located in Heaven).

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IV. THE PRICKED HEARTS OF PENTECOST — vv. 37-42

READ v. 37. Conviction of sin is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. We must rely on the convicting power of the Holy Ghost!

READ v. 38. This verse is the number one proof-text used by those who teach “baptismal regeneration” (or “baptismal remission”) — the belief that baptism is necessary for salvation. On the surface, it may appear that baptism is required for salvation. However, this teaching does not line up with the numerous scriptures showing the way of salvation, none of which mention baptism.

The key to understanding this particular scripture is the word “FOR” in the middle of the verse. This little word “for” can have two meanings: “in order to” or “because of”.

For example, if we say: “He was put in prison FOR a crime,” we do not mean he was placed in prison ‘in order to’ commit a crime — rather, he was put in prison ‘because of’ a crime he had already committed. An example of these two meanings is found in Luke 5:14.

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“And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer FOR [because of] thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, FOR [into order to show] a testimony unto them.”

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Those who teach baptism is necessary for salvation interpret the “for” in v. 38 to be mean ‘in order to:’ - “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ in order to [receive] the remission of sins...”

However, the scripturally harmonious interpretation of “for” is — ‘because of:’ - “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ because of the remission of sins...”

v. 38 – The act of baptizing someone should follow baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Great Commission. The wording here of baptizing in Jesus name is not a contradiction to the Great Commission but it means “by the authority of Jesus Christ.”

vv. 38-39. The gift of the Holy Ghost is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

READ v. 41. Three thousand souls were converted to Christ. What a marvelous sight that must have been! This is a KEY verse of scripture, because it outlines the order God has established for the Christian life. This order is that of the Great Commission in Matthew 28.

1. Salvation - They received his word, i.e. the Word of God that was preached.
2. Baptism - This always follows salvation — it never (scripturally) precedes it.
3. Church Membership - They were “added unto them.”

Two important points are to be made in this verse. First, church membership is for believers. A “regenerate Church membership” is one of the historic Baptist distinctives. Second, church membership is for baptized believers.

Just as the new birth is the “door” to the Kingdom of God, so baptism is the “door” to the Church. I Corinthians 12:13 states that we are “baptized into [the]...body.”

READ v. 42. Those who were saved and baptized did not drift away — back into the world, or back into their false religion. They continued!! There are FOUR areas Christians are to continue in:

1. The Apostles’ Doctrine. The word “doctrine” means ‘teaching.’ The apostles’ doctrine refers specifically to the New Testament scriptures. The Word of God is the Christian’s spiritual food. The New Testament Church is the place to be taught the Word of God.
2. Fellowship. Christian fellowship has two aspects. First, Godward, this is our personal walk with the Lord. Second, manward, this is our service with other believers.
3. Breaking Of Bread means eating together.
4. Prayers. Prayer is to be a vital, constant thing in the lives of church members.

Here we have the basic ingredients for Baptist Church life — Bible study and preaching meetings, opportunities for service, social feasting, and the prayer meetings.

V. THE PEOPLE OF PENTECOST — vv. 43-47

READ v. 43. Notice their testimony. The fear of God came upon the people of Jerusalem.

READ v. 44. They were in one accord and the church exemplified brotherly love. Some have imagined Acts 2:44 teaches a kind of “Christian Communism!” However, the having “all things common” was: (1) Voluntary. Communism has to be forced upon a population, and is characterized by bloodshed and violence. (2) Not Universal. I.E Acts 12:12, where John Mark’s mother still owned her home. The Bible presupposes private ownership and opposes socialism. Communism and socialism are godless, humanistic philosophies which never work!

Christians are to depend upon the all-sufficient God (Who often works through the brethren) to provide the basic physical needs of food, clothing, and shelter (Matthew 6:25-34) — not the government!

READ vv. 46-47

Church growth is a major concern of all who are involved in the Lord’s work. This verse answers three questions: (1) Who Is Responsible For Church Growth? The Lord! Our responsibility is to faithfully preach the Word — but God gives the increase! (2) What Is An Acceptable Rate Of Church Growth? Daily! (3) How Is Church Growth Accomplished? Acts 2:41 explains exactly how the Lord adds to the Church — it is by baptism.

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This chapter focuses our attention on another of the “sign gifts” — the gift of healing. A comparison of this miracle with the pseudo-miracles done by today’s ‘fake’ healers is most revealing.

I. THE LAME MAN AT THE TEMPLE — vv. 1-5

READ v. 1. This verse gives two important practical lessons about evangelism. First, there is partnership in the work. Peter and John are working together. The work of the Lord was never intended to be done by individuals in isolation. Whether it be the day-to-day outreach of a church into its community, or the planting of churches in new areas, the scriptural plan is for God’s people to work together.

A study of New Testament evangelism demonstrates this principle of “team ministry.” It was the method first taught by the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church sending out 2x2. It was the practice of the great church-planters - Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas and John Mark, and Paul and Silas. Generally, we think of the apostle Paul as the great church-planter of the New Testament. The fact is, Paul always labored with at least two others in a team setting.

The second practical lesson in evangelism is the planning of the work. Peter and John did not go to the temple to pray — they went at the “hour of prayer.” Why? Because that was a time when many people would be present. Peter and John went where the people were! This teaches a simple, yet important principle of evangelism: have a definite plan of action! The apostles did not sit back and wait for the lost to come to them — they went to the lost, and God opened a door of opportunity for them to preach.

READ vv. 2-5. The lame man is a picture of the natural (unsaved) man. He was lame from birth. We are sinners by nature from birth. He was helpless. We are unable to save ourselves. He was in a desperate situation. Without Christ, we are hopelessly lost. He found no lasting satisfaction in what man gave him. People tried to help him, but none but Christ can satisfy.

II. THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN — vv. 6, 7

READ vv. 6-7. The so-called “gift of healing” is another trademark of the Pentecostal denominations and the Charismatic Movement. The Book of Acts records four specific miracles of healing, together with three general statements that a healing occurred. In considering this particular account, notice:

1. Peter and John did not claim any special power or ability (v. 12).
2. The apostles healed the man where he was. They never held healing meetings!
3. The afflicted man did not seek to be healed.
4. The healing was complete. There were no relapses.
5. The miracle was a minor thing, Gospel preaching was the major focus of the apostolic endeavor.
6. The apostles did not require faith — healing requires power, not faith.

There is a profound difference between divine healing and so-called divine healers! God is omnipotent and His power extends to His ability to heal the physical body. He can heal anyone at any time in any way He wills. The issue is not, "Can God heal?" but rather, "Is the gift of healing operational today?" Consider the following:

1. The healing ministry of Jesus Christ — The Gospels record 18 specific miracles of healing by the Lord Jesus Christ. A careful study of these reveals the following facts:

- a. Christ healed people where He found them — no special meetings.
- b. Christ healed ALL manner of sickness — no screening process.
- c. Christ's healings were complete — no failures, relapses, no convalescence.
- d. Christ's healings were free of charge — no offerings.
- e. Christ healed some who came requesting it.
- f. Christ healed some who didn't request it.
- g. Christ generally healed without touching — no theatrics.
- h. Christ never prayed before He healed someone.
- i. Christ discouraged testimonies — Mark 7:36.
- k. Christ didn't require faith on the part of anyone.
- l. Those He healed were either unsaved, or were saved at the same moment.

2. Healing is one of the "Sign Gifts." Healing is listed with tongues in Mark 16:17,18. As noted previously, the sign gifts were given to confirm or authenticate the message and the messenger of God. Because healing is a sign gift, it was transitory and therefore not available for today. Like the miracle manna, which ceased when Israel entered Canaan, the gift of healing was done away with when the written Word of God (New Testament) was completed.

3. God does heal today. God not only can, but most certainly does heal the physical bodies of people today. Clearly, however, the criterion is, "If it be Thy will." Many great Christians were NOT healed. It is not always God's will to heal (Paul, Epaphroditus, Timothy, and Trophimus). Also, James 5 gave instructions for when church members fall sick.

4. Satan is also able to work miracles.

III. THE HEALED MAN'S NEW LIFE — vv. 8-10

READ vv. 8-10. Here we observe a spiritual illustration of salvation, and the great change that is wrought in the life of any sinner who trusts Christ as Saviour. He began to walk. He had new life! When we are saved, we too have a new life in Christ. Salvation begins our walk in the Lord. He also began to talk. He started praising God. When we are born of God, we will naturally want to tell everyone we can of what Christ has done.

IV. THE APOSTOLIC EXPLANATION — vv. 11-18

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READ v. 11. An open door. Solomon's porch was located along the eastern side of the temple complex. The large crowd which gathered there provided a wonderful opportunity for Peter and John to witness.

READ v. 12. An honest disclaimer. Peter does not claim any special position or power.

READ vv. 13-15. An uplifted Savior. Peter immediately points his audience to the Lord Jesus Christ, not the Holy Spirit, as would a charismatic.

READ vv. 16-17. More important than the miracle of healing is the matter of salvation. Peter used the opportunity at hand to preach the death and resurrection of Christ. He then declared that FAITH was the only way to God — "through faith," but not just any faith: it is the "faith which is by HIM!"

READ vv. 18-21. The Jews were ignorant of their own scriptures. Verse 18 gives the "missed message of the prophets" — that Messiah must first come as a suffering saviour before establishing a glorious kingdom.

Old Testament prophecies speak of two comings of Christ. The first is the cross (v. 18b) that brought the "times of refreshing" (v. 19b). The second coming of Christ was the crown (v. 20a) that will bring in the "times of restitution" (verse 21a) — another term for the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

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Looking into the distant future, the Old Testament prophets saw the "mountain peaks" of the first advent of Christ (His birth and His death) and the second advent of Christ (His glorious coming and His kingdom). What they could not see between the peaks was the "valley of the present age" — the "Church Age."

The Jews were looking for the coming King, but had failed to understand their need of personal salvation.

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V. THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION — v. 19

READ v. 19. Having preached the Gospel, he concludes with a "therefore,". Three terms associated with salvation are used here.

1. Repentance — "Repent ye...". The call to repentance is missing from many pulpits today. It seems there is a desire to keep sinners feeling 'comfortable' about themselves, rather than confronting them with their sins. Repentance literally means "a change of mind." This is more than mere mental assent, however — it is a change of mind which results in action Matthew 21:28-30.

In the area of salvation, true repentance is always coupled with FAITH. Repentance and faith are “two sides of the one coin” — they are inseparable! Salvation involves a turning to Christ (faith) and a turning from sin (repentance).

Many think of repentance in terms of tears, mourning, sorrow, etc. However, remorse is not repentance (although it may accompany it). The sinner needs to be more than ‘sorry for being caught’ — he needs to be sorry for the offense he has caused a holy God.

2. Conversion — “...be converted...”. Conversion means a “change of life.” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Conversion is the work of God. The sinner must repent (and believe), but it is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit which brings about the change.

3. Forgiveness — “...that your sins may be blotted out.” Forgiveness means to pardon and can only be done by the blood of Christ. He blots them out.

READ vv. 22-26. In concluding his sermon, Peter once more refers his hearers back to the Old Testament and its prophecies of Christ. He gives three instances:

1. The message of Moses (vv. 22-23). This prophecy of Jesus Christ is cited from Deuteronomy 18:15.

2. The message of the prophets (v. 24).

3. The message of the Abrahamic Covenant (vv. 25-26). The promise that “in thee shall all the nations of the world be blessed” (Gen. 12:2, 3) - beginning with the Jews.

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This chapter continues the account of the miraculous healing in Acts 3. Doing good and what is right does not always receive accolades and thanks from others.

I. THE RESULTS OF PETER'S PREACHING — vv. 1-4

READ vv. 1, 2. Peter's preaching grieved the religious crowd. The establishment felt threatened. They were grieved: (1) Who was preaching – 'unlearned and ignorant men' (v. 13) and (2) What was being preached – Christ, sin, and repentance and faith.

READ v. 3. Peter's preaching land him and John in prison. This ushered in the first persecution against the first church. It was the first of many waves of harassment. Historically, the greatest opposition to the Baptists has come from the religious establishment.

Note the timing. It was "now eventide" — around 6:00 p.m. Peter and John went into the temple at 3 p.m. so they had about three hours of ministry time, and they certainly made the most of it!

READ v. 4. It resulted in a harvest of souls. When God's people will stay true to God's Word and serve him according to God's way, God's blessings will result. Here, 5,000 men were saved, indicating an even higher number if women were present.

II. THE REBUFF TO THE SANHEDRIN — vv. 5-12

READ vv. 5, 6. The Sanhedrin was the ruling Jewish religious body. While Palestine was under Roman rule, this council ruled over all internal affairs and religious matters. Its composition was of rulers, elders, scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees, priests, the High priest (and his relatives). Traditionally, it had 70 members.

READ v. 7. The Sanhedrin's enquiry. First, they asked by what power? The believer has the resource of all the power of God to do the work of God - Holy Ghost power; power of the Word of God; power of the Gospel; power of prayer, power of preaching; power of faith that can move mountains.

Second, they asked by what name meaning by what authority. Our authority to preach and witness is derived from the Great Commission which the Lord gave to His churches.

READ v. 8. They were filled with the Holy Ghost. This is the 'repeatable' experience of Pentecost.

READ vv. 9-11. Peter responded with a declaration of the gospel — the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is indeed the power of God unto salvation.

READ v. 12. This verse refutes the idea many have that all religions lead to the same God (spokes on a wheel – Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, etc.). There is positively, absolutely no other way a person can be saved except through Jesus Christ.

III. THE REPLY OF THE SANHEDRIN — vv. 13-22

READ v. 13. They marveled. Here is the secret of boldness — “...they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”

READ v. 14 – They were confounded. They may have disputed what was said, but they couldn’t answer what they saw. A changed life is a strong testimony to the truth of God’s Word.

READ vv. 15-16. They conspired. The miracle was in the open, it could not be denied. What to do?

READ vv. 17, 18. The decision of the Sanhedrin. They thought to ban the preaching of the gospel. No secular or religious power has the authority to override divine authority. If the government restricts or bans preaching and testifying, it is overstepping its God-ordained purpose.

READ v. 20. The answer. For a Christian, witnessing ought to be as natural as breathing. Note that witnessing requires that we have a first-hand, experiential knowledge of Christ.

READ vv. 21, 22. The Sanhedrin’s dilemma. The public miracle prevented anything from being done to the two apostles.

IV. THE REPORT TO THE CHURCH — vv. 23-31

READ v. 23. Peter and John were not ‘free-lance’ Christians. Even though they were the ones used of the Lord in this episode, they were a part of the church in Jerusalem and realized it was through the church the Lord was pleased to work.

We need to remember that when we see fruit in our ministry, it is not the result of us as individuals, but that God is working through the ministry of His church.

READ vv. 24-30. How did the disciples answer the threats against them. They, the church, took it to the Lord in prayer. They were in one accord (v. 24).

Church unity is one of the keys to effective church work. They made definite request on behalf of the preachers and the preaching. Notice that they did not ask for protection, they asked for power.

READ v. 31. The results of this prayer meeting. First, God’s preachers were filled with the Spirit. Second, the Word of God was preached boldly.

V. THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM — vv. 32-37

This passage gives us a further insight into the life of the church in Jerusalem, which by this time was numerically very sizeable.

READ v.32. It was united - one heart, one soul, and one bond. People really suffered for their faith.

READ v. 33. It had a powerful witness – great power and great grace.

READ v. 34. It was filled with love. This in itself was a tremendous witness to all around.

John 13:35 – by this shall all men know you are my disciples.

READ vv. 35-37. It was liberal meaning generous and giving. It was also organized and accountable. The money collected was laid at the feet of the apostles, who then oversaw its distribution according to needs as we will see in chapter 6.

Here we are introduced by name to Barnabas, one of the great men of the apostolic age. His name is Joses, a shortened form of “Joseph”. He was a Jew from Cyprus. He was of the tribe of Levi.

He apparently was a wealthy landowner. His nickname was “Barnabas” meaning ‘son of consolation’. He was the exhorter or the encourager of the church. He would soon become Saul’s mentor.

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Satan hates the church that Jesus established, commissioned, and empowered. In chapter four, we saw that his physical and verbal assault of two pastors of the church at Jerusalem failed to deter or diminish its outreach — resulting only in a church that was more united and more effective than ever. In this chapter, Satan turns his attention to two members of the church, Ananias and Sapphira, in an attempt to tear down its unity.

I. THE SIN OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA — vv. 1-11

The offerings in question in this passage of scripture were “special offerings,” used to alleviate the needs of poorer members. This giving was voluntary, and a manifestation of the love for God in the hearts of the people.

There is no doubt the churches continued the OT practice of the giving of TITHES AND OFFERINGS — the only difference being in the storehouse (no longer the temple, but the treasury of the church). Tithing is a scriptural principle, spanning both testaments and transcending the period of “Law.”

1. Abraham Commenced It — Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:1-5.
2. Jacob Continued It — Genesis 28:22.
3. Moses Confirmed It — Leviticus 27:30.
4. Malachi Comanded It — Malachi 3:8-10.
5. Jesus Commended It — Matthew 23:23.
6. Paul Conformed It — I Corinthians 9:13,14.
7. God Commissioned It — I Corinthians 16:2.

The New Testament teaches scriptural giving to be a “GRACE” — something God does in and through us. Thus our giving comes as a result of the work of the Lord in our hearts, rather than an obligatory payment as demanded under the Law.

READ vv. 1, 2. The deceit of Ananias and Sapphira. Their sin was NOT that they didn’t give the full amount received from the sale of their possession, but that they SAID they had given all. What was their motive? Maybe it was they wanted celebrity status and receive commendation like what was given to Barnabas in the previous chapter.

READ vv. 3-4. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira. Their real sin was that of lying. Satan is the ‘father of lies’ (John 8:44). Lying is a great sin in the sight of God.

Proven - the personality of the Holy Spirit. V. 3 states that Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost. One can only lie to a PERSON. It is not possible to lie to a ‘force,’ or some impersonal object or power.

Proven – the deity of the Holy Spirit. V. 4 states that Ananias lied to God. He lied to the Holy Ghost in v. 3 and to God in v. 4 so that means that the Holy Spirit IS God. The Holy Spirit is the THIRD PERSON of the Godhead. He is co-eternal, and co-equal with God the Father and God the Son.

Review v. 4. Ananias and Sapphira were under no compulsion to give. Here the Bible recognizes the right of private ownership. Even after the property was sold, the couple had the right ('power') to do whatever they liked with the proceeds. This not only shows the right to private ownership but proves that Christian giving is NOT obligatory. Offerings are to be freewill.

READ vv. 5-10. God's judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira. They both dropped dead! No doubt the Lord was seeking to give an example to the church at Jerusalem and all subsequent churches and believers. God does chastise His children when they grieve Him through sin. Sometimes, physical death may be the result.

READ v. 11. The results of God's judgment. God's swift judgment brought great fear (reverential awe) upon the membership. Whenever we grow lax in our devotion to God, our giving to God, and our service for God, we need to be reminded of just Who our God is.

II. THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM — vv. 12-16

READ v. 12. The church did not have its own property. It met in various homes (Acts 1:46; 12:12), but its regular general meeting place was at the Temple in Solomon's Porch.

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Solomon's Porch was the area along the eastern outer wall. Within its colonnades were places where the scribes held their schools and debates, and the merchants and moneychangers had their stalls. It was somewhat a public gathering place. As persecution grew, this locality became unusable.

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READ v. 13. The stand that this church took brought about a separation. There were church members and there were non-members. Notice that when a church stands true to the Lord, it will have the respect of the lost.

READ v. 14. The church continued to grow. Note the expression, "added to the Lord." To be added to the Lord means to be added to His church and Acts 2:41 tells us this is accomplished through receiving baptism. According to I Corinthians 12:18, it is the Lord Who places members in His body.

Note also that it was 'believers' who were added — not the lost. This helps disprove the false theory that a person is baptized (added) into a universal, invisible church by the Holy Spirit at the point of conversion.

READ vv. 15-16. The ministry of this church was people oriented. Note also that the scripture does not say the shadow of Peter healed anyone — people just thought it might. Interesting thought: Here's a case where people wanted to come to church, because of its testimony.

III. THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM — vv. 17-28

READ v. 17. The attitude of the religious crowd was indignation. Satan will often stir up the most religious of people to fight against the work of the Lord. An active, evangelizing church can always expect the disapproval and scorn of a dead 'church.'

READ v. 18. The attack of the religious crowd. The first people in a church the Devil will attack are those in leadership. This is why members should pray constantly and fervently for their pastors.

READ v. 19. The deliverance of the Apostles. The Lord brought a supernatural deliverance by means of an angel.

READ v. 20. As if to answer any doubts that may have arisen in the hearts of the preachers and people, God, through His angelic messenger, reaffirms the mandate. "GO ... SPEAK ... TO THE PEOPLE ... WORDS OF THIS LIFE."

READ v. 21a. The Apostles obeyed and early in the morning they were back at the great task.

READ v. 21b – 27. The religious authorities planned to bring the apostles out of prison and deal with them severely in private. When it was discovered that the prison was missing the prisoners (there was no violent jailbreak!), the Jewish leaders became very concerned about "whereunto this would grow." The apostles returned to face the judges willingly (v. 26).

READ v. 28. We see the influence of the church. The whole city had been filled with the doctrine of Jesus Christ. What an admirable goal for a Bible-believing Baptist church!

IV. THE ANSWER OF THE APOSTLES — vv. 29-33

READ v. 29. Christians are to be law-abiding citizens who dutifully pay their taxes and pray for their governments. However, all human authority — government, husbands, parents, pastors, etc. — is delegated authority, established by the absolute authority of Almighty God. We are to obey them "as unto the Lord."

The Bible teaches complete and absolute separation between "Church" and "State" (Mark 12:17). It is certainly ok for a Christian to be involved civil government, but it is wrong for religious bodies to interfere with the governing of society. Likewise, it is equally wrong for governments to control, support, or influence religious bodies.

Acts 5:29b gives the ONLY allowance for when a church or a Christian should deliberately disobey the laws and directions of governments or men — that being when such laws and directions interfere with our religious duty. For example, if the government banned Bibles, free worship, public evangelism, prayer, etc., then we must obey God rather than men.

READ vv. 30, 31. The Gospel is the great message. To cease preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is to deny the lost the blessing of the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins is received through repentance and faith, based upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

READ v. 32. The Holy Ghost is given to all those who obey the Gospel – get saved.

READ v. 33. The Holy Ghost is the reprover. They heard. They were convicted. They responded. Not all who are convicted of their sin will turn to Christ.

V. THE ANSWER OF GAMALIEL – vv. 34-42

READ vv. 34-42. Gamaliel's philosophy is faulty because it is based upon human experience. It is, however, the prevailing philosophy of today (pragmatism) whereby many justify their actions that are contrary to the Word of God. It is the philosophy that "SUCCESS means it is RIGHT!"

Communism has been successful – but it is not right! Jehovah's Witnesses are successful – but they are not right!

READ vv. 40, 41. The Apostles are beaten. Note the attitude of these men - rejoicing.

READ v. 42. The church's program defined. This ought to be the goal of every Baptist church:

- Daily – everyday evangelism.
- In the temple – church-house evangelism.
- In every house – house-to-house evangelism.
- They – every member evangelism.
- Ceased not – uninterrupted evangelism.
- To teach – educational evangelism.
- And to preach – preaching evangelism.
- Jesus Christ – Christ-centered evangelism.

What is the difference between teaching Christ and preaching Christ? Teaching is explaining while preaching is proclaiming.

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Having failed to defeat the church from the outside, the adversary now attempts to destroy it from the inside. Once again, the thrust of his evil work is to destroy the unity of the church. Satan's plan was simple:

- Divide the people — verse 1
- Divert the preachers — verse 2
- Disrupt the potential — verse 7

I. CHURCH PROBLEMS —v. 1

READ v. 1. Some have estimated the membership of this church to have been around 25,000 people. Although many of the 3,000 saved on the day of Pentecost would have returned to their home countries, the fact that 5,000 men (Acts 4:4) and then multitudes of men and women were “added” on a daily basis (5:14) would indicate this estimation to be reasonable. Notice that by the time we get to Acts 6:1, the Lord had dispensed with “addition” and had turned to “multiplication!”

Because of the large number of members, the “daily ministration” (dispensing of assistance for those who were left without means of support) was a major operation.

The Devil will always target his most savage attacks upon God's two institutions: the HOME and the CHURCH — especially when they are functioning as God planned. In attacking churches, Satan seeks to hinder or halt the work of the Lord. Already in Acts, we see three methods being employed:

1. Persecution From Outsiders — Acts 4.
2. Evil Intent From Insiders — Acts 5.
3. Division And Discord Within — Acts 6.

The problem was initially one of neglect, seemingly upon cultural lines. One group of widows was being overlooked — either inadvertently, because of cultural blindness, or perhaps deliberately. The problem was real (neglect), but the “solution” was wrong. Murmuring is not the scriptural way to solve any problem. Murmuring is defined as complaining or grumbling and is sin.

In this particular case (Acts 6), it seems there was a problem of favoritism. Even so, the Devil was able to gain a foothold because those affected murmured about it, rather than deal with the problem openly and directly.

Ministering to the needy was done by the apostles (Acts 4:35). It is unfortunate when a pastor overlooks or neglects a church member, but it can happen — especially when the membership is large. Satan has a good understanding of human nature — he knows how to incite and cause friction between church members.

There were two groups of Jews making up the membership of the church at Jerusalem — the “Grecians” and the “Hebrews.”

1. The Grecians were the Hellenistic Jews — those who had adopted the Greek culture and were Greek-speaking. Their history extends back to the time of Judah’s captivity (c.606 B.C.), when the prophet Jeremiah and other Jews were taken to Egypt (Jeremiah 43,44). During the intertestamental period, the city of Alexandria became home to a large colony of Jews, descended from these exiles. This city also became an influential center of Greek philosophy and culture.
2. The Hebrews. These were Jews who had kept to the ancient Hebrew way of life. They spoke Hebrew and were very proud of their heritage and their orthodoxy. In the Jewish society at the time of Christ and the apostles the Hellenistic Jews were looked down upon as second-class Jews by the Hebrews. Unfortunately, it seems some of the old prejudices spilled over into the church.

II. DIVINE SOLUTIONS — vv. 2-5a

Although the word “deacon” does not appear in Acts 6, the ministry of deacons does. This passage gives an account of the election of the FIRST DEACONS. According to Philippians 1:1, the two offices in a New Testament church are bishops (elders, pastors) and deacons.

The office of Pastor. At this early point in history, the twelve apostles served the church at Jerusalem as pastors. Peter was the “presiding” pastor (“senior” pastor), but each of the twelve worked as a team. After the scattering of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 8), other men were appointed as pastors. Churches need pastoral leadership to be properly organized. Every church needs at least one pastor, but in a church the size of the one at Jerusalem even twelve pastors had their hands full.

In vv. 2 and 4, we see that pastors are to be concerned foremost with the spiritual oversight of the church. First it is not reasonable to serve tables. Pastors should never be above doing menial tasks when the need is present. However, they must be careful not to become consumed with such things. Second, they are to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

The office of Deacon. The word “deacon” comes from the Greek meaning a “servant” — literally, “one who waits on tables.” A deacon is the servant of the church and is primarily concerned with meeting the physical needs of a church.

Two key things took place. First the pastors directed the church. They called for a church “business” meeting in v. 2 and in v. 3 instructed the member on what to look for, not who to vote for. This is pastoral leadership in action.

Then second, the church considered the matter, prayed about it, then chose seven qualified men to serve as deacons. This is the second example of the church demonstrating God’s plan for Baptist church governance — a congregational church vote under pastoral leadership.

What does the Bible teach concerning deacons?

1. Deacons are servants. Deacons do not “run the church” — they serve it.
2. Deacons are to be chosen when necessary. A church should not have deacons just for the sake of having them. The basic criterion is when the pastors must set aside prayer and the study of the Bible to take care of the physical needs on behalf of the church membership — deacons should be elected.
3. Deacons must be spiritually qualified (Acts 6; 1 Timothy 3)
4. Deacons are to be under the direction of the Pastors. See v. 3b — “...whom WE MAY APPOINT over this business...” The church chooses, the pastor uses.
5. Deacons are elected by the whole church (v. 5a). Although the pastors decide when deacons are necessary, and direct the deacons in their area of ministry, it is the church that decides who its deacons will be.

III. CHURCH CHOICE — vv. 5b,6

READ v. 5b. We see an act of Christian graciousness in the outcome of this matter. The names of the seven deacons are all Greek names — indicating that those chosen were from among the Grecian Jews, those who had raised the complaint to begin with. There are two notable deacons.

1. Stephen. Stephen was a mighty witness for the Lord. His ‘career’ as a preacher was short-lived (Acts 7). Only ONE message he preached is recorded in scripture — but it was through this message that Saul was convicted, and later converted to Christ. Saul went on to become a great apostle and evangelist. We must never underestimate anything done for Christ. What we do can have great consequences. “Little IS much, when God is in it!”
2. Philip. He was a great preacher too. The Lord used him for many years as an evangelist (Acts 8:5,26; 21:8). It is a wise policy to have men called to preach first serve as deacons.

READ v. 6. The laying on of hands is an act of identification and sanctification (setting apart). The church publicly identifies itself with the ministry of these chosen men.

IV. DIVINE BLESSING — v. 7

READ v. 7. Discord and disunity were destroyed. This is implied by the events that occurred once the problem was resolved. Unity resulted in fruit. Introversion gives way to extroversion. The work of the Lord through this church was re-started, and the fruit was abundant!

V. THE MINISTRY OF STEPHEN — vv. 8-15

READ v. 8. Stephen becomes a preacher. It may be in some cases, the Lord intends for the office of deacon to be a stepping stone to becoming a preacher.

READ v. 9. There were approximately 480 synagogues in Jerusalem at this time. The Libertines — Jews freed from Rome. The Cyrenians — Jews from Northern Africa. The Alexandrians — Jews from Egypt. It appears much of the opposition came from Jews who were born outside of Palestine.

They would have been Hellenistic Jews. It appears Stephen had gone to their synagogue specifically to win those of his own kind.

READ v. 10. Stephen was a spirit-filled man of God, and God gave weight to his preaching. The people could not refute the “substance” of his preaching, and they couldn’t speak against his “style” — he was such a sweet-spirited man.

READ vv. 11-14. Stephen’s capture. This is the only way a man who speaks the truth may be silenced. Stephen’s enemies used the same tactics that were employed against his Lord and Saviour.

READ v. 15. Stephen was both trusting his Lord and walking closely with Him. His whole face shone so that he looked like an angel.

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~ Chapter Seven ~

This chapter is devoted to the sermon preached by Stephen before the Jewish council. It is the third Gospel message recorded in the Book of Acts.

I. THE SETTING FOR THE SERMON — v. 1

READ v. 1. Stephen's ministry had enraged many of the Jews, who in turn stirred up the people and employed false witnesses against him. Stephen was accused of blasphemy (v. 13) and sedition (v. 14). Historically, Baptists have long been accused of sedition because their Bible doctrines of a saved and voluntary church membership strike at the heart of a State-Church society. Times of blessing and growth are often accompanied by times of trial in both our personal lives, and in our church life.

The question of the high priest. The high priest was Annas. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Both these men were involved in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Annas was also at the forefront in attempting to suppress the church at Jerusalem (Acts 4). Before Annas and the council, Stephen is asked to defend himself.

II. THE BODY OF THE SERMON — vv. 2-50

His sermon covered just about the entire Old Testament, which God used to bring great conviction in the hearts of the religious crowd. One of the "laws of teaching" is that the teacher (preacher) must go from the known to the unknown. Stephen began with the known (the Old Testament) to introduce his main point. The outline of Stephen's sermon is as follows:

READ vv. 2-7. ABRAHAM. The first part of Stephen's message covered events recorded in Genesis 11-20. Stephen pointed out that Abraham had resisted God through his incomplete obedience. God told him to leave his family but he took his family. God told him to go to Canaan but he stopped in Haran, halfway between UR and the Promised Land until his father, Terah, died.

READ vv. 8-16. ISAAC, JACOB, AND THE PATRIARCHS. The story of Joseph is a wonderful illustration of Jesus Christ — the beloved Son, obedient to the Father, despised and rejected by His own, patient in suffering, tempted yet without sinning, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, raised to glory, given a bride, exalted, given a Name, bringing the world into subjection, delivering His brethren, etc.

READ vv. 17-44. MOSES. This part of Stephen's sermon covers the record from Exodus through Deuteronomy. Stephen was pointing out through this section that national Israel had resisted God through their acts of disobedience in the wilderness.

READ v. 45. JOSHUA. Stephen covers the record of the Books of Joshua and Judges.

READ v. 45, 46. DAVID. This part of Stephen's sermon covers the record in the Books of Samuel.

READ vv. 47-50. SOLOMON. This part of Stephen's sermon covers Solomon's Temple.

III. THE APPLICATION OF THE SERMON — vv. 51-53

READ vv. 51-53. Stephen leveled a six-fold indictment against the Jews.

- (1) They were stiff-necked. This meant they were proud, and refused to bow their hearts to the will and Word of God.
- (2) They were spiritually uncircumcised. Spiritual circumcision is salvation. Unsaved.
- (3) They were resisting the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Who brings conviction. To resist Him is the unpardonable sin and results from a hardened heart.
- (4) They had killed the prophets.
- (5) They had murdered the Son of God.
- (6) They had not kept the Law.

IV. THE EFFECTS OF THE SERMON — verses 54,57

READ v. 54. It brought conviction. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. A man under conviction of sin will either be mad or glad — he will resist the Gospel or submit to the righteousness of God. They resisted and it brought forth violence (v. 57).

V. THE EFFECTS OF THE SERMON — vv. 55-60

READ vv. 55-60. The result of the sermon was the martyrdom of Stephen. With a forgiving heart, Stephen submitted to being cruelly stoned to death. Note: For The Christian, Death Is "Sleep."

In v. 58, we are introduced to Saul (Paul). Saul was a zealous Pharisee in charge of the lynch mob. It was this ONE sermon of Stephen's that was used by God to bring deep conviction and, ultimately, salvation to Saul — who became the apostle to the Gentiles, the greatest evangelist mentioned in the Word of God.

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~ Chapter Eight ~

This chapter marks the first transition in the Book of Acts. Up to this point, the Gospel had been largely confined to the city of Jerusalem. Now we come to the “and in all Judæa, and in Samaria” stage of the Lord’s commission was implemented. It took severe persecution to bring it about. The Lord will often use times of affliction and difficulty to move His people and churches

I. THE GREAT PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM — vv. 1-4

READ vv. 1-4. Saul, the young Pharisee was the leader of this persecution against the church at Jerusalem. It was widespread. It involved house-to-house searches — no doubt looking particularly for those homes where believers would congregate. The word “havock” (havoc) means devastation, ruin, total disruption, carnage, etc. It was a violent persecution, that paid no respect to gender or age.

As a result, the church membership was scattered and the Gospel spread. It seems God actually allowed this persecution to come about in order to accomplish what His church had thus far failed to do — i.e. carry the Gospel into all the world (Acts 1:8) as they stayed in Jerusalem.

Notice that it was the “lay people” of the church who became the preachers. The apostles remained in Jerusalem. Every member of a church has a personal responsibility to testify of Christ and preach the Gospel — it is not only up to the pastors and church staff.

II. THE MINISTRY OF PHILIP IN SAMARIA — vv. 5-17

READ v. 5. Philip, one of the seven deacons, had taken the “step up” from being a servant of the church to the ministry of an evangelist (See: Acts 21:8).

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He “preached Christ” to the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a mixed race — “half-breed Jews.” Their history extends back to the demise of the northern kingdom of Israel. In 721 B.C., Samaria finally fell to the armies of the Assyrian king and were taken into captivity. The Assyrian king then brought in captives from other countries and settled them in Samaria. Through intermarriage with Jews in the area, the race of the Samaritans evolved. They were despised by Jews.

Samaria had been reached earlier with the Gospel. In John 4, we read of the marvelous account of the “woman at the well” who received the Living Water following her encounter with Jesus Christ. As a consequence of this woman’s salvation many others living in that town were converted — John 4.

READ vv. 6-8. The results. (1) A great reception. The seed had been sown in this region some years earlier by the Lord Himself. (2) A great demonstration of God’s power. (3) A great joy. This indicates the fruit of the Gospel.

Skip vv. 9-11 and come back to it. READ v. 12. The next step after salvation. Baptism follows salvation; it is for Believers. "...when they believed ...they were baptized, both men and women." What about infants?

Baptism is not the New Testament equivalent, or continuance of the Old Testament rite of circumcision. Those who want to "prove" their doctrine of infant 'baptism' often use the circumcision argument. Because circumcision was to be done at eight days, therefore, infants should be the subjects of baptism.

This argument fails here in Samaria because we see that both males and females were baptized whereas only boys are circumcised. Furthermore, they were believers! A newborn cannot intelligently believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Also, in Acts 16:3, Paul had Timothy circumcised — at which time Timothy was already a "certain disciple" and a baptized member of the church at Derbe. If baptism replaced circumcision, then why still circumcise?

READ v. 14. A church is organized. Although not explicitly stated, this fact is implied by the actions of the church at Jerusalem. The principle of "authority" was laid out by the Lord as He trained His disciples; it was expressed in His commission to His church; and it was practiced by the churches.

Philip's authority to preach came from the church in Jerusalem. After he had gathered a nucleus of baptized believers, the "mother church" sent two of its pastors — to both recognize and to formally organize the new church.

Sidenote: What is a biblical evangelist? In Acts 21:8, Philip is called an "evangelist." This word is only mentioned two other times in the New Testament — Ephesians 4:11; II Timothy 4:5. The word literally means a "gospeller" — a preacher of the Gospel. By studying the ministry of Philip, we can get a general idea of what the ministry of an evangelist is.

An evangelist is sent with church authority, as an extension of the church they belong to, to (1) Preaches Christ (8:5), baptizes believers (8:12), and organize church (8:14, 15). In essence an evangelist is a church planter. The more popular term for the New Testament evangelist is a "missionary".

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III. THE FALSE PROFESSION OF SIMON — vv. 9-11, 13-18

READ vv. 9-11. Simon was Satan's man in Samaria. He was a sorcerer, a man given to demonic practices and the use of magic. He was the local "witch doctor!" He was a respected man in the area. Note that the belief of the people in him was based upon what they SAW. The belief of the people concerning Christ was based upon what they HEARD (Faith comes by hearing - Romans 10:17).

READ v. 13. What did Simon believe? This verse demonstrates that not all belief is saving belief (The devils also believe - James 2:19). Judas Iscariot was one of the 12 apostles. He made a profession of faith. He was baptized by John the Baptist; he walked with the Lord and heard the best Bible preaching and teaching ever — and yet he was NEVER SAVED. Simon's belief was based on what he saw (v. 13b). He was attracted by the demonstrations of God's power, rather than by the Savior.

Why was Simon baptized? Seeing so many of his followers desert him for Christ, Simon no doubt thought it best to join them. One of Satan's methods is to infiltrate people into the Lord's churches who are not born again.

READ vv. 18-20. Simon's real motives were revealed. Simon made his move, and this revealed his true heart. He wanted power and control. He thought the power of God is something that could be used for personal gain (power, popularity, prestige, etc.)

READ vv. 21-23. Simon's true condition exposed. Peter's response to Simon's request indicates his true spiritual condition. He had no part in God's ways. Though he had joined the church, he was not in the kingdom. It was a case of profession without possession.

His heart was not right. He needed to repent. The only hope for Simon (as for all men) is to exercise repentance and faith — repentance from sin and true faith toward Jesus Christ. He was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Simon had never been truly liberated by the Gospel. He was still in bondage to sin and self.

IV. THE SAMARITAN CHRISTIANS RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT — vv. 14-25

The church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria. At this point, the Samaritans did not receive the Spirit at salvation like the Jews did since Pentecost. It is evident the Holy Spirit came in ethnic order: the Jews in chapter 2, the Samaritans in chapter 8, and the Gentiles in chapter 10.

V. PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN — vv. 26-40

READ vv. 26, 27. Some have wondered why the Lord directed Philip away from a "successful" campaign among the multitudes in Samaria to the remote desert, where he dealt with one man. This is, however, in keeping with the work of an evangelist. A church having been planted; the evangelist's ministry is finished. God did not call Philip to pastor; he was a church-planter.

In Acts 6, Philip was introduced to us as a spirit-filled Christian, a faithful member of the church at Jerusalem, and a deacon. He became one of God's choicest preachers. There are some key points to note here about Philip's spiritual character. He was sensitive to the Lord's leading (vv. 26, 29), always ready to preach, tireless in his service for the Lord.

The Ethiopian was an important and trusted man (v. 27). He was also a “seeker.” The Ethiopian came to Jerusalem to try to find God. He searched the Bible looking for answers (v. 28). As with Cornelius (Acts 10) and Lydia (Acts 16) — when man seeks God, the Lord will find him (Jer. 29:13).

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READ v. 28. The Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53. This is the one chapter in the Old Testament that is avoided by Jews to this day. It is one of the greatest and most explicit prophecies of Jesus Christ.

READ vv. 29-35. We can learn something about dealing with people and giving them the Gospel from Philip’s actions.

First, he sought the Spirit’s leading (v. 29). What a difference it would make if every Christian prayed and asked God to lead them to one soul who was seeking the Lord — and was prepared to act upon that opportunity.

Secondly, he used questions to lead into spiritual things (v. 30).

Thirdly, he presented the Lord Jesus (v. 35). Notice he used scripture, not arguments or his own reasoning.

READ vv. 36-39. The baptism of the Ethiopian. For the purpose of this study, we will examine this particular incident of baptism to observe the four requirements for scriptural (valid) baptism.

1. A Scriptural Candidate — believers, not babies. “IF thou BELIEVEST...” — verse 37. Note: Many Bible perversions omit or in some way cast doubt upon this verse.
2. A Scriptural Mode — immersion, not pouring or sprinkling. “...they went down both INTO the water ... they were come up OUT OF the water...” — verses 38,39. Why not just take his water bottle and pour or sprinkle him? Because the mode is immersion. The very word baptize means to dip, to plunge, or to immerse.
3. A Scriptural Motive — a symbol, not a sacrament. There is no salvation attached to baptism. Baptism is a picture or a figure of Christ’s death and resurrection.
4. A Scriptural Authority — a New Testament Church. Philip held two church-related ministries — that of deacon (Acts 6:5), and Evangelist (Acts 21:8). Therefore, it is most probable that he was acting under church authority.

What became of the Ethiopian? He continued on home to Ethiopia (v. 39). Tradition has it that he became the basis for many churches that were started in his land.

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This chapter records the most celebrated conversion experience in Christian history.

I. THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS — vv. 1-9

READ vv. 1, 2. Saul of Tarsus, the young zealous pharisee, took extreme measures to resist and eradicate the Gospel. It was his personal vendetta. Having scattered the church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), he next sought permission to continue his quest farther abroad.

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Damascus was 150 miles (240 km) away — a six-day journey.

READ vv. 3-6. On the road to Damascus. Saul's encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ was dramatic. The circumstances and emotions accompanying salvation will be different for each person. Salvation is based upon the FACTS of God's Word, not the FEELINGS that arise from circumstances. Everyone will have a different testimony of the circumstances of their salvation.

Some think Paul was saved on the road to Damascus while others point to later in v. 18. Whichever is true, we see the convicting power of the Holy Ghost - "...the pricks..." (v. 5). This means a "goad" — a long, sharp-pointed stick used to prod and move oxen along. Conviction of sin is the work of the Holy Spirit, Who uses the "sword of the Spirit", the Word of God, to prick the heart and conscience. A man cannot be saved unless he is convicted of his sins — but a man may "kick against" conviction and even reject Christ.

READ v. 6. Saul's question ought to be asked by every child of God. All who trust Christ need to ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" at the first opportunity. God's answer was, "Arise, and go." Before salvation, the Lord says "come." After salvation, it is always "go."

READ vv. 7-9. Other effects of Saul's conversion. First there was confusion (v. 7). Those traveling with Saul didn't understand what was taking place. They just knew something was happening. Often this is the case with friends, relatives, etc., when we accept Christ. Second, there was blindness (v. 8). Third, there was helplessness. Saul is led by the hand to Damascus. Newborn babes in Christ need much help in the early stages of their life in Christ. How we need to be tender with them!

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II. THE MINISTRY OF ANANIAS — vv. 10-19

Was there a church already established in Damascus? Based on the fact that Saul was going after definite groups of believers, we can conclude that there was a church in Damascus. It seems unlikely that this was merely a "refugee church" that had gathered in the city as a direct result of the persecutions of the church in Jerusalem in Acts 7 and 8. The pastor, Ananias, had only heard of the events — he hadn't personally experienced them (v. 13).

Therefore, we conclude that this church was in existence for some time. The Lord Jesus did not preach in Damascus, and no one from there is listed in the crowd at Pentecost (Acts 2:9-11), so we must assume the church at Damascus was established out of the church of Jerusalem.

READ v. 10. Ananias was probably a pastor of the church at Damascus.

READ vv. 11, 12. What an assignment given to Ananias. Saul was Providentially ready and prepared to hear from God's man. We should keep this in mind as we witness – this is a Kairos – divine appt.

READ vv. 13, 14. It is easy for Christians to think that God will never save certain people. Yet, Paul was the "chiefest of sinners" and the Lord Jesus Christ saved him (I Timothy 1:15)!

READ vv. 15, 16. The Lord revealed to Ananias His will for Saul. He would become a great preacher (v. 15) and a great sufferer (v. 16).

READ v. 17. The tenderness of pastor Ananias helped prepare Saul for his lifelong ministry. He did not treat him as an enemy but recognized him as a brother in Christ. Saul was ministered to physically, he received his sight back and spiritually, he was filled with the Spirit.

READ vv. 18, 19. We see here a good example of the immediate duty of every Christian. First, he was baptized in v. 18. Baptism is to be the first step of obedience for a Christian. Second, he united with a church. It is not the scriptural plan for someone to be baptized and then to drift around like a "spiritual gypsy." Baptism always unites a believer with a church.

III. THE EARLY MINISTRY OF SAUL — vv. 20-31

READ vv. 20-22. Saul begins preaching immediately. He "preached Christ is the Son of God." He first went to his own people, the religious Jews in the synagogue.

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RE: Saul's training. It is evident from Gal.1:15-18 that Saul left Damascus for a time and went out into the Arabian desert to be alone with the Lord. The time of this journey falls between v. 22 and v. 23.

READ vv. 23, 24. Saul departed from Damascus. Galatians 1:18 establishes the "many days" (v. 23) to be three years. This was above and beyond the time Saul spent in Arabia. Saul experienced his first taste of persecution. Saul's enemies had now become his friends, and his one-time friends had become his enemies. Such is the change wrought by the Lord.

READ v. 25. Saul's escape. It reminds me of the two spies let down by Rahab in Jericho (Joshua) and when David was let down a rope during his escape from King Saul.

READ vv. 26-29. Saul presented himself for membership in the church at Jerusalem, but the church voted “no” (v. 26). It was only after Barnabas spoke for him that the vote was changed to “yes” (v. 27). There are two principles seen here.

1. People are received into church membership by the consent of the church. No one person in the church has the right to admit members. It is a church matter. This is why the church body votes for receiving members.
2. Transfer of church membership is on the basis of recommendation. In this case, Saul was received on the basis of Barnabas’ commendation. This is why we accept people from Baptist churches of like faith and order by means of a letter of transfer and commendation.

READ vv. 30-31. Saul moved to Tarsus. Saul’s preaching resulted in another plot to kill him. It may be that the fear of having him stir up another general persecution was the motive for the church sending Saul to Tarsus, his hometown.

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At the beginning of the Book (Acts 1), there was just one organized church in existence. In Acts 9 we see the word “churches.” The areas now reached with the Gospel were Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee. At this time, there were no Gentile churches. Reaching the world is the next phase of the Great Commission in Acts 1:8, and we see it begin to come to pass from the next chapter on.

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IV. THE HEALING OF ÆNEAS — vv. 32-35

READ vv. 32-35.

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The town of Lydda is located on the coastal plain, inland about 12 miles SE from Joppa (v. 38). Notice that there was already a church established in this town, maybe from the labors of the evangelist Philip?

At this time, it appears that Peter had embarked upon somewhat of an itinerant ministry while at the same time, James (the apostle) had become the “senior” pastor (presiding elder) of the church at Jerusalem. Æneas had been paralyzed for eight years. He was healed and many people were saved as a result.

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V. THE RAISING OF DORCAS — vv. 36-43

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Joppa was the seaport for Jerusalem located NW of Jerusalem. It was the city from which Jonah sailed, Jonah 1:3. Joppa was another town where a church was located (v. 38).

READ v. 36. Dorcas was a faithful church member. “Tabitha” is the Hebrew name; “Dorcas” is the Greek name. Both words mean the same thing — a “doe” or a “female gazelle.” This was a name of endearment.

From the narrative, she was well-loved by all. She was a woman of good works. She used her seamstress talents to advance the work of the Lord.

READ v. 37-38. She died and Peter is sent for. Why Peter? Was it to conduct a funeral service?

READ vv. 39-42. Dorcas was raised from the dead and the outcome was that many were saved.

READ v. 43. It was from this town that the events of Acts 10 would have their beginning.

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~ Chapter Ten ~

This chapter begins the third phase in the fulfillment of the Lord's command to take the Gospel "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Approximately ten years have transpired since the "Great Commission" was given.

I. THE VISION OF CORNELIUS — vv. 1-8

READ v. 1. He was a centurion — normally a captain over 100 men.

READ v. 2. Cornelius was probably a convert to Judaism (a "proselyte"). He was undoubtedly a good man — by human standards. He was religious, feared God, generous, and prayerful. He is an example of a good man who was lost.

READ vv. 3, 4. God will respond to those who genuinely seek Him. The response to Cornelius came in the ninth hour — around 3:00 p.m.

READ vv. 5-8. Even though Cornelius had experienced a real vision of a real angel of God, his salvation would be conveyed via human agency. Angels do not preach the Gospel. Let every Baptist absorb these words and take them personally — "HE shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (v. 6c).

II. THE VISION OF PETER — vv. 9-16

READ v. 9. Peter's time of prayer. It was the sixth hour — 12 noon. Perhaps he was seeking God's leading for his next phase of service. He had been staying at Joppa "many days" (9:43). Even as he was praying, the messengers of Cornelius were coming.

READ v. 10. Peter's trance. We are not told how long Peter prayed. He became extremely hungry but, before he could eat, fell into a trance. It was to prepare him for his next duty. Peter, as a Jew, naturally despised the Gentiles and, like other Christian Jews of the time, thought the gospel was exclusively for them.

READ vv. 11-13. This sheet contained foods that were unclean.

READ v. 14-16. The Lord was showing Peter that the Gentiles were included in the scope of His salvation. This intention wasn't new — it has always been God's plan.

III. THE MISSION TO CAESAREA — vv. 17-22

READ vv. 17-22. These verses present some of the ingredients that go into a divine call to go and preach the Gospel to a particular people-group or nation. How does a preacher know where to go preach? The Lord will direct him through:

1. A Prepared Heart — verses 14-16. The Lord will first work on a man's heart — often to rid him of prejudices. An evangelist who has no use for the people he is taking the Gospel to will be unlikely to do much for the cause of Christ (Jonah).
2. A Presented Need — verse 17b. While there is a need for the Gospel to be preached everywhere, this fact in and of itself does not constitute a divine call to the ministry. However, needs that present themselves play a part as indicators of the will of God.
3. A Spiritual Prompting— verse 19. Recall how the Spirit of God directed Philip to his field of service (Acts 8:26). Now here, Peter fasts and prays, and is directed by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 13, we find the leadership of the church at Antioch fasting and praying about getting the Gospel to the “regions beyond” them. God will answer this kind of prayer!
4. A Scriptural Mandate — verse 20. “Arise ... and go ... doubting nothing.” A preacher must be absolutely convinced by the Word of God that he is where God wants him to be, doing what God wants him to do! God's call is that clear.
5. An Unquestioning Obedience — verses 20, 21. Peter didn't understand, but he went anyway — verse 21. This is called “faith” — believing God's Word and acting upon it! Serving the Lord is thrilling. Peter was beginning to see the great plan of God unfold further.

IV. PETER AND CORNELIUS — vv. 23-33

READ vv. 23-24. The distance from Joppa to Caesarea was about 45 miles (70 km). It took a full day to complete. Peter took some men from the church at Joppa with him on this evangelistic mission.

READ vv. 25-27. Cornelius was waiting, and with others. Peter had a ready-made congregation, just waiting for the message from God's Word. This is a rare occurrence in evangelism these days!

READ vv. 28, 29. Peter informed Cornelius that it was against his principles to visit with a Gentile, but that he was obeying the voice of God.

READ vv. 30-33. Cornelius related his vision.

V. THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS — vv. 34-48

READ vv. 34-35. Peter finally realized the import of his vision. He learned by experience that God is no respecter of persons (not prejudiced).

READ vv. 36-40. Peter preached the gospel.

READ vv. 41, 42. Peter was able to give a first-hand account of the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

READ v. 43. Peter's invitation. Whenever the gospel is preached, an invitation to receive Christ ought to be included. God's invitation is for "whosoever will."

READ vv. 44-46. The Holy Spirit falls upon Cornelius and his household. The importance of this passage will be dealt with in the next chapter.

READ vv. 47, 48. Cornelius and his household are baptized. The consistent scriptural order in baptism is found here: first, there is evidence of salvation (v. 47) followed by baptism (v. 48).

Many who try to find "proof" for infant baptism will point to the "household baptism" (and all thy house) argument (Lydia and the Philippian jailor in Acts 16 is also used). However, notice:

- a. Cornelius' household is defined in Acts 10:24 as comprising "kinsmen and near friends." There is no mention of infants.
- b. Those who were saved, Spirit indwelt, and subsequently baptized are said to have heard the Word — verse 44. Infants cannot hear with understanding.
- c. Those who were saved, Spirit indwelt, and subsequently baptized are said to have spoken in other languages — verse 46. Infants cannot even speak in one language.
- d. Those in the household who were baptized are said to have believed (Acts 11:17). Infants are incapable of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

READ v. 48b. There was an establishment of a church. Peter remained in Cæsarea "certain days." This was to fulfill the third part of the Lord's commission as given in Matthew 28:19, 20 - discipleship. Discipleship ("teaching them to observe all things") is a necessary part of the process.

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This chapter begins with an explanation of the Gospel being preached to the Gentiles. It also introduces us to the second great evangelistic church of the 1st century — the church at Antioch.

I. JEWISH REACTION TO THE CONVERSION OF GENTILES — verses 1-3

READ v. 1. In the previous chapter, we saw how the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (the Gospel) were used to unlock the door of salvation to the Gentiles. Out of this evangelistic mission from the church at Joppa, a new church was established at Cæsarea.

This should have come as glorious news. It probably did to the apostles and most of the brethren in the church at Jerusalem — but it also caused some serious contention. Some people always seem to find a fault in a blessing.

READ vv. 2, 3. The contention. It is just as important to consider what Peter was NOT criticized for. He was not rebuked for preaching or baptizing. He was criticized for eating with Gentiles.

II. PETER’S DEFENSE AND EXPLANATION OF HIS MINISTRY — vv. 4-18

READ vv. 4-15. Peter calmly outlined the sequence of events: his prayer (v. 5); his vision (vv. 5, 6); his duty (v. 7); his contradiction (v. 8); his leading by the Spirit (v. 11, 12); his meeting with Cornelius (v. 13); his purpose (v. 14), and his fruit (v. 15).

READ v. 16. Then he remembered Christ’s words. His mind went back to Acts 1:4, 5. The expression, “the beginning” (v. 15) refers to the events on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 — about 8-10 years previous. Peter had to go back almost 10 years to his own experience to explain what happened to Cornelius and his company. This was an unusual event.

READ vv. 17, 18. The conclusion of the matter. What a great realization — “...then hath God ALSO to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life...”

III. THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL — vv. 19-21

READ v. 19. The expanded evangelistic outreach of the church at Jerusalem began in earnest with the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1-4). To this point, however, the Gospel was being preached exclusively to the Jews. These verses summarize the expansion of the Gospel.

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1. Phenice (Phoenecia). This is the coastal region now known as Lebanon. Its chief cities were Tyre and Sidon. Like the Samaritans, people from this region had been exposed to the Gospel during the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Cyprus. This is a large island in the Mediterranean. This was the homeland of Barnabas.

3. Antioch. It was about 300 miles (480 km) north of Jerusalem with a population of half a million.

READ v. 20. Some of the preachers who were raised up out of the dispersion of the Jerusalem church were from Cyprus and Cyrene — a city in North Africa (Libya).

READ v. 21. Multitudes were saved and a large church was established. There are now two influential centers of Christianity — Jerusalem and Antioch.

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IV. THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH — vv. 22-26

READ v. 22. Barnabas is sent to Antioch. Note that it is the CHURCH that does the sending — not some denominational headquarters. The Lord always works through His churches.

READ v. 23. Barnabas disciplined these new believers. Barnabas organized the believers into a New Testament church (v. 26).

READ v. 24. Barnabas was a godly man filled with the Spirit. He was a man of great faith. It seems Barnabas was sent to organize and oversee (pastor) the church at Antioch. In this ministry, we note three things.

First, God used faithful men. Barnabas was active and faithful in his church — before the Lord sent him on this mission.

Second, God uses qualified men. He was filled with the Spirit.

Third, God blesses those who serve Him. Under Barnabas, the church grew numerically. Believers were added to the Lord's body in Antioch through baptism.

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READ vv. 25, 26. Saul joins Barnabas at Antioch. That these men served as pastors of the church in Antioch is seen from the fact that they "taught." This is the main duty of a pastor.

READ v. 26. Believers were first called Christians in Antioch. The word "Christian" is found in only two other places in the Word of God — in Acts 26:28 and I Peter 4:16. It means means a "follower of Christ" — a "little Christ" or, "Christ-like." It is rich in implication.

This denomination was at first a nickname given by the unbelieving world. It was later adopted and used by the believers themselves. Over the past two millennia, the Lord's people and His churches have been given many nicknames.

The most common name by which the Lord's churches have been denominated is "Baptist." The name "Christian" is descriptive of our life — the name "Baptist" is descriptive of our doctrine.

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V. SCRIPTURAL CHURCH COOPERATION — vv. 27-30

It is very certain that all churches of the apostolic era were independent and autonomous. But they weren't isolationist!! They were independent, but also interdependent. Churches of like faith and order may scripturally cooperate in several areas, so long as their autonomy is not violated.

READ vv. 27, 28. The prophecy of Agabus. Here we see the New Testament prophet and the gift of prophecy in action.

The gift of prophecy — foretelling — is no longer in effect since the completion of the written New Testament.

The gift of prophecy — forthtelling — continues today as the proclamation of that written Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

READ v. 29-30. The church at Antioch determined to help. A special love offering was collected and taken to the pastors of the church at Jerusalem. Pastors have the ultimate responsibility for, and oversight of, the finances of the church.

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This chapter records another wave of persecution against the church at Jerusalem. Although it was fomented by the Jews, it was a politically motivated persecution by king Herod.

I. HEROD'S PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM— vv. 1-4

READ v. 1. There are several kings in the Herodian dynasty. This Herod is Herod Agrippa I.

READ v. 2. There are three men called James in the New Testament: James "the Less", the son of Alphaeus; James the half-brother of Jesus; and James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee. It is this James to which Acts 12:2 is referring.

At this point in time, it would seem that James was the presiding elder (pastor) of the Jerusalem church — a position he came into following the departure of Peter to the coastal cities. He was the third Christian martyr (1st - John the Baptist; 2nd - Stephen the Deacon). James became the first apostle to die for his Lord.

READ v. 3. Peter had returned to Jerusalem to report the conversion of Gentiles. He was caught up in a new wave of persecution and taken captive.

READ v. 4. A "quaternion" was a group of four soldiers. Peter had sixteen strong men guarding him.

RE: EASTER. Critics of the King James Bible often delight in pointing to the translators having "inserted" the word Easter in the text — when, as everyone knows, the Greek word "pascha" should have been correctly translated as Passover.

This objection is answered by verse 3. The Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread comes AFTER Passover. The only way Herod could bring Peter before the people after Passover would be to wait a whole year! Many believe that Easter (Ishtar) was a Pagan holiday.

II. THE IMPRISONMENT AND RELEASE OF PETER — vv. 5-11, 18, 19

READ v. 5. Peter was kept in prison, pending his execution after the holy season.

READ vv. 6, 7. Peter sleeping soundly — I think Peter knew he wasn't going to die because Christ told him how he would die by crucifixion later in life.

READ vv. 8 – 11. From this passage, we learn three facts about angels: First, their purpose is that they are "ministering spirits". Second, angels are always masculine when they assume human form. They are never presented in a feminine manner. Third, their speech, the "tongues of angels" (I Corinthians 13:1) is understandable human language.

III. THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM — vv. 5,12-17

READ v. 5 again. Prayer meetings were one of the notable features of the church at Jerusalem. Note some of the features of this season of prayer:

1. It was held in a time of difficulty. A new and serious wave of persecution was breaking out against the church. Scattering the membership had only caused the spread of the gospel (Acts 8:1,4), but this attack was aimed at the church's leadership.
2. It was all that God's people could do. Humanly speaking, Peter couldn't be helped.
3. It was "church prayer". There is a great need for private prayer — but we must not neglect the practice of corporate prayer.

READ v. 12. The home of Mary. The mother of John Mark had opened her home for prayer. The fact that Mary's home was large enough for "many" to gather indicates that she was a woman of some financial means.

READ vv. 12, 14. The joy of answered prayer. Rhoda could hardly contain herself when she realized their prayers were answered. Prayer brings joy.

READ vv. 15, 16. The doubts of praying saints. This is a remarkable happening, for it shows that those in prayer never really expected God to answer their prayer. Either the church prayed, but didn't believe, or they prayed, but didn't expect an answer right then.

READ v. 17. Others were praying elsewhere in the city. Answered prayer — especially when many pray together — is a blessing that ought to be passed around.

IV. THE DEMISE OF HEROD AGRIPPA I — vv. 20-23

READ vv. 18, 19. Herod was a cruel man. This was the customary method of dealing with those charged with such a responsibility. Then we went to his magnificent palace at the seaside city of Caesarea.

READ v. 20. Herod makes a treaty with Tyre and Sidon. These two northern cities received food from Palestine, which Herod, evidently in his displeasure, had cut off. Delegates from Phoenecia came and, after bribing Blastus, had signed a peace treaty with Herod.

READ vv. 21-23. Roman cæsars were often deified. For Herod, this was the greatest moment of his life. But God judged him. History tells us that Herod was stricken by sudden pains. These were "violent internal pains," and he was "carried to his palace." There, "he lingered five days in extreme pain" before dying.

V. THE MINISTRY OF SAUL AND BARNABAS — vv. 24, 25

READ v. 24. We fear persecution but it usually results in the spread of the Gospel.

READ v. 25. Barnabas and Saul were in Jerusalem. They had been sent there by the church at Antioch to bring financial relief to the churches in Judea (Acts 11:30).

Then they returned to Antioch with John Mark (the writer of the Gospel of Mark). At the time he was a young man. Barnabas and Saul became his mentors for the ministry.

The end of this chapter marks a change in the Book of Acts. Chapter 13 heralds the beginning of the third division of the Book.

The narrative now concerns itself primarily with the spread of the Gospel among the Gentiles.

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This chapter properly begins the “...unto the uttermost part of the earth...” phase of the Great Commission, centered around the church at Antioch. It provides a great explanation of Biblical church-planting evangelism — principles which must be followed by New Testament Baptist churches today.

I. ANTIOCH'S FIRST MISSIONARIES/EVANGELISTS — vv. 1-3

READ v. 1. This church was organized by Barnabas (Acts 11:22-26) out of the fruits of the ministry of the scattered members of the church at Jerusalem. Churches beget churches. This church became the great “Missionary Church” of the first century. Antioch was the second great center of Christianity.

This verse describes the leadership of the church. As with the church at Jerusalem, we see a plurality of pastors. The composition of this church is noteworthy: Barnabas was a Jewish Cypriot, Simeon was a black man (Niger), Lucius was from Cyrene (a Greek city in Libya), Manaen was raised with Idumæans (Edomite cousins to the Jews), and of course, Saul.

READ v. 2. This verse describes God’s call to a particular ministry, rather than a call into “the ministry”. Barnabas and Saul were already engaged in “full time” Christian ministry. Nonetheless, we can learn some great principles about the “divine call into the ministry”.

1. It is a definite call. The call into full time Christian service is a call from God. It is not a chosen vocation. Any man who decides to be a pastor or an evangelist without a divine call upon his life will have (or cause) trouble.
2. It is a call out of the churches. One of the great themes of the Book of Acts is that all Christian ministry is centered in and around the Lord’s CHURCHES! The New Testament Church is the source for ministers of the gospel.
3. It is a call from out of mission-minded churches. There can be little doubt the church at Antioch had an evangelistic mind set. Why?
 - a. They were at the very edge of the “regions beyond.” The advance of the Gospel to this point ended at Antioch.
 - b. They were fasting and praying — seeking God’s will.
 - c. There was no hint of surprise when God called two men. This was what they were praying for!
 - d. They did not question the Lord’s will, or argue with God. After all, Barnabas and Saul were valuable to the church — why lose them?
4. It is a call extended to active Christians. Saul and Barnabas were not sitting around waiting for something to do. God invariably calls those who are already busy in His work.
5. It is a call to specific men for a specific work. Presumably any of the five preachers would have been capable of going. God always has the “right men” for a given task.

READ v. 3. Here we see another great principle regarding New Testament evangelism — it is to be church-centered.

1. Church planters – Evangelists – Missionaries are sent out by their church. The New Testament knows nothing of mission boards, clearinghouses, or other para-church missions agencies. While most of such man-made institutions were founded with noble motives and godly desires, God’s plan cannot be improved upon. What often begins as a sincere ministry of helps, designed to facilitate churches and missionaries in their worthy endeavors, usually institutionalizes into a controlling body that effectively eviscerates church authority (and sometimes church involvement).

2. Church planters – Evangelists – Missionaries are an extension of their sending church. The laying on of hands signifies identification. Here the church at Antioch identified itself with the work of Barnabas and Saul. They would preach the gospel on behalf of the church at Antioch and would baptize with the authority of the church at Antioch.

3. Church planters – Evangelists – Missionaries are supported by their sending church. In prayer (and giving), churches are in effect “holding the rope” for those who go down into the pits of sin and darkness to rescue the perishing.

4. Church planters – Evangelists – Missionaries work in teams. Team ministry is once again shown to be God’s way to do God’s work.

II. THE FIRST EVANGELISTIC EXPEDITION — vv. 4,5

READ v. 4. The supervision of the missionary-evangelist. Though they are sent by churches, their activities must be directed by the Spirit of God. In church-planting work, the Holy Spirit leads as to time (Acts 16:6-10) and place (I Corinthians 16:9). Seleucia was the closest seaport to Antioch. Cyprus was the home of Barnabas. No doubt he had a burden for his own people.

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READ v. 5. The nature of evangelism. There was a definite message — they “preached the Word of God.” And a definite plan — they went to the Jew first.

John Mark was a young man from an apparently wealthy home in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), a nephew of Barnabas’ (Col. 4:10). He was at this point a “preacher-in-training,” and accompanied the two evangelists as “their minister” (assistant, servant).

Serving under a man of God is an essential step to becoming a man of God — (i.e. Moses-Joshua, Elijah-Elisha, etc. John Mark later became a profitable man of God (II Timothy 4:11), and was the human writer of the Gospel according to Mark.

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III. THE FIRST EVANGELISTIC EXPLOITS — vv. 6-13

READ vv. 6-8. We observe a two-fold reality in Christian work, God opens doors (v. 7), but Satan opposes (vv. 6,8).

Elymas Bar-Jesus was a devil-possessed Jew. Satan will use people, events, things ... anything! ... to prevent people from hearing the Gospel. Often, Satan will use the guise of religion to hinder the work of the Gospel. Elymas was a religionist.

In v. 8, we see Satan's methods: (1) "Withstood." Oh, how we need to pray for those who preach the Gospel!! and (2) "... seeking to turn away ... from the faith..."

READ vv. 9-12. Saul's name was changed to Paul, perhaps it was his Gentile name and used in Gentile ministry? Ministry success! First, Satan was defeated. A spirit-filled preacher gained the victory over the power of the Evil One. Second, souls were saved (v. 12). Third, churches were established (14:23). Fourth, preachers were trained. The newly established churches needed pastors.

READ v. 13.

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We are not given the reason why John Mark left Barnabas and Saul and returned to Jerusalem. This lack of information leaves open a number of reasons why men either "quit the ministry" or fall away through discouragement. It may have been because of the hardness. Did Mark depart because of the ferocity of Satan's opposition? Or it may have been because of homesickness. Did Mark miss his mother to the point that he couldn't go on?

John Mark's actions here were the cause of a future split between Barnabas and Saul — Acts 15:36-40. The fact that Paul refused to have him back on the team shows that his actions were inexcusable; the fact that Barnabas was willing to work with him shows that his actions were not disqualifying.

We need to be careful not to condemn those who falter in the service of the Lord. John Mark went on to be a fine preacher who was a great blessing to others — including Paul. The "God of the Second Chance" used this unfaithful servant to record the life and ministry of the Perfect Servant in the Gospel bearing his name.

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IV. THE FIRST RECORDED SERMON OF PAUL — vv. 14-41

READ vv. 14-15. This passage is Paul's first recorded sermon. Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia — thus the Hebrew flavor of his sermon. The theme of his message is justification by faith (vv. 38, 39).

READ v. 16. Paul went from the known to the unknown, using the familiar history of Israel to show his listeners that God graciously gave everything to His people. Nothing that they were or had was due to their own merits. In this message, the apostle gave a general outline of OT events.

READ v. 17. The Exodus From Egypt. God was the Deliverer!

READ v. 18. The Wilderness Wanderings. God was the Provider!

READ v. 19. The Conquest Of Canaan. God was the Conqueror!

READ v. 20. The Period Of Judges. God raised up judges!

READ v. 21. The First King. God gave them a king!

READ v. 22. The Second King. God raised up David!

READ vv. 23-25. The Promised Messiah. He was promised by God (v. 23). Proclaimed by John (v. 24) and presented to Israel (v. 26). Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Law and the expectation of the Old Testament.

READ vv. 27, 28. Jesus' death.

READ v. 29. Jesus' burial.

READ vv. 30-37. Jesus' resurrection. Paul quotes from Psalms 2:7; 16:8-11.

READ vv. 38-41. The conclusion to the message. Justifying faith is the appropriation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to ourselves.

When the sinner by faith receives Christ as Saviour (as payment in full for his sin), he is forgiven and justified. Justified means to be judicially JUST (righteous) in God's sight. Rejecting the Gospel allows only for judgment.

V. THE EVANGELISTIC CYCLE — vv. 42-52

READ vv. 42-44. In this final section, we observe the open doors and opposition to the preaching of the Gospel. There were many hungry hearts in this city.

READ v. 45. Whenever and wherever God works, Satan will stir up trouble.

READ v. 46a. The Christian's responsibility. We are accountable to God to preach the Gospel to every creature; how people respond to the Gospel is their own responsibility.

Sometimes, the best evangelistic endeavors fail to win souls and see a church planted — resulting in the evangelistic team moving on. That is NOT a failure, IF the Gospel was faithfully proclaimed. Our duty is to preach the Gospel; God's part is to save souls!

READ vv. 46b-47. The reality of rejecting the Gospel. This verse shows that God never sends anyone to Hell — those who choose to reject the Gospel send themselves there.

READ v. 48. Joy among the Gentiles. The word “ordained” means “chosen,” or “disposed.” This verse does not teach that God has chosen some to be saved and others to be lost. It recognizes that God has chosen to save those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ — as these Gentiles did.

READ v. 49. An evangelistic outpost. The church that was established became a “beacon” of the Gospel to the region.

READ vv. 50-52. Satan often uses “respectable religion” to oppose Bible-believing, Bible-preaching Baptist churches.

Paul and Barnabas were expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, but not before a church was established there (v. 52).

At a later time they were able to return to this place and complete the organizing and teaching of the church (Acts 14:21-23).

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Here we have the continuation of the first evangelistic expedition out of the church at Antioch — primarily the reach of the Gospel into Lycaonia and its cities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

I. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AT ICONIUM — vv. 1-6

READ v. 1. Iconium was the chief city of Lycaonia. Iconium was about 75 miles (120 km) SE of Antioch in Pisidia.

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Barnabas and Paul were consistent in their evangelistic strategy — preaching first to the Jew, usually in the synagogue. A great multitude believed — both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles).

Note: There is a distinction to be made between “Grecians” (Acts 6:1; 9:29; 11:20) and “Greeks”. The Grecians were Greek-speaking Jews; the Greeks were Gentiles.

READ v. 2. The opposition to evangelism. Whenever God opens a door, there is a battle as Satan tries to close it. Here the opposition comes from the religious quarter. Note that they made their “minds evil affected.”

This indicates that the townspeople ordinarily had no issue with the two evangelists, but that their minds were turned against the faith — no doubt through scare-tactics and falsehoods. Also, notice also that this first attack was directed against “the brethren” — i.e., the new converts.

READ v. 3. The tenacity of the missionary-evangelists. We see their persistence. They didn’t “give up” on their mission. Even though fiercely opposed, these two servants of the Lord remained at their post. They preached. They didn’t “tone down” their message. And we see the proof. The Lord did two things through His servants: souls were saved and He permitted the use of signs and wonders.

This was another use of the temporary “sign gifts” — given to convince unbelieving Jews to validate Paul and Barnabas as God’s messengers and their message.

READ v. 4. The effects of the evangelism at Iconium. We see that the Gospel divides men and not all will be saved. In any evangelistic outreach with the Gospel — even during times of great reaping — not all will turn to Christ.

READ vv. 5, 6. Under the threat of death, Barnabas and Paul were finally forced to depart. While every true preacher is willing to lay down his life in the cause of Christ, there is generally no value in an untimely death. Upon every preacher is a “necessity” to do what is “necessary”.

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II. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AT LYSTRA — verses 7-18

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The town of Lystra was a small Roman colony located about 20 miles (35 km) south of Iconium. It was the hometown of Timothy — Acts 16:1.

READ v. 7. The simplicity of biblical evangelism. Evangelism is simply preaching the Gospel. Paul had no idea that his preaching under such hazardous conditions would yield him a precious “son in the faith”, Timothy, a “next generation preacher.”

READ vv. 8-10. The healing of the cripple. This is one example of “faith” healing. A careful comparison with the same kind of miracle in Acts 3:2-8 reveals one notable difference: in Acts 3, the man had no faith (he was unsaved at the time of the miracle), in Acts 14, the man had faith to be healed. This confirms that in all cases of miraculous healing, God is the Healer — the spiritual condition of the one healed is as varied as all the accounts.

READ vv. 11-13. The reaction of the people. The people of the area were not Jews. They were idolatrous pagans. A sign gift did not confirm the message. Instead of believing the preached Word, these pagans got the wrong impression. Why? Because sign gifts were given specifically for Jews.

Note: The gift of tongues was absent from Paul and Barnabas. Two Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, Spirit-controlled men of God didn’t understand what the people were up to as the people spoke in the “speech of Lycaonia”. It took time for Barnabas and Paul to understand what was happening — indicating the absence of the gift of tongues/interpretation of tongues. Why? No Jews were present.

READ vv. 14-8. After Barnabas and Paul realized what was taking place that they ran in among the people. They had to get their attention. Satan was attempting to divert people from the true Gospel to false religion. Satan doesn’t mind if people are religious — just so long as they don’t get saved! Then they preached against their idolatry. They used a bad situation for good. We should always be ready to take any opportunity to give out the Gospel.

There is a noteworthy contrast to the sermons previously recorded in addressed to Jews compared to the Gentiles. The sermons to the Jews were based on the Old Testament account of Israel’s history, from Abraham to Christ. The message here is addressed to Gentiles, and it is entirely different in its approach. This was a CREATIONIST message — God is presented as the Creator (not the covenant God of Israel), and the hearers are pointed to His creation.

All preaching and teaching must go from the known to the unknown. However, regardless of the starting point and the foundation of the Gospel message, the call to repentance and faith must be issued.

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III. THE SEVERITY OF THE OPPOSITION — vv. 19,20

READ v. 19. Those who oppose God often seek to stir up others to act with them, as if to justify their own position. Some of these Jews traveled 100 miles just to cause trouble. Paul was stoned, presumed dead, and dragged out of the city. This may have been Paul's "Paradise experience" — II Cor. 12:1-4.

READ v. 20. Paul is revived. What a site! There are two truly remarkable things here. First, that Paul could physically resume his journey so quickly, after such a severe stoning. He was certainly a man of great physical toughness. Second, that Paul and Barnabas were willing to continue!! These events must surely have had a profound impact upon the life of a young teenage boy, Timothy.

IV. THE PLAN OF EVANGELISM — verses 21-26

There are many misunderstandings and misconceptions about the exact nature of evangelism. True evangelism is spelled out in Matthew 28:19,20. It is to be conducted wherever lost souls are to be found. This passage elaborates on some of the elements of the Commission.

READ v. 21. They preached the Gospel. This is the first work of the Commission. Apart from Gospel preaching, there can be no baptizing or discipling.

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Derbe was located about 30 miles (48 km) SE of Lystra. A notable convert to Christ from the town of Derbe was Gaius, Acts 20:4. They also taught many. Teaching believers the Word of God takes time and patience. And then they returned the way they came – Lystra – Iconium – Antioch.

READ v. 22. They confirmed many. This has nothing to do with the unscriptural practice of "confirmation" that is common among Pædobaptist groups.

What is meant is that these evangelists worked with the converts and churches (Acts 15:41), confirming (reaffirming) the message already preached. It involved then returning to places from whence they had been forced to leave, to complete the third part of the Great Commission. Then they exhorted many. This exhortation was that the Christian life would not be easy.

READ v. 23. They organized churches. By ordaining elders (pastors) in every church, Paul and Barnabas not only formed the converts into "assemblies of baptized believers" (churches), but properly organized them. The ordaining (choosing, electing) of pastors is necessary for the organizing of a church.

They left the churches in a condition where they could continue on in the work of the Lord. The success of this is evidenced by the fact that Paul and Silas visited these churches five years later.

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V. THE BIBLICAL PRACTICE OF “FURLOUGH” — vv. 24-28

READ v. 24-28. The word “furlough” is a military term meaning a “leave of absence.” For the faithful evangelist, furlough is a time to leave off his labors to:

- (1) Return to his home church. Paul and Barnabas returned to the church at Antioch.
- (2) After the assignment was completed. They came home when their work was “fulfilled.”
- (3) To report to the church. All churches that support missionaries/evangelists deserve to hear firsthand what their prayers and giving have accomplished.
- (4) To rest their body and soul. Evangelism is a difficult and sometimes dangerous duty.

Furlough is an essential component to ministry. Rest was prescribed by Christ – Mark 6:31. It is not a sin to take some time off. Either we “come apart” or we’ll come apart!

Many times, a limited furlough is not sufficient. Barnabas and Paul were “long time” (v. 28) with their church.

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Within a mere 20 years of Christian history, the first deadly perversion of the Gospel had taken hold among some of the Lord's churches. This doctrine is known as Judaism. It sought to place believers back under the Mosaic code and quickly degenerated into a works-based plan of salvation.

I. THE DISPUTE — vv. 1-5

READ v. 1. Satan's attempts to stop the work of the Gospel takes a new turn as false doctrine raises its ugly head. Satan attacked from without through persecution (ch. 4-5, 7-8, 12, 14) and Satanic induced confusion (ch. 8, 13, 14). Then Satan attacked also from within through discord in chapter 6. Now, he attacks from within again, but this time it is through doctrinal error.

What is Judaism? Judaism developed out of a desire by Jewish Christians to maintain the Mosaic traditions they had been raised in. However, it quickly developed into a false gospel of faith plus works and made the keeping of ceremonies (like circumcision) requisite to salvation. The impetus for this error came from converted Pharisees — v. 5.

Judaism Rejected. The apostle Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit wrote condemning Judaism. The Book of Galatians was written specifically to condemn and correct the teachings of Judaism. The Book of Colossians addresses both Judaism and Gnosticism. Paul also instructed Timothy to earnestly contend for truth against this error.

READ v. 2a. The effects of false doctrine upon a church. Note the words, "dissension" and "dispute." After a very successful evangelistic endeavor, the Devil was obviously attempting to side-track this church. Error will destroy any Baptist church if given an opportunity.

READ v. 2b. The action of the church at Antioch. False doctrine must be dealt with decisively by any church. Although the fight against doctrinal error is to be led by the pastors, it is a church matter. The church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to take up the matter. The "certain other of them" that accompanied Paul and Barnabas included Titus (Gal. 2).

READ v. 3. The journey to Jerusalem. These two preachers declared along their way to Jerusalem that God was saving all people by grace, not through the keeping of the Law. It brought great joy to the churches!! HERESY brings DISSENSION but TRUTH brings GREAT JOY.

II. THE DEBATE — vv. 4-18

READ vv. 4-6. This was a church meeting. The matter was first considered by the apostles and pastors present. Later, the whole church assembled.

READ v. 7a. This verse is very revealing. The disputing was coming from the pastors, and the fact that there was a lot of arguing going on shows how pervasive this error really was!

READ vv. 7b-11. The testimony of Peter. Peter again related how God used him to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. His main points were:

(1) God chose to save Gentiles (v. 7). In fact God's sovereign election (choice) is to save ALL who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. This includes Gentiles.

(2) God gave the Holy Ghost to Gentiles (v. 8)

(3) All men are saved the same way, by faith (v. 9)

(4) The Law cannot save anyone, it only condemns (v. 10)

(5) Salvation is entirely by God's grace (v. 11)

"Legalism" is an oft-heard nickname today. Bible-believing Baptists, who preach and practice godly living, are often branded as legalists. Scriptural "standards" — especially in areas of personal separation — are despised by Christians who want to live as they please. This charge, however, is not what the Bible would call legalism.

Legalism is properly defined by verse 10. Legalism is the attempt to be saved, or to maintain salvation, by keeping the Law. Legalism says "do" and "live" whereas grace says "live" and "do". The two are contrasted in v. 1 with v. 11.

"Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" — Acts 15:1.

VS

"We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved" — Acts 15:11.

READ v. 12. The testimony of Barnabas and Paul. Peter had stated the fact of salvation by grace through faith, now these two men testified to it through what they had personally seen God do.

READ vv. 13-18. The conclusion of James. James (who wrote the Book of James) was the presiding elder ("senior pastor") of the church at Jerusalem at this time. After all the discussion, James brought the matter to a conclusion.

Having summarized what Peter had said, James takes his people back to the scriptures that clearly speaks of God's salvation being extended to the Gentiles. Amos 9:11 (cited by James in vv. 16,17) speaks of God's plan regarding Israel and the Gentiles.

III. THE DECISION — vv. 19-21

READ v. 19. The doctrine of independency - "...we trouble not them...". The church at Jerusalem would not make any binding decisions for the church at Antioch.

They could advise, suggest, and join hands in fellowship — but NEVER usurp its authority, autonomy, or independence. Bible-believing Baptist churches are independent.

READ vv. 20, 21. The doctrine of deference. The word “abstain” suggests a voluntary act, certainly not an enforced rule. This was a request from the church at Jerusalem.

Certain instructions are given to the Gentile believers as to how to live acceptably to God and in good fellowship with Jewish Christians. To abstain was an act of deference to the sensitivities of the Jewish believers.

The doctrine of liberty. Believers have LIBERTY but not LICENSE. Furthermore, if our liberty offends another brother, we ought to desist.

IV. THE DECLARATION — vv. 22-35

READ v. 22a. A church decision. The conclusion put forward by pastor James was ratified by the whole church. Pastors give leadership, but the congregation “votes.” This is the New Testament plan for church government.

READ v. 22b. A church delegation. Since men came from the Jerusalem church preaching false doctrine, men were sent from the same church to correct the error. The two men were Judas Barsabas and Silas (also known as Silvanus).

READ vv. 23-29. Note the text of the letter:

1. Greetings (v. 23). This letter was intended not only for the church at Antioch, but also those churches it had “mothered.”
2. Disclaimer (v. 24). No excuse was made for the false teachers.
3. Unity (v. 25). Here we see how the church closed ranks to shut out the heresy. This “one accord” would be a great encouragement to the brethren.
4. Authority (v. 28). When seeking God’s will in important matters, one should seek the counsel of one’s church and the authority of the Holy Spirit (through the Word of God).
5. Instruction (v. 29). By nature and custom, the Gentiles were idolatrous and fornicators. They were called upon to live separated lives and not to give offense to the Jews.

READ vv. 30-32. A church delighted. Again, we see the whole church involved. There was no “clergy class” or hierarchy existing at this time.

READ vv. 34, 35. A church delivered. The advent of false doctrine had obviously affected and distracted the evangelistic zeal of the church at Antioch.

Now that the issue had been dealt with, we see the church on fire once more. Silas remained, and joined Paul, Barnabas, and many other preachers on the ministry team of that great church.

V. THE DEPARTURE — vv. 36-41

READ v. 36. Plans for a second missionary trip. This is “evangelistic follow up” — not just planting churches but seeing how they do. That is all an evangelist can do. He is not a member of those churches and has no authority over them once they are organized.

READ vv. 37-40. The great contention. Satan stepped in the moment Paul and Barnabas decided to go. Barnabas was an “exhorter,” and wanted to give his young nephew, John Mark, a second chance. An encourager sees the POTENTIAL in people, then sets out to help them meet it. However, Paul was a PERFORMANCE man, and seemed to have the attitude of “one strike and you’re OUT.” He held John Mark’s failure against him.

Good men to disagree. In this case, the issue was not over doctrine or practice. It was a difference of opinion concerning the make-up of a preaching team. While the contention was sharp, it:

- (1) Was “between them” — it was not allowed to spill over into the church and cause a schism.
- (2) Did not derail either of them — there was no pouting and quitting because one didn’t get his way.
- (3) Did not end their friendship. Things such as personality and preferences will sometimes dictate it best that two men do not work together.
- (4) God can get the glory from anything. Who “won” in this dispute? God did! The split resulted in TWO evangelistic teams going forth instead of just one. John Mark was later reconciled to Paul and was used by the Holy Spirit to pen the Gospel of Mark.

READ v. 41. Beginning of Paul’s second missionary journey. Paul and Silas began this new expedition out of the church at Antioch. Confirming the churches means confirming them in the doctrines of the Word of God.

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The mention of Syria and Cilicia here reveals that churches had been established in areas other than where Paul and Barnabas had traveled on their first missionary tour.

The home church at Antioch was in Syria, so other churches must have been established in the region. Also, Tarsus, Paul’s hometown, was in Cilicia. So, there were churches planted there, perhaps by Paul himself before joining Barnabas in Antioch (Acts 13).

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This chapter begins the account of Paul's second evangelistic expedition — a journey of about four years. It was at this time that the Gospel was taken into Europe.

I. STAGE ONE OF THE SECOND JOURNEY — vv. 1-5

Once more we see the principal of “team ministry” when it comes to evangelism and church-planting. Paul's team initially consisted of himself and Silas (a preacher originally from the Jerusalem church) However, the team grew as they journeyed with Timothy, Luke, and Aquila and Priscilla.

READ v. 1-3a. The arrival at Derbe and Lystra.

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This time, the two evangelists went overland. The initial intention for this journey was to revisit those churches previously established by Paul and Barnabas — they certainly did not know all that the Lord had planned for them.

Timothy was won to Christ during Paul's first visit to the cities of Derbe and Lystra. He was a young man whom Paul referred to as his “son in the faith” meaning that the apostle personally led him to the Lord. Timothy came from a mixed marriage (Acts 16:3). Nevertheless, Timothy was raised in a godly atmosphere in the home.

When Paul returned to Lystra some six years later, Timothy was a disciple — meaning he was baptized and an ardent follower of Christ. He was a young man whose calling and gifts had been proven to the pastors and members of the area churches. The “laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (I Timothy 4:14) was an act by the pastors of the church at Lystra signifying their recognition of God's call upon him and their identification with his ministry.

Paul included Timothy on his evangelistic team — basically to train him as his successor. Timothy would receive “on-the-job” training. This is an example of God's Law of Spiritual Reproduction: “Christians beget Christians; churches beget churches; preachers beget preachers.” Timothy began as a “minister” to Paul. Someone had to cook, wash clothes, set up tents or find accommodations for the busy evangelists. Yet, all the while Timothy was doing this, he was receiving a great education.

Sometime later, Paul began giving special assignments to Timothy. Finally, in his waning days, the apostle turned his ministry over to Timothy. He was the “next generation!” Paul's two letters to Timothy (I and II Timothy) are known as “pastoral epistles.” They are full of instruction about how churches should be organized and how they should function.

READ v. 3b. Paul circumcises Timothy. Why? Titus was a Gentile and therefore it was not necessary to circumcise him. However, Timothy was ½ Jew.

An uncircumcised Timothy would have been an offense to the Jews. Paul was endeavoring to remove a stumbling block to the Jews and his own ministry. This would enable Timothy to help him in his ministry towards Jews.

There is a lesson to be gained from this episode that applies to church-planting in a different culture. So long as the Word of God is not violated, evangelists should seek to avoid practices and customs that would offend the people they are seeking to reach with the Gospel.

READ vv. 4, 5. Paul and Silas busied themselves strengthening the existing churches by: (1) Doctrine. They informed the churches about the Judaism controversy, no doubt warning them of the heresy. A church strong in doctrine is a strong church. And (2) Evangelism. The churches that were planted must themselves plant churches. A church strong in evangelism is a strong church.

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II. STAGE TWO OF THE SECOND JOURNEY — vv. 6-15

After visiting the churches established during the first journey, the three men were then directed by the Lord to take the Gospel into new areas.

READ vv. 6-8.

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The leading of the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit direct? This is a key question for every man called of God to preach the Gospel — where do I GO to preach that Gospel? Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, and Bithynia were all provinces that were needy — as is any place on planet Earth to this day. So where does God want ME?

Obviously, the Holy Spirit will lead us primarily through the Word of God. He will never lead us contrary to scripture. However, the Bible says to go into ALL the world and preach the Gospel to EVERY creature. What about His particular leading for the individual preacher or evangelistic team?

The Spirit leads: (1) Through His peace. While not an absolute or infallible marker, this peace is only possible when we are walking close to the Lord. And (2) Through circumstances. It may be an invitation. It may be an interest or a burden. It may be an opportunity. Paul was directed because he was looking for direction.

READ v. 9. The Macedonian call. Here is another principle of team ministry, whether in the pastorate or in evangelism: God always gives the vision to the team leader.

READ v. 10a. Instant obedience. They did not go immediately to Macedonia — they “immediately endeavored” to go, meaning they began planning and preparing right away. There was no delay.

READ v. 10b. Luke joins the team. Up until this point, the narrative in Acts has been in the third person (“they”). Now it becomes “we” — indicating that the writer of the Book of Acts (Luke), has joined Paul, Silas and Timothy at Troas (Troy). This “we/us section” ends in Acts 16 — indicating that Luke remained in Philippi. The second “we/us section” begins in Acts 20:6, after which Luke remained with Paul.

READ vv. 11, 12. The Gospel comes to Europe. Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke sailed across the northern Aegean Sea to the port city of Neapolis. From thence, they took the short journey to Philippi. It is described as a “chief city.” It is important to establish churches in major population centers so that they in turn can reach out into other areas.

READ vv. 13-15. The first European church. The first known convert in Europe was Lydia, a Jewish businesswoman from the Asian city of Thyatira. Her conversion and baptism was the beginning of the church at Philippi.

Lydia met for prayer with other Jewish women by the river (v. 13). There was a synagogue in the city (v. 16) so there was not a significant Jewish population there. Note 4 things about her:

1. She worshipped God (v. 14). This means she was a devout Jewess. However, devoutness and piety do not equate to salvation. Cornelius (Acts 10) is another example of a devout lost man.
2. She came to trust Christ (v. 14). Devoutness and piety can certainly pave the way to salvation. It reveals a seeking, searching heart. It was the Lord Who “opened her heart.”
3. She was baptized (v. 15). Baptism is to be the first step after salvation. This was another “household baptism.” There is no reason to believe that this household included infants — to the contrary, a businesswoman on a trip abroad would not want to put any babies through the travel, let alone have to take care of them and conduct business at the same time!!
4. She provided a meeting place for the church (v. 15). Her home became a hotel for the preachers and a meeting place for the church.

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III. SATANIC OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL — vv. 16-24

Victories won for Christ will always cause the enemy of the Gospel to rear his ugly head. As we have seen already in Acts, Satan often uses religious people, church people, and pagan people to hinder the work of God. In this case, the Devil used one of his own — to “ratify” the Gospel being preached!

READ vv. 16, 17. The demon possessed girl. This pitiful girl was used by her handlers as a fortune teller. Devils spoke through this girl. Occultic practices such as fortune telling, palm reading, séances, ouija boards, horoscopes, and so forth are all Satanic and Scripture condemns such things.

Satan's goal was to discredit the Gospel message by having one who is ungodly declare it. From her lips, it became just another religious voice.

READ v. 18. The demon is cast out.

READ v. 19. The reaction of the Philippian merchants. With the demon gone, her wealthy handlers lost opportunity to continue to make lots of money.

READ vv. 20-24. The persecution of Paul and Silas. The merchants stirred up the crowd into a frenzy. Paul and Silas endured a merciless beating. This was the first of three severe non-Jewish beatings that Paul received. This was followed by a cruel imprisonment.

The word "thrust" (v. 24) implies that the bloodied and beaten men were thrown into their cell. Where was Timothy and Luke? Good question. Maybe they had been attending to some logistical tasks at the time of Paul's arrest.

IV. MAN'S EXTREMITY: GOD'S OPPORTUNITY — vv. 25-34

This passage is one of the best-known salvation stories of the Bible — the conversion of the Philippian jailor. In this account we observe the principle that God can get the glory out of any situation.

READ v. 25. The testimony of Paul and Silas. They were praying and singing!!

READ v. 26. The miraculous earthquake. This quake was more than just a circumstantial act of nature. It shook more than buildings — it shook off shackles and it shook up a lot of people.

READ v. 27. The fear of the jailor. He was a dead man!

READ vv. 28-30. The effects of their witness:

1. The prisoners heard them (v. 25). One may have thought this was a time to keep quiet.
2. We are all here (v. 28). Normally, many of the prisoners would have taken advantage of the situation and tried to escape. No one did!
3. What must I do to be saved (v. 30)? What a strange question unless this man had also been listening to the witness of Paul and Silas. Man thinks he must do something to please God.

READ v. 31. A clear statement of what any sinner needs to do in order to be saved. "Believe ON...", not "believe IN." There is an eternal difference between mental assent and heart acceptance. The phrase "believe on" means to TRUST.

READ vv. 32-34. True salvation evidenced. There are certain fruits we can expect to see in the lives of those who receive Christ. The Philippian jailor evidenced salvation through his:

1. Love for the brethren. A hardened, brutal man now tenderly took care of the servants of God.
2. Obedience. The jailor and his household were baptized.
3. Fellowship. They sat around the table together.
4. Joy. Now he was singing and praising God — in the early hours of the morning!

As with the account of Cornelius' and Lydia's baptism earlier, the practitioners of infant sprinkling point to this passage ("household" baptism) as proof for their unscriptural deed. The supposition is that the household of the jailer MUST have included children — therefore children may be baptized.

To this we reply: First, there is no mention of infants. There is no evidence the jailor and any small children in his household. Second, the Word of God was spoken to those baptized. This can hardly be done with infants understanding what is said. Third, those baptized believed. Again, these are actions beyond the capability of infants.

Another proof of the deity of Christ: compare v. 31, "... believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ..." with v. 34, "... believing in God ...".

V. THE VINDICATION OF PAUL AND HIS TEAM — vv. 35-40

There is an interesting conclusion to the final episode of Paul's ministry in Philippi. It sheds some light on the believer's relationship to the laws of the land.

READ v. 35. Christianity does not negate the laws of civil government. Paul did not take advantage of the situation (his freedom) or the new converts. He evidently returned to his cell and the next day was still in custody.

READ v. 36. Christianity does not remove us from established authority. Even though he was now a brother in the Lord, the keeper of the prison was still the keeper of the prison and of Paul. While in the eyes of the Lord we are all one (without distinction) — there are still established levels of authority in marriage, the home, the workplace, in the church, and in society. The only difference is that we now submit one to another in the roles God has placed us in "as unto the Lord!"

READ v. 37. Christianity does not ask us to give up our civil rights. The attitude of going "the second mile," turning the "other cheek," and "doing good to others who despise us" must be seen in its right context. The teachings of the Lord in Matthew 5 have to do with our attitude. In this case, Paul does not seek to despise authority in any way — but neither did he allow himself to be treated like dirt.

READ vv. 38, 39. God's blessings rest upon those who do right. Paul, although a Jew, was also a full Roman citizen. Romans were supposed to be given a trial.

READ v. 40. Paul and Silas (the persecuted) comfort the brethren. A church had been established in Philippi, born out of suffering and sacrifice. It is interesting to see how Paul and Silas, who were surely in a bad way physically, continued their ministry to the brethren.

The ministry of the Gospel to two great cities of present-day Greece provides an interesting contrast. In the northern city of Thessalonica, a great church was planted amidst great physical persecution; in the southern city of Athens, no church was planted in the face of intellectual opposition.

I. THE APOSTLE PAUL AT THESSALONICA — vv. 1-9

READ v. 1. The journey to Thessalonica.

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Paul and his companions traveled from Philippi to Thessalonica. Luke uses the pronoun “they” indicating he was not with Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Luke probably remained with the church at Philippi to help establish it. The journey from Philippi to Thessalonica was about 100 miles (155 km).

READ vv. 2, 3. The ministry of the Gospel. First, he went to the people. Paul used the Sabbath Day gatherings of Jews to advantage. Second, he used the scripture. The Word of God is our primary weapon and the Holy Spirit uses it to convict men. He preached the Gospel.

Although Paul used different approaches depending on his audience – Jew or Gentile – in EVERY case, the Gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ must be presented.

READ v. 4. Some Jews believed. A multitude of devout Greeks were saved. Many influential women also came to trust Christ. A church was established. Paul wrote the epistle of I Thessalonians shortly after his departure from the city. It is addressed to the church of the Thessalonians. This is what evangelism is all about, winning souls, baptizing converts, and establishing NT Baptist churches.

From other scriptures, Aristarchus, Secundus, and possibly Demas were men of Thessalonica who later joined with Paul and his team.

READ vv. 5-9. Opposition to the Gospel. There was physical abuse. Jason was one of those who believed. It seems he had opened up his home as a meeting place for the new church. Perhaps he was ordained as its first pastor. He had to post a bond before being freed (v. 9). There was the opposition of lies (v. 7) and slander (v. 8).

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II. THE APOSTLE PAUL AT BEREIA — vv. 10-14

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Berea was a city located about 48 miles (77 km) WSW from Thessalonica.

READ v. 10. The noble stand of the Thessalonian church. These new believers were willing to stand for Christ and personally suffer if need be, so that Paul, Silas, and Timothy could continue their ministry. What price am I willing to pay to keep the light of the Gospel shining in other places?

READ v. 11. The noble attitude of the Berean Jews. This statement stands in contrast to the attitude of the Jews of Thessalonica, who had closed minds when it came to the truth.

READ v. 12. The fruit of the Gospel at Berea. Those who were converted to Christ is interesting: Many Jews from the synagogue, honorable Greek women, nobility, and quite a few Greek men.

READ vv. 13, 14. The opposition to the Gospel at Berea. This came from the Thessalonian Jews and Paul was urged to move on, and he headed south to Athens. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea to organize and establish the church there.

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III. THE APOSTLE PAUL AT ATHENS — vv. 15-17

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READ v. 15. Paul's journey to Athens. This was a sea journey. He was accompanied on this journey by men from the Berean church, one of whom was possibly Sopater (Acts 20:4). Once Paul arrived, he desired Silas and Timothy to come and join him. He was dependent on a team approach and didn't want to do anything without his partners.

READ v. 16. Paul's eye affected his heart — Lamentations 3:51 – and his heart was stirred. How sad it is that many Christians can look at others and experience no burden, compassion, or concern.

READ v. 17. This is the only recorded instance where Paul worked apart from his evangelistic team. He couldn't wait until the others arrived; he saw a need and did something about it. The word "daily" occurs twice in Acts 17 (verses 11, 17). This serves to remind us that Christianity is not a Sunday option, but an everyday life to be lived out for Christ.

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IV. THE APOSTLE PAUL AND THE ATHENIAN PHILOSOPHERS — verses 18-21

READ v. 18-21. The Greek love of wisdom was a feature of Athenian society. There were several philosophic systems flourishing in Paul's day. The Epicureans taught that pleasure was the chief good in life - "If it feels good, it is good". The Stoics were the opposite to the Epicureans — a self-righteous party who believed, "If it hurts, it is good." Then there were followers of Plato/Aristotle.

These philosophers saw Paul as just another philosopher, but Christianity is NOT a philosophy. Paul preached the Gospel to them. Philosophers need Christ too! Areopagus is another name for "Mars Hill" a 377-foot-high hill where philosophers met to debate and argue.

V. THE APOSTLE PAUL'S SERMON ON MARS HILL — vv. 22-34

READ vv. 22, 23. Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill. The Greeks held a court on that location — Paul would have stood in the middle, surrounded by philosophers of all kinds. The word “superstitious” would have been complimentary to these Athenians — in much the same way as being called “very religious” would please many unsaved but devout ‘Christians.’ If we approach people with a “you’re wrong, I’m right!” attitude, they will not want to listen.

Paul went from the known to the unknown. “To the UNKNOWN God.” This altar was a “catch-all” to make sure no deity was overlooked by the Greeks.

There is a marked difference between this sermon and other recorded sermons of Paul that were addressed specifically to Jews. This has been noted before, but when Paul preached to Jews, he began with the Old Testament, because they were familiar with it. To these Gentile philosophers, the apostle used a different approach. He appeals first to GENERAL REVELATION — the witness of nature. Note the declarations in this message in vv. 24-31:

READ v. 24. God is the Omnipotent Creator. He made all things. He is the Omnipresent Creator. He is not confineable.

READ v. 25. God is a Spirit. He is not worshiped through external acts, but internally by regenerated hearts. As Creator, God is the sustainer of human life. Our life is not independent of God.

READ v. 26. God is active in the general affairs of men. He set the bounds of the nations (Gen. 10).

READ v. 27. God is not far away.

READ v. 28. God is gracious in preserving life. Paul showed his acquaintance with the writings of ancient Greece and his knowledge of Hellenistic culture.

READ v. 29. God is not an idol. Paul used a little “counter-philosophy” here. He addressed his hearers in a manner that was familiar to them.

READ v. 30. God is seeking men. God does not overlook sin but commands all men to repentance and faith.

READ v. 31. God is going to judge the world and Jesus Christ is man’s only hope. Here Paul delivers the Gospel message — he has moved from the known to the unknown. Jesus Christ will one day judge these men, but He died and rose again that through believing we might escape the judgment.

READ vv. 32-34. This is a good summary of the reactions people have toward the Gospel today: some rejected the Gospel outright, some procrastinate, but others will accept the Gospel and be saved.

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~ Chapter Eighteen ~

The account of two great cities (Corinth and Ephesus) being reached with the Gospel is the main focus in this chapter. It also records the conclusion of Paul's second great evangelistic expedition and the beginning of his third.

I. PAUL THE TENTMAKER — vv. 1-3

READ v. 1.

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Paul arrives in Corinth. Unlike the academic, philosophical center of Athens, Corinth was a commercial city

READ v. 2. Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla. Aquila and Priscilla were a Jewish couple who were forced to flee Rome when emperor Claudius I force all Jews to depart Rome. The couple had recently arrived in Corinth from Italy. It appears that Paul won this couple to Christ and disciplined them during his 18-month stay in Corinth.

READ v. 3. Many a preacher has had to work a secular job in order to get a church planted and established. At least in the early stages of this church plant, Paul needed to work to support himself and his missionary team.

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II. A CHURCH ESTABLISHED AT CORINTH — vv. 4-11

READ v. 4. Paul's method - to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. Notice got out among the people and he "reasoned" with them from the scriptures.

READ v. 5a. Paul's companion. Silas and Timothy join Paul in Corinth. From I Thessalonians 3:1-6 we can determine that Silas and Timothy indeed came to Athens from Berea as Paul had commanded (Acts 17:14,15), but then he sent Timothy on a special mission back to Thessalonica and Silas, as some believe, back to Philippi.

READ v. 5b. Paul's burden. He was "pressed in the spirit." That is, he was compelled or constrained. He had a burning, God-given desire to preach the Gospel.

READ v. 6. The Gospel message always provokes a reaction. In this case, the Jews of Corinth opposed themselves (meaning they resisted the conviction of the Holy Spirit) and they rejected the Gospel.

READ v. 7. Justus was a Gentile who resorted to the synagogue as a seeker and worshiper of God.

READ v. 8. God rewarded faithfulness. Crispus is saved. Note The Consistent Order: hearing, believed, and then baptized.

READ vv. 9, 10a. Paul's comfort. Satan often attacks a preacher through discouragement. But God brings special comfort to those who serve Him and sometimes, it comes only from the Lord.

READ v. 10b. Paul's vision. God gave Paul a vision of what He wanted to do in this city. Every man of God and servant of the Lord needs such a vision for his ministry and sphere of service.

READ v. 11. Paul's labor. A church is not established overnight. Many months of patient, tender care and teaching are required. Note: A church was established at Thessalonica in a very short time, but Silas and Timothy actually spent more time with it after Paul had left. During Paul's stay in Corinth he was used of the Holy Ghost to pen his first epistles, I and II Thessalonians (c. 50,51 A.D.).

III. GOD TURNS A BAD SITUATION TO THE GOOD — vv. 12-17

READ v. 12. Continued opposition to Paul's ministry. Another principle of evangelism found in the Book of Acts : great works for God will be met with great opposition from Satan. The Jews seized upon Gallio's appointment to further their desired end.

READ v. 13. The accusation against Paul. Notice their wording, "... contrary to the law." They no doubt hoped that Gallio would think that Paul had broken some Roman law (not Jewish law).

READ vv. 14-16. The rejection from Gallio. Gallio was not interested in settling religious disputes.

READ v. 17. The backlash against the Jews. Sosthenes, the successor to Crispus and the ring leader of the insurrection, received some of his own medicine. Note: Crispus did not remain in the synagogue after his conversion. He became a baptized member of the church at Corinth — I Corinthians 1:14.

What will it take for a man to come to Christ and be saved? Sosthenes profited from his beating. At some point later, Sosthenes himself trusted Christ, and became a servant of the Lord (I Cor. 1:1).

IV. THE CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND EVANGELISTIC JOURNEY — verses 18-22

READ v. 18. Paul leaves Corinth taking with him Aquila and Priscilla. He was headed for his home church in Antioch. No further mention is made of Silas from this point in the narrative of Acts. Perhaps he remained in Greece. However, in 1 Peter 5:12, we learn that Silvanus (probably the same Silas) is with Peter and John Mark in Babylonia some years later.

READ vv. 19-21. Paul's short stay at Ephesus.

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Ephesus was a “stopover” on his sea voyage from Cenchrea to Syria. It seems that, while Paul looked at the city, he realized its great need (and great potential) for the Gospel. He left Aquila and Priscilla and planned to return after taking care of business in Jerusalem.

READ v. 22. He went from Ephesus to Cæsarea by sea. From Cæsarea to Jerusalem by land. He greeted the church there and then returned to his home and sending church. This concludes his second missionary journey.

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V. THE COMMENCEMENT OF PAUL’S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY — vv. 23-28

READ v. 23.

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Paul spent “some time” with his home/sending church and then set out on his third missionary journey. Paul began by visiting the churches he had previously planted. There is always a need to keep in touch with the churches they have planted in order to strengthen them.

READ vv. 24-28. Introducing Apollos. He was a Greek cultured Jew. He was from Alexandria, Egypt which was center of Greek cultured Jewry. He appears as a remarkable man. There are seven desirable (and acquirable) qualities for a man of God seen in Apollos.

- (1) Eloquent
- (2) Mighty in the Scriptures. This should be the goal of every God-called preacher.
- (3) Instructed in the way of the Lord. God’s servants need to be taught the Word of God
- (4) Fervent in the Spirit. He was a zealous, fiery preacher.
- (5) Single minded. He did not preach philosophy; he did not teach religion — he “... spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord...” (verse 25).
- (6) Teachableness. This is one of the qualities lacking in many of God’s people today.
- (7) Able to work with others. His ministry complemented that of Paul in Corinth.

We also see that Apollos’ doctrine was limited. He knew “... only the baptism of John...”. Since John the Baptist only baptized saved people by immersion in water and by his baptism pictured the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, we can affirm that Apollos knew with the plan of salvation well.

But we also see that his doctrine was expanded. Apollos was ignorant of the completeness of the Christian message that was revealed after John the Baptist, through the apostles. Apollos was well-informed about the Gospel — it seems he needed to be taught “church truth” and that Aquila and his wife took him in and straightened his doctrine out.

He became an effective preacher. Following a short ministry at Ephesus, Apollos was led to go to Corinth, and became a real blessing to the church there.

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This chapter records events associated the establishment of the great church at Ephesus. The foundation for this church had been laid during a brief visit by Paul to the city, the extended presence and ministry of Aquila and his wife, and the preaching of Apollos. A nucleus of baptized believers had already been gathered and probably organized into a New Testament church.

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Paul revisited the city on his third evangelistic expedition, and remained there for about three years (Acts 20:31). He had traveled from his home/sending church at Antioch overland through Galatia, Phrygia, and the “upper coasts” (probably Mysia) before arriving in Ephesus.

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I. SOME MEN WHO “GOT WET” — vv. 1-7

READ v. 1. Paul comes to Ephesus and finds certain “disciples”.

READ v. 2a. Paul asks a searching question. There was something evidently missing in the lives of these men. It caused the apostle to question their salvation. Paul asked a simple question — “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”

READ v. 2b. These men had not even heard of the Holy Ghost. The indwelling Spirit of God is the essence of true, Bible Christianity.

READ v. 3. Their hopes for eternal life rested in their baptism. They could boast they had the right baptism! But trusting in your baptism in a work’s-based salvation. Belonging to the right church is important. Believing in the right doctrine is important. Being baptized with the right baptism is important, but NONE of these will save a soul or remove a single sin!

READ v. 4. These men were not baptized by John the Baptist. Though they claimed to have received John’s baptism, the evidence does not support the teaching that John baptized them. First, John’s ministry was 25 years earlier, making it unlikely they had come into contact. Second, Ephesus was 600 miles (1,000 km) from Palestine, making it unlikely they had come into contact. Third, the doctrine does not line up. John frequently mentioned the Holy Ghost — these men had never even heard of Him. John also preached repentance and faith — these men had experienced neither.

Some believe that Apollos was the one who, in his zealous ignorance, baptized these unsaved men. Though this might seem logical, we must keep in mind that, according to Acts 18:24, Apollos was (1) Instructed in the way of the Lord. He knew the way of salvation. And (2) he was fervent in the Spirit. He knew about the Holy Spirit and His working power. The most probable answer to this situation is that they were influenced by false teachers.

READ vv. 5-6. Paul leads them to real salvation and baptizes them. Paul lays hand upon the men and the Holy Spirit was given to them in an apparent way. This is the fourth and final demonstration of the Holy Spirit's reception by believers (Acts 2, Acts 8 – Samaritan, Acts 10 – Gentiles). Note: This is the final mention of "speaking in tongues" in the Book of Acts.

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS — vv. 8, 9

READ v. 8. Paul's evangelistic effort was practical – he went to the synagogue where people were to be found. He was bold in his presentation. He used the scriptures to convince them of Christ.

READ v. 9. As with all preaching of the Gospel, there can only be two results. Some rejected Christ. Some believed on Christ.

A church is organized. The disciples were separated from the synagogue crowd. This is what happens when a New Testament church is organized – the baptized believers are organized into a separate and distinct entity. The first meeting house of the church was a rented schoolhouse of Tyrannus. The name "Tyrannus" means "the tyrant." He must have been some schoolmaster!

III. THE OUTREACH OF THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS — v. 10

This verse of scripture not only describes one of the great feats in church-planting evangelism, but gives a scriptural model for present-day churches to reproduce themselves. Over the space of two years, ALL ASIA (Province of Asia Minor) heard the Gospel.

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At least nine other churches were planted in the province: Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Miletus, Colosse, and Philadelphia.

The natural conclusion is that the great apostle Paul went to each of these cities and founded the churches that are mentioned in scripture. However, this was not possible. Paul was disputing DAILY (verse 9c) for the space of at least two years and three months in Ephesus – his total time in Ephesus was "night and day" for three years. Paul NEVER left Ephesus! How was this accomplished?

Paul reproduced himself in other men. It doesn't matter how energetic, efficient, driven, or productive a preacher may be – there is only so much any one man can do. Paul reproduced himself in others; he actually multiplied himself. This is God's way of producing preachers – II Timothy 2:2. He trained men as both pastors and church planting missionary/evangelists.

One of the churches established in Asia was at Colosse. During his time in Ephesus, Paul never personally went to this city and he never saw the believers there – he only heard about them.

The man who went there to start the church was Epaphras. Besides Epaphras, Tychicus and Trophimus were other notable Ephesian preachers who traveled and worked with Paul.

From Paul's time in Ephesus, we learn a sound evangelistic practice:

1. The evangelistic team establishes a church in a major city.
2. Members of the team remain with that church to help train others.
3. The new church in turn sends out teams to the surrounding areas.

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IV. THE EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AT EPHESUS — vv. 11-22

READ vv. 11, 12. God's special grace in allowing true miracles. These miracles belong to the catalog of the "sign gifts" that were promised to the apostles for the purpose of convincing unbelieving Jews and confirming their preached word — the New Testament not yet having been written.

READ vv. 13-17. The false miracles of the seven sons of Sceva. The word "vagabond" means a "wanderer". These were the sons of a local Jewish priest who had some kind of traveling sideshow. They were first century "fake-healers" whose specialty was exorcism.

Exorcism is an occult practice. It attempts to use incantations and magic formulae to remove evil spirits. Such practice usually only substitutes one devil for another. The spiritual gift of casting out devils was one of the sign gifts and therefore is no longer valid. However, whenever the Lord Jesus Christ or one of the apostles cast out devils, it was permanent.

The sons of Sceva used the name of Jesus. Like Simon in Acts 8, they had observed God's power working through the apostle Paul. They considered the Name of Jesus to be a magic formula, so they tried it out. Note the wording: "... by Jesus Whom Paul preacheth." These men did not know Christ personally.

The evil spirit also knew Paul. However, note their question to the exorcists: "...but who are ye?" We do well to apply that question to our own life and ministry. Is our life and what we do for Christ getting the attention of the kingdom of darkness? Is our church known and feared because it prevails against the gates of Hell?

The possessed man attacked his would-be exorcists. Demon possession accounts for super-human strength. This was a Satanic attempt to discredit the Gospel in the minds of the unsaved. However, God used this remarkable event to bring about the salvation of many in Ephesus.

READ vv. 17-20. When a person is born again a wonderful change or conversion results. True repentance is evidenced by actions. There are some things pertaining to the past life that a believer must literally put away. In this account, the new Christians burned their books of magic and witchcraft — a very expensive bonfire! And as a result the Word of God grew and prevailed.

READ v. 21. Paul was aware of God's future plans for him and was ever intent on fulfilling God's will and purpose for his life. Paul's plans were put on hold, however. His extended stay in Ephesus is described in I Corinthians 16:8-10 about a great and effectual door that was opened to him.

READ v. 22. Paul's ministers. Paul practiced a "team ministry" approach to church-planting. Those who made up his team were seasoned preachers (such as Silas and Luke) and younger men who were getting their "on-the-job" training and mentoring.

Timothy and Erastus are called Paul's ministers. A minister is a servant. While learning the various aspects of the ministry, they were serving Paul. Someone had to cook the meals, erect the tents, wash the clothes, run the errands, etc.

Men are trained for the ministry by men who are engaged in the ministry (II Timothy 2:2). The place to begin is as a servant.

V. THE RIOT AT EPHEBUS — vv. 23-41

The Ephesians were idolaters worshipped the goddess Diana (Artemis). The month of May was a time when thousands of worshipers flocked to the city for public games and events. The events in this passage likely occurred in May and may have been what Paul alluded to "the great and effectual door" that was opened to him.

READ vv. 23-25. The silversmiths. The silversmiths were involved in the souvenir and idol-making business. It was a lucrative business for them. Demetrius was leader of the silversmiths.

READ vv. 26, 27. In Ephesus, so many people were converting to Christ that the idolatry trade was losing business.

READ vv. 28, 29. The uproar. In order to save their craft (and wealth), the silversmiths contrived a riot against Paul and the work of the Gospel. Two of Paul's companions were caught. Aristarchus and Gaius both from Macedonia.

READ vv. 30, 31. Paul is restrained from entering the theatre.

READ v. 32. Many were not even aware of what was happening. There was the blending of the two groups — the assembly and the mob.

READ vv. 33, 34. The identity of Alexander is not given, though it is very possible that he was the "Alexander the coppersmith" who became a sworn enemy of Paul. Was Alexander defending, the Jews or Christians?

If he was the Alexander of Ephesus mentioned in I Timothy 1, then he was associated with the church at Ephesus before later “swerving” from the faith into the error of Judaism. If he was defending the Jews, it may be that Alexander was trying to quell the situation for his people’s sake.

READ vv. 35, 36. The town clerk was the moderator of the governing body, the Ephesian assembly. He finally was able to calm the mob down enough to reason with them. If Diana is so great, she can take care of herself and don’t do anything rash that might jeopardize the city.

READ v. 37. He cleared Paul’s companions of any wrongdoing.

READ vv. 38, 39. He directed the crowd to follow their own civil laws.

READ v. 40. He reminded them of the danger of intervention. The Romans were always quick to quell any rebellion or disquiet among the peoples they ruled.

The Ephesian Assembly. This passage is particularly helpful in confirming the Biblical meaning of the word “assembly,” the Greek word “ekklesia.” This word is found in verses 32, 39, and 41.

The English word “church” is rendered from “ekklesia” , meaning “assembly.” An assembly — any assembly, religious or not — has four key characteristics:

- LOCAL
- VISIBLE
- ORGANIZED
- CONSTITUTED

This Ephesian assembly was not in any way spiritual; it was political, a civic assembly. The question is, does the Ephesian assembly answer to the same definition and these key characteristics?

1. Was the Ephesian assembly local? Yes! They met in the theater. It was not a universal assembly!
2. Was the Ephesian assembly visible? Yes! It was not an invisible assembly!
3. Was the Ephesian assembly organized? Yes! It was led by the town clerk. It had a purpose — to determine matters (verse 39).
4. Was the Ephesian assembly constituted? Yes! It was limited to citizens.

Assemblies were common in Bible times. The concept and meaning of the word was well understood. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus Christ used the term “MY church” to distinguish the Christian assembly He founded from the other assemblies of the day.

Thus the teaching in this passage supports the Bible teaching that a New Testament Baptist church is a local, visible, organized, assembly of baptized believers, with Christ as its Head and His work as its mandate.

The apostle Paul's intended departure from Ephesus was delayed by a door of great opportunity (Acts 19:21,22; I Corinthians 16:8-10). This chapter records his eventual departure and subsequent journeys and ministry among the churches of the region.

I. PAUL'S DEPARTURE FROM EPHESUS — verses 1-5

The "great door and effectual" was the sacred month of May devoted to the worship of Diana. Ephesus was filled with pilgrims and tourists from all over the province of Asia during these festivities. With the open door came "many adversaries" — notably those who made their money by exploiting the religion of the city. After the silversmiths discovered they were losing money, they started a riot.

READ v. 1. Shortly after that, Paul determined to leave Ephesus and go into Macedonia.

Slide 80 – Highlight Paul's travels from Ephesus to Corinth

READ vv. 2-3. Although very little is stated in this passage, the evidence from Paul's epistles indicates that the 10 months following Paul's departure from Ephesus were among the most fruitful in his entire ministry! The apostle went about encouraging and strengthening the churches. Notice the expression, "much exhortation!" From this we learn the principle that an evangelist's work does not cease when he leaves a particular area.

1. In Macedonia. The phrase "those parts" in v. 2a embrace a considerable amount of activity by the apostle and his team. "Those parts" would be places where churches had been planted seven years earlier (i.e., Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea), but also new territory as far as the province of Illyricum.

Paul penned the Second Epistle to the Corinthians while in Macedonia (possibly at Philippi). Paul finally met up with Titus in Macedonia (II Corinthians 7:5-7) and received the glad news that the Corinthian church had responded positively to his previous letter. This good report, along with the disturbing news of the influx of false teachers who challenged Paul's apostolic authority was the occasion for his penning the epistle.

2. In Greece (Achaia). Paul spent three months with the church at Corinth. He wrote to the Galatians and Romans from Corinth.

READ vv. 4-5. Paul's team. At this stage of his life Paul had gathered around him a sizeable team. This fact helps explain how such a relatively short period of ministry could be so far-reaching and productive. Several of the men listed here are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament.

Notice that these seven men all came from the places where Paul had been used of God to establish churches. He was reproducing himself and his ministry in faithful men.

Paul planned to sail from Achaia to Syria — the shortest practical way to get to Jerusalem. These plans were disrupted by a conspiracy of Jews, so Paul went back up to Macedonia.

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II. PAUL'S MINISTRY AT TROAS – vv. 6-12.

READ v. 6. From Philippi to Troas. The “we” indicates that Luke had rejoined Paul and his team.

READ v. 7. Paul did not plant a church in Troas during his first visit to that city. It was during his relatively short stay after leaving Ephesus that this was accomplished. Now, on his third visit, Paul spends a week with the church. The details of this visit shed some light on first-century Christianity.

(1) Churches were visible, local assemblies. We read that “...the disciples came together...” A New Testament church is an assembly, which involves “coming together in one place”

(2) Churches met on Sundays. Paul preached the Gospel in the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath (Saturday) because that’s when the people were there. But Christians met on the first day of the week.

(3) Churches met for long hours. Obviously, this was a special meeting to hear Paul preach. Nevertheless, the people were willing to stay for that length of time.

READ vv. 8-10. Eutychus fell asleep. Being that there were many lights (lamps) giving off fumes, and that Eutychus was up on the third level, and hot air rises, the poor ventilation made attentive hearing difficult — even good preaching!

He fell asleep and fell out the window, down three floors. This was a serious accident. Paul restored the dead boy to life.

III. PAUL'S JOURNEY TO MILETUS — vv. 13-16

READ v. 13. While Paul’s companions sailed from Troas to Assos, the apostle walked.

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This was a 20-mile (32 km) hike — all done with little or no sleep!

READ vv. 14, 15. The journey outlined. This was an “island hopping” journey. The many islands may have made night sailing hazardous. From Mitylene – Chios – Samos – Trogyllium – Miletus.

READ v. 16. Paul wanted to get to Jerusalem ASAP.

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IV. PAUL'S MEETING WITH THE EPHESIAN PASTORS — vv. 17-35

Not wishing to make a return visit to Ephesus, Paul instead called for the leadership of the church there to come to him during his layover in Miletus. Paul's charge to them is one of the most instructional passages on pastoring and preaching given in the New Testament.

READ v. 17. The words "elder", "bishop", and "pastor" refer to one and the same office in a church, and are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Notice that Paul called for the elders (plural). A plurality of elders (pastors) in a church was normal practice. Just as Paul had a "team" approach to evangelism, so the Lord initiated a team approach to the pastorate.

READ v. 18-19. Attitude is key in the work of the Lord. If we have a bad attitude, we'll not be effective in our service. The testimony of the apostle is remarkable and challenging. In his ministry at Ephesus, he exhibited :

1. A sense of urgency ("...from the first day...").
2. Undeterred constancy ("...at all seasons...").
3. Focused submissiveness ("...serving the Lord...").
4. Humility of mind ("...with all humility of mind...").
5. Compassion ("...many tears..."). A true preacher is brokenhearted over the effects of sin and the consequences of sin in the lives of people. Paul also shed tears because of false teachers that attacked the flock and the damage they caused.
6. Consistency ("...and temptations..."). The apostle was undaunted, despite many difficult circumstances he faced — e.g., II Corinthians 6:4,5; 11:23-27.
7. A sense of obligation (v. 26). Paul considered himself to be a debtor to those without Christ. The only way he could be pure from the blood of all men was to tell everyone about Christ.

READ v. 20. Paul's approach to ministry. It was complete "...kept back nothing...". He made maximum use of the scriptures. It was constructive "...profitable...". He sought only the best for his hearers. It was concrete — shewed you and taught you.

This defines what it means to be a mentor and gives the basic plan for preachers to reproduce themselves. It was comprehensive "...publicly ... house to house." It is still God's primary plan for reaching people.

READ v. 21. Paul's appeal. The apostle reminded the preachers about how to preach and present the Gospel. There are two vital elements here regarding the sinner's response to the Gospel. There must be repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ.

READ vv. 22-24. Paul's acceptance of the ministry. Paul was fully resigned to the Lord's will, come what may. He was duty bound ("...I go bound in the Spirit"). He was steadfast ("...none of these things move me..."). He was selfless ("...neither count I my life dear...").

He was a visionary (“...that I might finish my course...”). He was thankful (“...the ministry ... I have received...”). He considered his ministry to be a gift from God.

READ vv. 25-27.

READ vv. 28-32. Paul’s charge to the Ephesian pastors.

1. A three-fold warning. The danger from:
 - a. Personal error. Pastors must constantly be considering themselves.
 - b. External error. Pastors are to be on guard for the grievous wolves
 - c. Internal error. This can involve “well-meaning” church members who pass around books, tapes and CDs, etc. without a pastor’s knowledge or approval.
2. A Three-Fold Reminder.
 - a. A pastor is God’s appointee. While a church may “vote” to call a man as a pastor, it should be a recognition of the Holy Spirit’s designation. Pastors are Christ’s gifts to His churches and, if the scriptural pattern is followed, it is God Who sets a man in this position.
 - b. Pastors have a God-given responsibility: to HEED (bishop), FEED (pastor), and LEAD (elder).
 - c. Every New Testament church is God’s property.
3. A Three-Fold Remedy.
 - a. Watch — verse 31.
 - b. Warn — verse 31.
 - c. Fortify — verse 32.

READ v. 33. The ministry is not for making money. There should be NO charge for the Gospel. Those who have been blessed (saved) through the Gospel will subsequently support those who labor in the Word. Even though preachers need money to live and labor, money is not the objective.

READ v. 34. The ministry may be supported by personal labor. It is desirable that a man be taken care of financially to enable him to devote all his time and energy into the ministry, but there is no shame in a preacher taking secular employment.

As a general rule, church members should do all in their power to see that God’s preachers (pastors and evangelists) are fully supported. Note: Paul took responsibility for the support of his team.

READ v. 35. The ministry ought to exemplify giving. There is a blessedness in giving to the Lord’s work. Proportionally, preachers should be the “biggest givers” in the church.

V. THE DEPARTURE FROM MILETUS — vv. 36-38

This is one of the most touching scenes in the Book of Acts. It reveals the deep bond that is developed between a mentor and those he has trained. It helps define what true Christian fellowship is all about.

READ v. 36. Christian fellowship involves prayer. Fellowship is not talking about mundane things. Christian fellowship is centered around the Word of God, the Son of God, and communication with God. Praying together is the sweetest form of fellowship, for it connects all three!

READ v. 37. Christian fellowship invokes feelings. There is much emotion in the ministry. There is a holy camaraderie that can only be fully appreciated by those who have labored, prayed, and stood shoulder-to-shoulder.

READ v. 38. Christian fellowship invites longings for home. There is often much separation that comes with the ministry, but it will be worth it all.

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Although Paul never actually made it back to his home/sending church in Antioch, verse 13 records the conclusion of the apostle Paul's third evangelistic journey. Paul is now a captive to the will of God for his life that would begin to unfold once he reached Jerusalem.

I. THE VOYAGE FROM MILETUS TO TYRE — vv. 1-6

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READ vv. 1-3. Miletus – Coos – Rhodes – Patara – Tyre. Tyre was an ancient Phoenecian city, and one of the great trading and seaports in the Mediterranean. It remains a major city of southern Lebanon.

READ vv. 4-6. The church at Tyre. Paul and his party spent a week in Tyre while the ship was unloading and loading. There was a New Testament church in that city. It is not clear how and when this church was established. The fact that they “found” disciples indicates that they were looking for a sound church.

This should be the duty and desire of every believer whenever they come to a new place. It shows the importance of actively seeking to be present in a church meeting, even when away from one's own church for an extended time (e.g., on vacation).

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II. THE VOYAGE FROM TYRE TO JERUSALEM — vv. 7-17

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READ v. 7. From Tyre to Ptolemais. It was a port city, south of Tyre, in Galilee. Though he would only spend a day in port, Paul sought out the brethren from the local church to enjoy their company and fellowship.

READ v. 8. From Ptolemais to Caesarea. Entered the house of Philip the Evangelist. This is the Philip of Acts 6 & 8 — one of the seven deacons of the church at Jerusalem, and the man God used to bring the Gospel to Samaria, to the Ethiopian, and to the cities and towns of the coastal plain.

Philip here is titled “the evangelist.” For 25 or so years, Philip was used of the Lord to preach the Gospel and plant churches. Philip lived in Caesarea. It is unclear whether he was in “retirement,” or whether the church there was his “base of operations.” His home was given to hospitality.

READ v. 9. The daughters of Philip. Philip had four unmarried daughters. Perhaps his wife was no longer with him and he was being cared for by these daughters. These women had bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit the gift of prophecy in a woman's and/or children's ministry.

This reference is often cited in support of “women preachers.” Although women may certainly teach (and preach) — to women, they may not preach or teach men or exercise any authority over them.

READ v. 10. Agabus was a predictive prophet from the church at Jerusalem. There are two aspects to the gift of prophecy — foretelling (predictive) and forthtelling (proclaiming).

1. Before the completion of the NT, the gift of prophecy involved both fore-telling and forth-telling.
2. Upon the completion of the New Testament, this spiritual gift “failed” (ceased). The Bible is now the complete revealed will of God to man. The gift of prophecy continues on only as the proclaiming of the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit — i.e., preaching.

READ v. 11. The prophecy of Agabus. Using Paul’s girdle (belt), Agabus gave a symbolic account of what was to happen to Paul. As far as Paul was concerned, this was nothing new.

READ v. 12. The plea from Paul’s companions. How easy it is for good Christian people to become a stumbling block to the will of God in a man’s life!

READ v. 13. Paul’s answer to his friends. Paul’s friends had a good motive, but Paul had a higher one, following God’s will.

READ v. 14. A godly desire. “The will of the Lord be done.” This is a response of submission, and should be the acquiescent attitude of every believer.

READ v. 15. From Caesarea to Jerusalem. This was a journey by foot which took a full day to complete. It may have taken longer due to the numbers in the group. The word “carriages” means “that which is carried,” i.e., baggage.

READ v. 16. Paul’s companions. By this time, Paul’s company consisted of Luke (signified by the “we” 26 times in this chapter), eight other traveling companions, some members of the church at Caesarea, and Mnason, an elderly saint in which Paul would lodge in his home in Jerusalem.

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III. THE APOSTLE PAUL AT JERUSALEM — vv. 18-26

Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem signals the end of his third journey. His purpose for coming was to hand over the offerings raised by the churches in Europe specifically to relieve the sufferings of many in the Jerusalem church.

READ v. 17. The brethren were very happy to see Paul once again. His last visit came at the end of his second evangelistic journey.

READ v. 18. There was a pastor’s conference. James was still the “presiding” pastor. (Acts 15).

READ v. 19. Paul reported on the ministry of all what God did.

READ v. 20. Paul's report brought a joyous response. These pastors were thrilled to hear of souls being saved and churches established. But then we read of the inroads of Judaism.

Judaism is the teaching that salvation comes through keeping the Law of Moses (Acts 15). It soon degenerated into a false gospel of a works-based "salvation." The error of Judaism faced some eight years earlier had not gone away. There were still thousands of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who had not separated from the fold of Moses. They still maintained their Jewish customs.

READ vv. 21, 22. The rumor was that Paul taught a total rejection of Moses. The pastors wanted to settle the matter before the church assembled. They were wise to do this: they were acting to protect the flock from unnecessary confusion and conflict.

READ vv. 23-25. The pastors wanted Paul to give some visible demonstration of his support for and observance of the Law of Moses.

1. Four men with a vow. This was no doubt the vow of a Nazarite. See: Numbers 6:1-8. Their proposed act was the fulfilling of Numbers 6:9 — meaning that their Nazarite vow had somehow been broken. They needed purifying (Numbers 6:12b). Paul's "defiling" act (in the eyes of the strict Jews) was no doubt his consorting with Gentiles.

2. Paul to be "at charges". This meant that Paul would pay the cost of their required offering.

READ v. 26. Did Paul make a mistake? Some say "No". He was deeply concerned for his people and would do anything to win them to Christ. Others say "Yes". He consistently rebuked the doctrine of Judaism. What we do know is that before an offering was made, God intervened by allowing the riot and his arrest before the seven days were up.

IV. THE RIOT AT JERUSALEM — vv. 27-36

READ v. 27. Paul is recognized by his enemies – Jews from Ephesus.

READ vv. 28, 29. These Jews stirred up the people by claiming that first, Paul taught against Israel, Moses, and the Temple and second that he brought a Gentile into the holy place. This was based purely upon supposition.

READ v. 30. Paul is taken by the mob. The whole city was in an uproar.

READ vv. 31, 32. Roman soldiers to the rescue. Paul was in the process of being beaten to death.

READ v. 33. Paul was bound hand and foot in shackles and chains. Obviously, he must be some dangerous criminal!

READ vv. 34-36. Paul was taken into custody. The situation was so dire that the soldiers literally picked Paul up and carried him up the stairs of the castle.

V. PAUL IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY — vv. 37-40

READ v. 37. Paul requests to speak. The captain was amazed to learn that Paul could speak Greek. This was evidence that he was an educated man.

READ v. 38. A case of mistaken identity. According to Josephus, this particular Egyptian's rebellion was put down by Felix, although he apparently escaped.

READ v. 39. Paul shows himself to be a Jew in order to receive permission to speak to the Jews. At this time he did not reveal his Roman citizenship.

READ v. 40. Paul prepares to speak to the Jews. This was the burning desire of the apostle — to preach to his people.

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This chapter records the apostle Paul's first defense of his faith before the Jews in Jerusalem.

I. PAUL'S LIFE B.C. (BEFORE CHRIST) — verses 1-5

READ v. 1. Paul addressed the crowd courteously. Even though they were out to kill him, he showed them respect. This is a key point in our approach to witnessing.

READ v. 2. Paul spoke perfect Hebrew. He was careful with his words. It is interesting to see how the apostle "tailored" his speech so as not to be offensive to the Jews.

There was no point in further antagonizing the enraged Jewish multitude which would have ended any opportunity for him to preach the Gospel to them.

READ v. 3. It is from this account that we learn more about Paul's early life and upbringing. He was born in Tarsus, Cilicia. He received his Rabbinical training in Jerusalem under the tutelage of Dr. Gamaliel. He was a zealous Jew. (We know he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee).

READ vv. 4, 5. Paul confesses that he was a persecutor and injurious to Christians.

II. PAUL'S CONVERSION TO CHRIST — vv. 6-16

READ vv. 6-11. The details of Saul's conversion.

READ vv. 12-16. Saul receives a new commission and is baptized. The Lord used Ananias to deliver His will and purpose for the new convert. Ananias was a godly Jew who had trusted Christ and was most like a pastor of the church at Damascus.

III. PAUL'S MISSION FOR CHRIST — vv. 17-21

READ v. 17-20. Saul returned to Jerusalem. This occurred as recorded in Acts 9:26, after he had spent three years with the church at Damascus plus some time alone with the Lord in Arabia.

READ v. 21. God's plan for Saul.

IV. THE REACTION TO PAUL'S TESTIMONY — vv. 22,23

The Jews listened to Paul until the word Gentile was said. That set off an 'explosion of rage'.

READ vv. 22, 23. The Jews "pitching a fit".

V. THE APOSTLE PAUL AVOIDS A ROMAN WHIPPING — vv. 24-30

READ v. 24. Paul is taken into the castle. The Roman tribune thought a good whipping would get some answers. He wanted to know why Paul was causing such a commotion.

READ v. 25. Paul appeals to Roman law. The Romans had one law for themselves, another law for everyone else.

READ vv. 26-28. Paul is a Roman citizen. This was a great privilege. cf. Acts 16:37-39. There were three ways one could become a Roman citizen:

(1) Free-born — i.e. the child of a Roman citizen. This was the case with Paul.

(2) By Gift — as a reward for some notable service.

(3) By Purchase. This was the case with the chief captain.

READ v. 29. Paul is freed from the whipping post. It was a serious offense to harm any Roman without a proper trial.

READ v. 30. Instead of beating a confession out of Paul, the Romans called for the Jews to come and accuse him.

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This chapter records the apostle Paul's second defense of his faith before the Jews in Jerusalem. This time, Paul is brought from the castle to the place where the Sanhedrin met.

I. PAUL STANDS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN — vv. 1-10

READ v. 1. A good conscience before God. What a tremendous statement! The conscience is that inner faculty of man (part of the soul) that discerns responsibility with reference to moral truth.

We have a saying in my country, "Let your conscience be your guide". That is not good advice. Our conscience inherently knows good and evil, right and wrong but the conscience of man may become insensitive to sin through continual sinning. According to scripture, our conscience can be:

- defiled — Titus 1:15.
- seared — I Timothy 4:2.
- weak — I Corinthians 8:12.

We receive a good conscience through salvation (Heb. 10:22) and then maintain it through staying true to God's Word and living by God's Word. Was Paul being presumptuous in v. 1? Perhaps he was referring to his life since salvation rather than before salvation when he persecuted the church.

READ v. 2. Paul is smitten across the mouth. Such an act on the part of the High Priest was contrary to Jewish Law, which required that a man accused must be heard.

READ v. 3. Paul rebukes the high priest. Paul was simply making a defense by pointing to the hypocrisy of the man.

READ vv. 4-5. Paul is rebuked for reviling the high priest. Paul did not recognize the high priest. It is believed Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was a serious eye problem (Gal. 6:11). He may not have been able to see the High Priest very clearly.

READ v. 6. The divided council. The Jewish religious world in apostolic days was divided into two major parties. Both groups developed during the 400 intertestamental "Silent Years."

1. Pharisees. This was the ultra-orthodox conservative party. They were the Biblical scholars of the day but had degenerated into legalistic traditionalists — keepers of the "letter of the Law" but not the "spirit of the Law." The scribes were (mostly) pharisees who were experts in the Talmud and Torah.

2. Sadducees. This was the aristocratic party — deniers of key Bible truths (an after-life, the resurrection, and spirit beings in particular). The Sadducees developed from a priestly background and were more political. The party consisted of the wealthier Jews, and was chiefly concerned with social position rather than legal observance.

At this point, Paul exploits the divided Sanhedrin. He said, "I Am A Pharisee." This was a statement of fact — the only difference being that he was a saved Pharisee. Then he said, I Stand For The "Hope And Resurrection Of The Dead" meaning the resurrection which the Sadducees deny. It is likely that Paul spoke these words to engender a division in the Council.

READ vv. 7-9. There was dissension in the council. The Scribes come to Paul's defense. An uproar ensues once again.

READ v. 10. Paul is rescued from the council.

II. THE LORD STANDS BY PAUL — v. 11

The events of the day must have been overwhelming, even for Paul. God comes and encourages him. The Lord is not finished with Paul. There is still work to do.

III. THE CONSPIRACY TO MURDER PAUL — vv. 12-15

READ v. 12. What a violent world it was in those days! Their target was the apostle Paul. His protection by the Romans was preventing the Jewish authorities from achieving their end. Their plot involved violating 2 of the 10 Commandments.

#3 — "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain." This commandment prohibits the taking of oaths. These Jews bound themselves in God's Name to do their foul deed.

#6 — "Thou shalt not kill." Their plot involved an assassination. It was not a legal, judicial execution.

READ v. 13. There were more than 40 Jews.

READ v. 14. This conspiracy was known to the very highest reaches of the Council. It went "all the way to the top!"

READ v. 15. The chief priests and elders (i.e. the Sanhedrin) were to pretend they wished to speak further with Paul, thus bringing him out of the castle and back onto the streets. The 40 men would then seize the opportunity of killing him.

IV. THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST PAUL IS FRUSTRATED — verses 16-30

READ v. 16. God uses Paul's nephew. This is the only mention of Paul's family.

READ v. 17. Paul takes steps for his own safety. Here is an example where God did NOT use a supernatural miracle to deliver His servant. Rather, he allowed Paul to use his own common sense.

READ vv. 18-21. The Chief captain is informed of the plot. This nephew of Paul's obviously was a courageous man. He may have been one of the pharisees. He was willing to inform against his own, and go into the Roman garrison willingly.

READ vv. 22-24. Lysias takes steps to protect Paul. He kept secret his discovery. He prepared a strong guard - 470 men are gathered to protect just one man — a servant of the Lord. The third hour of the night is 9:00 p.m. (Roman reckoning). He devised a secret escape.

READ vv. 25-30. The letter to Governor Felix. This letter represents an attempt by Claudius Lysias to promote himself somewhat as a champion of the Romans. Most of the letter contains a true statement of the facts — although he stretches the truth when he declared "... having understood that he was a Roman..." (verse 27).

V. PAUL IS TAKEN TO CÆSAREA — vv. 31-35

READ v. 31. Stage one of the journey. This was a late-night trip to Antipatris about 40 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Paul would have arrived in the early morning hours.

READ vv. 32, 33. Stage two of the journey. In the morning of the next day, the 200 strong cavalry continued to escort Paul to Caesarea.

READ vv. 33, 34. Paul's first appearance before Felix. This was a formal arraignment. It was to ascertain jurisdiction.

READ v. 35. Paul is kept in custody until his Jewish accusers arrive. The accusers should have been the Jews from Asia.

Remember, it was in Acts 21:27 when the Jews from Asia that accused him when he was in the Temple purifying himself.

Since they did not appear, the case should have been dropped. However, this became more and more a political issue.

The burning theological question raised in this chapter: "Did Paul's would-be assassins starve to death?"

Slide 91

In this chapter we have the apostle Paul's third defense of his faith before the Jewish nation. This time it took place in Cæsarea. In the previous chapter, Paul had been secretly escorted from Jerusalem to Cæsarea under heavily armed Roman escort.

I. PAUL IS ACCUSED BEFORE GOVERNOR FELIX — vv. 1-9

READ v. 1. The arrival of his accusers. This was a high-level delegation. It reveals how the Jews saw the spread of Christianity and the impact of the apostle Paul.

There was the high priest – Ananias, the elders – most if not all the Sanhedrin, and Tertullus, the best orator they could hire to get Paul convicted. Most likely he was a Roman Gentile lawyer.

READ vv. 2, 3. The speech of Tertullus. This lawyer used all his persuasive skills by first flattering Felix. The statement of verse 3 is very humorous, because the Jews despised Felix and had no time at all for him. He addressed him as "...most notable Felix..." This, too, was a joke, because Felix was a real reprobate, and everybody knew it.

READ vv. 5, 6. Four charges were made against Paul.

(1) Paul was a "pest" (literally, a plague). By this they meant that Paul was a disturber of the peace, a plague on society. i.e., get rid of him and there will be tranquility and peace. Any reading of the life and ministry of Paul would refute this notion, for it was the Jews who caused all the disturbances.

(2) Paul was a mover of sedition. This remark was designed to play on the fears of the Romans. There had been several would-be insurrectionists over the years of Roman occupation.

(3) Paul was a ring leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. This was perhaps the only allegation with some truth. In his defense the apostle will not deny it, although Christianity was not a religious movement started by and centered around some man.

(4) Paul had desecrated the Jewish Temple. This was not true. In fact, he had followed the correct rituals so as not to offend — Acts 21:26.

READ vv. 7-9. The insinuation of Tertullus. Tertullus daringly attempted to put Lysias in bad light by suggesting that it was his fault Felix was now being bothered.

The implication comes out clearly — "simply turn Paul over to us; we'll gladly take him off your hands." The Jewish leaders made it clear that Tertullus was speaking for them.

II. PAUL MAKES HIS DEFENSE BEFORE GOVERNOR FELIX — vv. 10-21

READ vv. 10-13. Tertullus had made Paul out to be an arch-criminal. The apostle answered these allegations with hard facts. First, he had only been in Jerusalem for a short time, hardly enough to cause all the trouble he was accused of.

Second, he had not, up until the time of his arrest, even done any public preaching. Third, none of his accusers had seen him do anything of the things he was accused of. No time, no witnesses, no proof! At this point, Paul should have been exonerated — and would have been, except for one thing...

READ vv. 14-16. Paul's personal confession. "But this I confess..." Had Paul sat down after v. 13, he would surely have been a free man. But he just couldn't keep his mouth shut! Even with his life in danger Paul took the opportunity to testify of his Saviour. There were four things he readily confessed to being "guilty" of. He said in effect, "But I AM guilty of:"

(1) Not conforming to established religious practice. This stand has cost many a Baptist his or her life down through the centuries past.

(2) Believing ALL the Bible. Paul believed in "plenary inspiration" — that the whole Bible was inspired of God. See: II Timothy 3:16 ("ALL"). He did not believe the Bible merely contained the Word of God — it was the Word of God.

(3) Have hope toward God. Paul, like every Christian, had the "blessed hope" of the resurrection. Note: Paul believed in two resurrections — one for the saved and one for the lost. The first resurrection occurs at the Rapture and the second resurrection occurs after the Millennium, following the Great White Throne judgment.

(4) Living what I believe. Paul practiced what he preached. He was prudent in how he lived his life before God and before men.

READ vv. 17-21. Paul's pointed defense. He explained his purpose in coming to Jerusalem. He actually came to be a blessing. One of his purposes was to bring love offerings from many of the Asian and European churches to the church at Jerusalem.

He gave a succinct challenge. This was well put, yet simple. Where are my accusers? Where are the witnesses? He gave an argument for dismissal. If there are no witnesses there can be no charges that will stand.

III. THE DECISION OF GOVERNOR FELIX — vv. 22,23

READ v. 22. Felix deferred the matter. Because the Jews had brought Lysias into their testimony, Felix decided to call for the chief captain — even though he did have Lysias' letter!

READ v. 23. Felix gave Paul restricted freedom. He was put under what may be termed "house arrest." Here we see just how well the Lord takes care of His own. Paul was given a bodyguard and access to the saints. There was a good church in Cæsarea.

IV. PAUL WITNESSES TO GOVERNOR FELIX — vv. 24-26

READ v. 24. Felix sends for Paul. Consider how even a few words spoken for the Lord in trying circumstances (verses 14-16) may be seeds that will sprout further opportunities.

Felix was somewhat acquainted with Christianity. This is evident from verse 22 when, after Paul had made his confession, Felix gained a "... more perfect knowledge of that way." It is also evident that Felix was quite interested; he did not call for Paul to discuss religion but was concerned about FAITH IN CHRIST.

READ v. 25. Paul preaches to Felix and Drusilla. The apostle went straight to the point without any of the niceties and flatteries employed by his accusers. He preached a three-point sermon:

1. Righteousness. The first thing he did was declare God's holy standard. This would show to the couple they were sinners and had missed the mark! Note: It is important to keep in mind when witnessing for Christ, that a person will not seek to be saved unless they first perceive they are lost! This is the purpose of the Law!
2. Temperance. This means restrained, or godly living. Felix and his wife hardly measured up here. The Bible teaches that true temperance comes only through salvation.
3. Judgment. We must tell sinners that without Christ there is certain, fearful, eternal judgment that is coming. Paul the prisoner became Paul the judge. His message concerning faith in Christ was one of righteousness, restraint, and retribution.

Felix comes under conviction. Felix trembled. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to sinners to produce (through the preached Word of God) conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Another vital soul winning lesson: we must always rely upon the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin and the need of a Saviour by using the Word of God rather than human logic or arguments.

Felix and his wife put off receiving Christ and, as far as we know, never did find that "convenient season." God's convenient time is NOW!!

READ v. 26. Felix was dominated by his sinful ways and, although under great conviction, CHOSE to reject Christ by continuing in sin. History tells us that Felix probably died dishonorably by suicide.

V. PAUL'S CONFINEMENT AT CAESAREA – v. 27

READ v. 27. Paul remained two years in Cæsarea — steadfastly refusing to bribe his way out of prison. These two years were silent years as not much is known about Paul's life except his time with Felix. Luke and Aristarchus were probably his constant companions during this time.

Paul has been kept in Cæsarea at the pleasure of Felix for two years. Finally there is a change in government, and events are set in motion that will greatly impact Paul's life.

I. FESTUS BECOMES GOVERNOR OF JUDÆA — v. 1

Felix's disgraceful behavior finally caught up with him, and he was recalled to Rome in 60 A.D. Though he escaped the death penalty, it is thought he eventually committed suicide. Porcius Festus was appointed by Nero as Felix's replacement.

Festus was a nobler man than Felix. He was rationalistic. It is said he was a student of philosophy. However, he had no belief in anything he could not see. To him, religion was nothing but a silly superstition. He was decisive.

In contrast to his predecessor, Festus was one to take care of matters. He was political. Festus was typical of many politicians — he wasn't interested in what was right but sought to please the majority. His first task was to placate the restless Jews. He went to Jerusalem after only three days in the office.

II. PORCIUS FESUS VISITS JERUSALEM — vv. 2-6

READ v. 2. Festus visits Jerusalem and the issue with Paul is revived. This shows the extent and persistence of Jewish hatred toward the apostle of Christ. No sooner had the new governor been installed than they were at it again. Paul was high on their agenda.

READ v. 3. The request of the Jews. There were men who would lay wait to kill Paul.

READ vv. 4, 5. The reply of Festus. Festus seems determined to take control over his province and be in control of every situation.

READ v. 6a. Festus spent over ten days in Jerusalem. No doubt this involved a lot of socializing with the elite Jews.

III. PAUL IS ARRAIGNED BEFORE FESTUS — vv. 6-12

READ v. 6b. The judgment seat. This was the place of civil law.

READ v. 7. The accusing crowd. Notice how time had enlarged their accusations. In Acts 24, there were four complaints — now there are "many." Note: Every one of their charges was without proof!

READ v. 8. Paul answers his accusers. He had not committed any offense against the Law of Moses, the temple of God, or the laws of Rome.

READ v. 9. Festus suggests a compromise. His duty was to Paul, but he sought to please the Jews.

READ vv. 10, 11. Paul realized he had no hope for justice from Festus. He was already before the right court to be judged; to be sent back to Jerusalem would have resulted in “mob justice.” Paul went directly to the very highest court possible – Caesar himself.

READ v. 12. Festus agrees to send Paul to Rome.

IV. FESTUS RECEIVES KING AGRIPPA – vv. 13-21

READ v. 13. King Agrippa and Bernice’s royal visit was to welcome and meet the new governor.

READ vv. 14-16. Festus raises the matter of Paul. He told King Agrippa how he found Paul, heard from his accusers and applied Roman law.

READ vv. 17-19. He told Agrippa how he was disappointed at the hearing. With all the commotion, Festus expected to hear grave and horrible crimes laid against Paul. But he perceived the issue as a religious one. Roman law did not intervene in matters of religion.

READ vv. 20, 21. He ultimately decided to send Paul to Rome. The “Hearing of Augustus” was the name given to Rome’s supreme court — the judgment of the Cæsars.

V. HEROD DESIRES TO MEET PAUL — vv. 22-27

READ v. 22. Herod had a more religious bent than Festus.

READ v. 23. The ceremonial entrance of King Agrippa. The chief captains are the ones who lead the Roman legions. Josephus said there were five such officers stationed at Cæsarea. The principal men and the local city politicians. What a contrast this must have been! Surrounded by pomp and pageantry, entered a somewhat decrepit, stooped Baptist preacher. Some dangerous criminal!

READ vv. 24, 25. The speech of Festus. The governor confirms he will send Paul to Rome to stand trial before the emperor.

READ vv. 26, 27. The dilemma of Festus. Though he has decided to send Paul to Rome he has no charges to lay against him. This was both unfair to the prisoner, and it would make him look foolish in Rome.

The events of this chapter represent the final piece of God's will for the apostle Paul. At the time of his conversion and call to the ministry, the Lord had revealed His purpose for Paul's life (Acts 9:15) was as a "chosen vessel" to bear His name before...the Gentiles [fulfilled in Acts 13–20], and kings, and the children of Israel [fulfilled in Acts 21-23].

Here, Paul witnesses boldly to a king (Herod Agrippa II), as well as to the Roman procurator, top-ranking military men, and politicians. What a great opportunity!

I. PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA AND FESTUS — vv. 1-3

READ v. 1. Agrippa gave Paul permission to speak for himself.

READ v. 2. Paul was obviously overjoyed at this opportunity. The Greek word translated "happy" is 'makarios' — it means "supremely blessed." Any opportunity to speak up for the Lord ought to make a Christian happy — regardless of the circumstances.

We see in Paul's opening words, that he respected authority and exercised courtesy. Although Agrippa was pro-Roman, he was well acquainted with the intricacies of the Jewish religion and had charge over the temple and the priesthood.

II. PAUL GIVES HIS PERSONAL TESTIMONY — vv. 4-17

READ v. 4. This is the third recorded account of Paul's conversion to Christ. This verse reveals that Paul came to Jerusalem as a young man. We have previously learned that he was born at Tarsus in Cilicia but studied under Dr. Gamaliel in Jerusalem.

The term "youth" generally applies to the period between childhood and full adulthood. Saul likely went to Jerusalem shortly after his Bar Mitzvah to begin his rabbinical training.

READ v. 5. Paul's religious background. He lived as a Pharisee.

READ v. 6. Paul discovered that the Lord Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Israel was (mistakenly) looking for a "political Messiah" when they first needed a "suffering Saviour." Some mistakenly believe Jesus first offered Himself to Israel as their King, and only after being rejected changed His mission to offer Himself as their Saviour.

Though the Old Testament indeed points to the coming King, it is also replete with prophecies of His first coming as Saviour including His birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. In addition to its direct prophetic passages, the Old Testament presents Christ in picture and type — i.e. as the sacrificial Passover lamb of Exodus 12 — see: John 1:29.

READ v. 7. The apostle basically said: "I am accused of believing what any Pharisee should believe."

READ v. 8. Paul asks a rhetorical question. Herod must surely know exactly what Paul was talking about. Paul used the king's knowledge of the Jewish faith as his starting point.

READ vv. 9-11. Paul relates his salvation story beginning with what his life was like before Christ. There is tremendous value in a personal testimony when witnessing for Christ. No one can argue with it, and it adds the power of example to the scriptures.

Saul was a persecutor of Christians before his salvation. He was responsible for the imprisonment, execution, beating, torture, and scattering of Christians. Oh! the marvelous grace of God! If God can save Paul, He can save and use anyone.

READ vv. 12-15. Saul apprehended by Jesus. He explained his mission and experience on the road to Damascus. All the while Saul was persecuting Christians, he was under great conviction of sin. These "pricks" were like goads.

READ vv. 16, 17. Then he testified how God redirected his life.

Here it is explained why Saul was permitted to have this "road-to-Damascus" salvation experience, and not others. Paul was given the vision of Christ — not to bring him to salvation — but to prepare him (and qualify him) for his future ministry as an apostle. One of the requirements of an apostle was that he must have seen the resurrected Christ.

III. PAUL PREACHES SALVATION — vv. 18-23

READ vv. 18-23. In outlining his ministry as an apostle and preacher, Paul gives an excellent outline of what salvation is all about and what it does. Salvation is transitioning from darkness to light (18), coming under new ownership and control (18), and receiving forgiveness of sins through faith and repentance (18-20). Repentance and faith cannot be separated. Repentance and faith both involve turning. Repentance is turning from sin; faith is turning to Christ.

Furthermore, one the marks of true conversion is a willingness to obey the Lord in all things (19). Salvation is communicated through witnessing (22) and provided through the Gospel (23).

IV. TWO REACTIONS TO THE GOSPEL — vv. 24-29

READ v. 24. The reaction of the rationalist. A rationalist is one who judges everything at the level of reason. If it makes sense, or sounds reasonable ... he'll believe. The rationalist will always think Christianity is madness. Festus considered Paul to be affected mentally through too much religion.

READ v. 25. The calm reply of Paul. He was no fanatic! He gently responded that he was speaking sober truth.

READ vv. 26, 27. The reaction of the religionist. Paul appeals to the Word of God that was well-known by King Agrippa. Without allowing the king to answer, Paul placed the issue before him. "You believe the Bible, then believe what I say!"

READ v. 28. The sad reply of King Agrippa. Almost persuaded — surely the saddest statement from the lips of a lost man.

Note: Agrippa's use of the word "Christian" shows that the approbation had become quite well known since it was first coined about 18 years earlier in Acts 11:26.

READ v. 29. Paul had not allowed two years of confinement and frustration to make him cynical or bitter. These words reflect a real compassion for all that heard him. He didn't wish them to be just "almost," but "altogether" saved.

V. PAUL REMAINS IN CUSTODY — vv. 30-32

READ vv. 30-32. The consensus was that Paul had done nothing wrong by the Law of the land or by the Law of Israel. It was agreed that he should not even be a prisoner, but the decision was made to send Paul to Rome.

In reality, this decision was not made by man, but by the providence of God. Had he been released, he may well have been assassinated.

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This chapter gives the details of Paul's journey to the world's capital, Rome. It does not contain any major doctrinal teaching, although it does provide some important principles and insights about the Christian life.

I. THE GREAT JOURNEY BEGINS — vv. 1-8

READ v. 1. The determination to travel. While this decision was supposedly made by the authorities, it was actually made by a sovereign God.

READ v. 2. The companions of Paul. He did not travel alone. He was accompanied by two godly men. The first was Luke, as evidenced by the "we" and Aristarchus. He was from Thessalonica and a member of Paul's evangelistic team. In Rome, he was Paul's "fellow-prisoner" — Col. 4:10. This may indicate Aristarchus was also taking this voyage under bonds.

READ v. 3. Apparently, there was no ship was bound for Rome at this time of the year. It wasn't the "sailing season." Therefore, the centurion sought to make the journey in stages.

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Caesarea – Sidon. Julius was from Augustus' band (regiment) and gave him liberty to visit the brethren at Sidon.

READ vv. 4, 5. Sidon To Myra.

READ vv. 6-8. At Myra, the centurion located a grain ship that was going to Rome, and he placed his soldiers and prisoners on board. This must have been quite a large ship since the passengers and crew numbered 276 (v. 37). Salmone is located on the easternmost promontory of the island of Crete. The fair havens was a bay (not a harbor) near the city of Lasea, located on the southern coast of Crete — at about the midpoint of the island.

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II. THE GREAT GAMBLE — verses 9-13

When conditions were perfect, a grain shipment from Alexandria to Rome would take about 10 to 14 days. In this case much time had been lost due to the unfavorable sailing conditions, and things were not looking any better.

READ v. 9. The owner of the ship and its captain knew time was money, so they made every effort to get to Rome. Doing so was a calculated risk, but the ship had spent too much time sheltering in the Fair Havens. General (open sea) navigation was considered too dangerous at this time of year.

READ v. 10. Paul's warning came from Paul's common-sense appraisal of the situation. He had already experienced three shipwrecks (II Corinthians 11:25), so he had some experience as well.

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READ vv. 11-13. Phenice was a city near the southwestern end of Crete, otherwise known as Phoenix. The directions given in verse 12 are the route they would take and the gentle southerly breeze (verse 13) was ideal for this leg of the journey.

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III. THE GREAT STORM — vv. 14-20

Sailing was dangerous in the winter months with the rapid movement of storm fronts across the Mediterranean.

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READ v. 14. The Euroclydon. This was a violent wind that probably was intensified as it swept down from the high mountains of Crete that pushed the ship to the south, away from its desired port.

READ v. 15. We 'let her drive'. The ship could not withstand the brunt of the storm so they went with the wind.

READ v. 16. We had 'much work to come by the boat'. The ship had a small utility boat in tow, but it was no doubt full of water and its drag made steering very difficult in the violent storm. They had to get it on board.

READ v. 17. They 'used helps'. They under girded the ship with ropes just to hold it together. They feared 'the quicksands'. These were moving sandbars off the north African coast. They were a well-known graveyard for ships. They 'strake sail' meaning that to slow down their progress, they lowered the sails, putting themselves at the mercy of the storm.

READ v. 18. The 'lightened the ship' meaning they now began throwing the precious cargo overboard.

READ v. 19. They cast out the 'tackling of the ship' means they began throwing the equipment of the ship overboard.

READ v. 20. A hopeless situation. They didn't know where they were - no sun or stars to navigate by. The storm showed no signs of letting up. The situation was now beyond human help.

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IV. THE GREAT MESSAGE OF HOPE — vv. 21-26

READ v. 21. Paul was one man on the ship who didn't lose control. He would not live "under" the circumstances! Even though a bad decision had been made (by others) that affected him, he still had faith in God. Paul couples the words "I told you so," with a message of hope in v. 22.

READ v. 22-26. "Be of good cheer" v. 22. These words were said before to the apostle (Acts 23:11) and now he speaks them to others. "Thou must be brought before Cæsar" v. 24. God still had a purpose for His preacher. Paul was able to witness and testify to others.

V. THE GREAT SHIPWRECK — vv. 27-44

Paul had prophesied that they would be shipwrecked and would end up on an island. This island turned out to be Malta.

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READ vv. 27-29. This was a real test of faith — 14 days and nights in a howling gale! Some of the sailors thought they could hear the sound of surf. Perhaps they saw certain birds — experienced sailors are well acquainted with the signs. Sounding indicated they were indeed nearing land. The mariners preferred to try and make land in the daylight.

READ vv. 30-32. A selfish plot. Pretending they were planning to set more anchors, some sailors planned to abandon ship and take the lifeboat. Paul is now giving the orders and the Centurion obeys the order.

Paul alerted the centurion to the fact that if "THESE" (sailors) abandoned the ship, he, his men, and his prisoners would not make it. They would need the sailors to help ground the ship. The centurion ordered his soldiers to cut the skiff loose.

READ vv. 33-37. Paul encourages the others.

READ v. 38. They ate a good meal (after 14 days) and then threw the rest of the cargo overboard. Human life is worth far more than any other commodity.

READ v. 39. They located a suitable landing place. Luke's description here is so accurate that some believe they have located the actual spot.

READ v. 40. They prepared the ship — they lifted the anchors, disconnected the rudder and raised the mainsail. They were making a run for land, hoping the bottom would be sandy where the creek flowed out.

READ 41. The shipwreck. The ship broke up in the surf after running aground. The “two seas” refers to the confluence of two currents.

READ v. 42. The soldier’s plans was to kill the prisoners.

READ v. 43-44. The centurion wanted to save Paul. Maybe it was because he was a Roman citizen, or realized he was an uncondemned prisoner, or just maybe Paul left his mark on the man by his words and his faith. In reality, the reason was the Lord’s promise.

All the ship’s company made it to land. Those that could swim jumped overboard and made it to shore; those that couldn’t swim used the boards to make it to shore.

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This final chapter records the final leg of Paul's journey to Rome and the beginning of his first Roman imprisonment.

I. SHIPWRECK ON MALTA — verses 1-6

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After a traumatic situation of being caught up in a violent Mediterranean storm, the great cargo ship was finally run aground on the shores of an unknown land. In keeping with God's promise delivered through the apostle Paul, all 276 people on board survived and were washed up on shore. Because of this shipwreck Paul enjoyed a three-month Gospel ministry on (probably) a hitherto unreached field.

READ v. 1. Melita is known today as Malta.

READ v. 2. The people of Melita were barbarous. In the NT, barbarians refer to all who did not speak the Greek language. They were hospitable people. Instead of murdering the castaways, looting and otherwise taking advantage of the situation, they showed great kindness.

READ v. 3. Paul helped out on the ship and now on land he is working with his captors and hosts to make the situation a little better. But he was bit by a viper. A viper is a most poisonous serpent.

READ v. 4. We must be careful not to assume God's chastisement or punishment is come upon someone just because a bad thing happened to them. The "friends" of Job made that assumption. The conclusion of the Melitans reveals their pagan fatalism, but it also shows that they knew murderers deserved death.

READ vv. 5, 6. This event completes the fulfillment the prophecy of Mark 16:17,18. Each of the sign gifts listed in this passage has come to pass, and all were fulfilled in the Book of Acts. For example:

- a. Casting out devils — Acts 16:16-18.
- b. Speaking with tongues — Acts 2:4-11.
- c. Taking up serpents — Acts 28:5, 6.
- d. Laying hands upon the sick — Acts 9:32-42; 28:8.

These "sign gifts" were temporary — given to confirm the preached Word of God since most of the New Testament had not as yet been written or widely circulated.

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II. PAUL'S MINISTRY ON MALTA — vv. 7-10

READ v. 7. Publius was the chieftain of this island people. It is said that he had “possessions” — i.e., property, no doubt with buildings. The name “Publius” is Latin. He may have been appointed as governor of his people by the Romans.

READ v. 8a. The sickness of Publiu’s father. The Greek word translated “bloody flux” is dysentery. This was a potentially fatal illness, as Dr. Luke so carefully notes.

READ v. 8b. The remarkable thing here is that the healing was done through the hands of a preacher while a doctor looked on! It opened up an opportunity to preach the Gospel, which was Paul’s goal.

READ v. 9. Other miracles of healing. Through the calamity of a shipwreck, the Lord had opened a door for the Word of God to be preached. So often, “our disappointments are His appointments.”

READ v. 10. Honors bestowed upon the company. It appears Paul and his company received material honors, and when it came time to leave they were well supplied by the people.

III. PAUL’S ARRIVAL IN ROME — vv. 11-16

READ v. 11. A new ship. This was a vessel similar to the one they had been shipwrecked in. Its captain had had the good sense to stay in port during the severe winter.

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READ v. 12. Malta – Sicily. Syracuse was the main city on the island of Sicily. Three days were spent in port there.

READ v. 13. Sicily to Italy. The term “fetched a compass” means they had to sail a indirect route after leaving Syracuse. Rhegium is a city located at the tip of the “boot” of Italy. Then to Puteoli which was the closest commercial harbor to Rome.

READ v. 14. Seven days in Puteoli. Evidently there was a church in Puteoli. Notice that Paul and his two brothers in Christ “found” these believers — i.e., they went looking for them. Wherever we travel, we should look for a sound church and the fellowship of other believers.

READ v. 15. The approach to Rome. Appii Forum was a market town about 43 miles (70 km) south of Rome. The Three Taverns was a rest stop about 33 miles (50 km) from Rome.

Christians from Rome began coming out from Rome to meet Paul as he approached. Paul had written to the Romans from Corinth three years earlier and mentioned a church that met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla. Were they in this group to welcome him to Rome?

READ v. 16. Paul arrives in Rome and placed under house arrest, with a Roman guard accompanying him at all times.

IV. PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ROME — vv. 17-24

After a long, tiring, and traumatic journey, Paul waited only three days before calling for the Jewish leadership to meet him. He was anxious to preach the Word of God in Rome.

READ vv. 17-19. Paul begins the meeting by explaining why he is in Rome, under guard. A man seen to be under arrest naturally arouses thoughts that he must be a bad man. Paul stated that he had not violated any Jewish or Roman law and was there because he was forced to appeal to Caesar.

READ v. 20. Paul shares his burden. The “Hope of Israel” is the hope of the world — the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him there is no hope. Paul took this approach to establish a common-ground relationship with the Jews.

READ vv. 21, 22. The interest of the Jews. They had not heard anything bad about Paul, but they heard a lot about Christianity, all negative.

READ vv. 23, 24. Paul's ministry to the Jews. Having gained the interest of the Jews, a day was set up for Paul to speak to them. Many showed up. He preached the message of the kingdom of God starting with the known — the law and prophets — to the unknown — Jesus Christ. Just as Paul experienced before, some believed, and some believed not. Every man has a free will to either accept or reject Jesus Christ.

READ vv. 25-27. The Jews again fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 6:9, 10).

READ v. 28. Now the Gentiles will hear the Gospel. This was in keeping with Paul's practice, to the Jew first and when they rejected the message, he went to the Gentiles.

V. PAUL'S FIRST ROMAN IMPRISONMENT — vv. 30, 31

READ v. 30. This shows the liberty that Paul enjoyed. While technically under “house arrest,” he was nonetheless able to conduct an extensive two-year ministry. His home became his preaching station.

READ v. 31. Paul's consistent message. The book of Acts begins and ends with the message that focused on the... Lord Jesus Christ!

During this two-year confinement, Paul wrote his “prison epistles” — Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

DID PAUL ENDURE TWO ROMAN IMPRISONMENTS?

The evidence from the New Testament is that, after his two-year confinement in Rome, Paul was released and spent the next four or five years traveling — before enduring a second imprisonment in Rome and martyrdom. For example:

1. Two different imprisonments are described — the first had Paul living in his own rented house, enjoying considerable freedoms (Acts 28:30,31); the second was apparently in an austere dungeon (II Timothy 4:13-18) as a criminal (II Timothy 2:9).
2. Paul mentions in Philippians and Philemon 22 that he expects to be released from his confinement; whereas in II Timothy he is expecting to die (II Timothy 4:6-8).
3. Locations, events, and people are mentioned in the pastoral epistles that do not fit in anywhere with the Acts narrative. In between the two imprisonments, the “pastoral epistles” of I & II Timothy and Titus were written.

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A possible scenario for the period between imprisonments is as follows:

- Paul is acquitted and released — 63 A.D.
- Timothy is sent to Philippi (Philippians 2:19-23); Paul goes to Asia (Philemon 22).
- Paul visits Ephesus to deal with two heretics (I Timothy 1:20). Timothy is left at Ephesus.
- Paul travels to Macedonia (I Tim. 1:3) where he wrote the first epistle to Timothy — c.63/64 A.D.
- Paul visits Crete to evangelize the people he met in Acts 27:8-12; Titus is left there (Titus 1:5)
- Paul returned apparently to Macedonia (judging by the people he spoke about in Titus 3:12,13).
- Paul travels to Spain, and ambition of Paul’s (Romans 15:24,28) — 64 A.D.
- Rome burns — July 19-24, 64 A.D. Neronian persecutions begin.
- Paul travels to Asia via Miletus (II Timothy 4:20) and Troas (II Timothy 4:13) — 66 A.D.
- Paul is arrested, possibly in Troas.
- Paul is martyred — 67 A.D.

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And so ends the Book of Acts....

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