

Acts

Empowered to Witness

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Outline

<u>Lesson</u>	<u>Setting</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
1	Waiting in Jerusalem	"Awaiting the Gift"	Acts 1
2	Empowered in Jerusalem	"Receiving the Gift"	Acts 2-3
3	Witnessing in Jerusalem	"Unwrapping the Gift" (A) Courage to Face Persecution (B) Courage to Face Death	Acts 4-5 Acts 6-7
4	Going to Judea & Samaria	"Overcoming Barriers"	Acts 8-9
5	Going to the "Nations"	"Big Changes"	Acts 10-12
6	1 st Missionary Journey and Church Council	"Learning to Welcome Diversity" (A) The Nations Respond (B) The Church Responds	Acts 13-14 Acts 15
(6+)	Letters to Jews & Gentiles		<i>James & Galatians</i>
7	2 nd Missionary Journey	"New Leaders"	Acts 15-18
(7+)	Community of Witnesses		<i>1 & 2 Thes.</i>
8	3 rd Missionary Journey	"Spiritual Warfare"	Acts 19-21
(8+)	Spirituality		<i>1 & 2 Cor., Romans</i>
9	Defense in Jerusalem and Caesarea	(A) Jerusalem (B) Caesarea	Acts 21-23 Acts 24-26
10	Journey to Rome		Acts 27-28

Lesson numbers that include a plus sign (+) are overviews of epistles that parallel Acts

Indexes [Extended Outline](#)



Explanation of style















There is an abundance of questions and information provided in this study guide – more, in fact, than will fit in typical class periods. The purpose of this “excess” is to provide the teacher with options that best suit the needs and direction of the class. The teacher can trim the material to correspond with the desired length of the class and the interests of the group. Since the colored text helps identify elements that lead to the main themes, the colors can be used as a guide for what to include.

Acts 1:1-8

Scriptures along the left margin should be read in class before proceeding with the questions and comments.

Various symbols

(some of these symbols may not appear in this study)

-  Endnote reference; click on the number to see the reference.
-  Key point of explanation or interpretation
-  Question to ask your discussion group; possible answers or considerations sometimes follow in a list below the question.
-  Question that should correspond to the students' handout
-  Application question – go deeper into each student's walk with Christ.
-  *Quote that helps amplify the point.*
-  Relevant map with link to click on.
-  Time line, calender, or other dated information
-  Historical reference
-  Biographical character sketch
-  Place or city
-  Text with link to click on
-  Relevant photo with link to click on.
-  Relevant art work with link to click on.



Lesson 1 "Awaiting the Gift"

Waiting in Jerusalem (Acts 1)

Acts 1:1-8

Jesus Revealed



What was the “first account” from this author?

➔ Luke was written sometime between AD 50-60, prior to the writing of *Acts*.¹



Acts was probably written during Paul’s first imprisonment (while Luke was waiting for his release). Since the book concludes in Paul’s second year in Rome (Acts 28:31), it was evidently written around AD 62-63. Also, since Luke mentions his own arrival at Rome with Paul (Acts 28:16) but does not mention his departure, it is likely that the book was written in Rome.²

➔ Acts "is one of the most exciting adventure tales ever written. . . we see violent mob scenes, stonings, shipwrecks, prison escapes and earthquakes, interspersed with healings, visions, trials and sermons in the most unlikely places. . . These ordinary people did extraordinary things as they responded to the risen Christ."³

➔ There are so many stories in Acts that focus on the guest-host relationship that the book could be read as a collection of guest-host stories.⁴ Often the names of individuals are reported for no other reason, it seems, than to identify their exemplary hospitality. Luke appears to want us to understand *how flexible our roles in ministry must be*. God’s Spirit often advances the gospel by challenging our own self-images.⁵

➔ The book focuses on a few individuals, the most prominent being **Peter** (chapters 1-12) and **Paul** (chapters 13-28).

Luke

5

What do you know about the author, Luke?

➔ Luke was a doctor (Col 4:14), and his language in Acts shows that he was “well acquainted with the language of the Greek medical schools.”⁶

➔ He may be the only Gentile contributor to the New Testament (Col 4:10ff).

➔ Luke wrote a quarter of the New Testament, more than any other author (including Paul)! His two-part history was intended to introduce Jesus and explain the empowerment of the church.

➔ Luke emphasizes the role of people who were considered "second-class" by the Jewish establishment: women, Samaritans, Gentiles, and foreigners. Ultimately he focuses in on the enthusiasm and influence of his special friend **Paul**.

Theophilus



“Theophilus” means “loved by God,” and it is a Roman (not Hebrew or Palestinian) word. This could have been either a person or a general salutation. However, the adjective, “most excellent,” seems to denote respect for position – it is used to address both procurators, Felix (23:26; 24:3) and Festus (26:25). A modern equivalent of the term might be “Your Excellency,” so the addressee might be some Roman official.⁷ In any case, the name itself points to Luke’s theme in this book: showing the love of God to the world.

- (1:2) ? What “orders” had Jesus given to the apostles by the Holy Spirit (v.2)?
- (1:3) ? What would be a “convincing proof” that someone had risen from the dead (v.3)? See Luke 24; John 20:19-29; 21:1-14.

★ Now it was clear that Jesus had risen from the dead! The disciples hadn't grasped what would happen while He was with them, but now they had witnessed it themselves. What could such a turn of events mean for them and for the rest of the world? And how could this tiny group of faithful believers make any kind of difference in their hostile environment?

★ After His resurrection when Jesus “showed Himself,” He apparently focused His conversation with the disciples on two major topics: the kingdom of God (1:3) and the Spirit of God (1:4-5). And Jesus probably explained how these topics are related to each other, because the prophets had long described the coming reign of the Messiah in terms of a universal enjoyment of God’s Spirit. “The Spirit of God will make the rule of God a living and present reality to His people.”⁸
For reference, see Isa 32:15ff; 35:6ff; 43:19ff; 44:3; Ezek 11:19; 36:26f; 37:11ff; 39:29; Joel 2:28f.

★ The crucifixion and resurrection occurred at Passover, and Jesus’ ascension occurred 40 days afterward. Since Pentecost is 50 days after Passover, there were only 10 days between Jesus’ ascension and the events at Pentecost.

- (1:4-5) ? Why were the eleven apostles supposed to wait in Jerusalem (v.4-5)? What was the promise referred to here? See Matt 3:11; John 16:7-11. Also refer to Joel 2:28ff; Isa 32:15; Ezek 36:27.

♥ What are some ways that you wait for God and His Spirit?

God's Spirit

? Who is the Holy Spirit?

➔ The words that are translated “spirit” in the Old Testament (Hebrew *ruach*) and the New Testament (Greek *pneuma*) both mean “breath” or “wind.” The corresponding word in the Latin is *spiritus*, from which the English word is derived.⁹

➔ “The Holy Spirit exercises the power of the Father and the Son in creation and redemption. Because the Holy Spirit is the power by which believers come to Christ and see with new eyes of faith, He is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Like the eyes of the body through which we see physical things, He is seldom in focus to be seen directly because He is the one through whom all else is seen in a new light. This explains why the relationship of the Father and the Son is more prominent in the gospels, because it is through the eyes of the Holy Spirit that the Father-Son relationship is viewed.”¹⁰

- ➔ In John 16:7-11 Jesus explained why the Holy Spirit needed to come. The Spirit's primary activities are to show that:
 - Jesus is the solution for our sin
 - Jesus makes us right with God
 - Jesus is the one who decides our future (i.e., blessing vs. judgment)
- ➔ The ministry of God's Spirit is "both to reveal Christ to us and to form Christ in us."¹¹

🔵 *"The apostle [Paul] sees in the Spirit of Christ the source of the vital unity which inspires the Church, the quickening and compacting power of the new creation. But he teaches with equal clearness that the Spirit has come to regenerate and restore the personal life of each of he baptized, dwelling in the body as His temple, identifying Himself with the human spirit in its struggle with the flesh and its striving after God, until He has perfected the nature which the Son of God redeemed and has raised it to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."* ¹²

(1:5) **1** What does it mean to be *baptized with* (or *in*) the Holy Spirit?

- ➔ "To have been 'baptized' with the Spirit is a vivid figure of speech for to have 'received' the Spirit."¹³ In fact, Peter will specifically equate the *outpouring* of the Spirit with the *baptism* of the Spirit (compare 1:4-5 with 2:17,33)
- ➔ The "gift of the Spirit" (2:38) is synonymous with the "promise of the Spirit" (1:4; 2:33,39; also Gal 3:14), the "baptism of the Spirit" (1:5), and the "outpouring of the Spirit" (2:17,33).
- ➔ The two primary blessings of the new covenant are the removal of sin and the restoration of the relationship between God and mankind -- and both are accomplished *by Jesus through the Holy Spirit* (Ezek 36:25,27; Jer 31:31-34). When God *saves* us He "washes" us (Titus 3:4-7) so that we can be "justified" in His presence. The "baptism" or "gift" of the Spirit is what accomplishes this marvelous feat. Peter makes these connections clear in 2:38 and declares that water-baptism is the visible action that signifies the Spirit-baptism which takes place in that event.
- ➔ The "gift of the Spirit" is a promise made by God to *everyone* who believes in Jesus. The use of the term "baptism" indicates that the believer is placed (or "immersed") in a new state -- one in which we are "in the Spirit" (which by the way is the same as being "in Christ"). "To be 'in the Spirit', to 'have' the Spirit, to 'live by the Spirit' and to be 'led by the Spirit' -- these are all descriptions of every Christian believer."¹⁴
- ➔ This exciting story begins with God making it possible for ordinary people to participate in His extraordinary mission to the world. the Holy Spirit "universalizes" the presence of the risen Christ. No longer is Jesus limited by space and time; now His disciples can have a relationship with Him that is even more intimate than before. The one who dwelt *with* people now dwells *in* us.¹⁵
- ➔ Later in the book of Acts we will address the meaning and availability of the "gifts" (plural) of the Spirit. It should be clear from 1Cor 12:12-13,27-30 that *all* believers are baptized in the Spirit (receiving the Holy Spirit as a gift), and in addition the Spirit distributes a variety of manifestations ("gifts") of His presence.

2 What did the apostles think that Jesus would do with the kingdom of Israel? Are there Old Testament passages that suggest such an expectation? What was Jesus' response to their question (v.7)?

➔ Jesus told them that with the Holy Spirit in them, *they* would be the ones restoring the kingdom!

💡 *"The kingdom of God is not a territorial concept. It does not – and cannot – figure on any map. Yet this is what the apostles were still envisaging by confusing the kingdom of God with the kingdom of Israel."* ¹⁶
– John R. W. Stott

(1:8) ? Who was going to receive "power" (v.8)? What kind of power was it? Who gave it? How does it relate to the disciples' question about the kingdom?

? Why do you suppose that the apostles received this "power" but Israel as a whole did not (although it was expected)?

(1:8) ? What would happen after the Holy Spirit came upon them?

4 What does it mean to be a "witness" (v.8)?

➔ "A witness is someone who speaks from first-hand experience, who describes something he has seen."¹⁷ In courtrooms today, witnesses are brought in to tell what they have seen.

➔ "In Greek the word for witness and the word for martyr are the same (*martus*). A witness had to be ready to become a martyr. To be a witness means to be loyal no matter the cost."¹⁸

➔ Would it change your understanding of this passage if it were translated "martyrs" instead of "witnesses"?

♥ Do you have the power described in v.8? Are you a witness?

(1:8) ★ In v.8 we have an outline of what follows in this book. Compare [Isa 2:3](#); [Mic 4:2](#). Notice how Jesus replaces the traditional Jewish perspective of the nations flowing *into* Zion with this prophetic vision of believers flowing *out of* Zion to all the nations.

1. In Jerusalem
2. In Judea & Samaria
3. In all the earth


Acts 1:9-11


Jesus Ascended


★ Notice that Luke concluded his first book with the same event that he introduces his second (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9).


(1:9) **5** In your imagination, how do you visualize Jesus' ascension (v.9)?

? Why do you suppose the Gospel accounts written by Matthew, Mark, and John don't include Jesus' ascension?


 “The New Testament authors in general hardly distinguish between the resurrection and the ascension; they seem to regard them as the same event, or perhaps two aspects of the same event.” ¹⁹ – John R. W. Stott

- (1:10)  Whom do you suppose the two men in white might have been (v.10)?
- ➔ Compare Luke 24:4; John 20:12 – *at the tomb*
 - ➔ Compare Luke 9:29-31 – *at the transfiguration*, where His “departure” was a subject of discussion
 - ➔ Compare Rev 11:3 – *the two “witnesses”*

- (1:11)  What do you think these two men meant by their description of Jesus’ return (v.11)?


 In order to best understand Luke’s purpose in describing Jesus’ ascension, we must comprehend what these two “men” said:

1. “*This same Jesus*” – His return will be personal, and we will see Him. It will be clear when Jesus appears that it is not some abstract force or natural cataclysm.
2. “*taken from you into heaven*” – Although Jesus had disappeared and reappeared several times during the 40 days after His resurrection, this departure is for a longer period. The disciples had to let Him go in order to receive the Holy Spirit. They should now wait for the Spirit rather than watch the sky for Jesus.
3. “*will come back*” – He is not gone forever. Jesus is coming back. But in the meantime we have God’s own Spirit (who, by the way, is not some sort of “consolation prize” until Jesus returns).
4. “*in the same way*” – Just as the disciples *saw* Jesus leave them, so will His return also be *visible*. It will be a glorious and awesome event, just as His ascension was.


 What are some various ways in which Jesus “returns”?


Acts 1:12-14

The Disciples in Prayer

 The ascension took place on the Mount of Olives, the same area where Jesus was arrested. It was where the disciples had often gathered with Jesus. It was a “Sabbath-day’s journey” from Jerusalem, meaning that a Jew could walk that far on the Sabbath without it being considered “work.” Although Luke’s Gospel account states that Jesus led them “to the vicinity of Bethany” (Luke 24:50), Luke doesn’t say exactly where the ascension occurred; it is in Acts that he provides this detail. From here the disciples returned to Jerusalem because Jesus told them to.

 Where do you commune with the Lord?

- (1:13)  What had previously happened in this “upper room” (v.13)?
- ➔ The last supper with Jesus (Luke 22:12)

- (1:14)  What were they doing in the “upper room” now (v.14)?
- ➔ Praying
 - ➔ Waiting

7 Who were “the women” besides Jesus’ mother (v.14)? See Luke 8:2-3.

8 Who were Jesus’ brothers (v.14)?

- ➔ We are told by Paul that Jesus appeared to His brother James after the resurrection (1Cor 15:7), and this may have helped all of them (we don’t know how many brothers there were) turn from their earlier unbelief (Mark 3:21; John 7:5).

Acts 1:15-26

The Disciples in Action

9 How did the believers know that Judas’ rejection was part of God’s plan (v.16)? Can you identify which Scripture(s) were fulfilled?

- ➔ Read Psalm 109:1-25 and compare with Acts 1:20b. Why do you suppose they interpreted Psalm 109 as referring to Judas?
- ➔ Peter quotes both Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. It is interesting to note that Psalm 69 is applied to Jesus *five times* in the New Testament (see also John 2:17; 15:25; Rom 11:9-10; 15:3), so the Psalms must have been a significant resource that Jesus used to explain He fulfilled the Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27,32,45).
- ➔ Compare Matthew’s record of Judas’ death (Matt 27:3-5) with Luke’s account. Can you think of a scenario in which both sets of details can both be factual?

(1:21-22) **10** What were the criteria that Peter suggested for selecting a replacement apostle (v.21-22)? Where do you suppose he got these criteria?

- ➔ Accompanied Jesus the whole time
- ➔ Witness of His resurrection

(1:23-26) **?** How did they select the new apostle (v.23-26)?

- ➔ *Identified candidates.* The 4th century historian Eusebius said that both candidates had been among the Seventy who were sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1,17).²⁰
- ➔ *Prayed and gave the choice to God.* It was *Jesus* who had chosen the original 12 apostles, so it was *His decision* to select the replacement.
- ➔ *Drew lots.* Although casting lots was a common old covenant method of determining God’s will, it was apparently no longer used after Acts 2. The 5th century preacher Chrysostom explained that lots were used on this occasion “for the Spirit was not yet sent.”²¹

? Should we choose leaders in the same manner? Does the presence of God’s Spirit in all believers change the process?

? Since God later selected Paul as an apostle, were the eleven apostles presumptuous in making a selection at this time?

? Why do you suppose the apostles did not think it was necessary to also replace James, the son of Zebedee, after he was murdered (Acts 12:1-2)?



Summary

- ◆ This is Luke's second part of his two-volume history, in which he describes the Lord's continuing work through His disciples:
 - ➔ In Jerusalem
 - ➔ In Judea & Samaria
 - ➔ In all the earth

- ◆ The necessary preparation of the apostles included:
 - ➔ The resurrection and ascension of Christ
 - ➔ Waiting obediently for the Lord & His Spirit



Lesson 2 "Receiving the Gift"

Empowered in Jerusalem (Acts 2-3)

REVIEW

A lot happened during the 50 days between Passover and Pentecost:

1. The disciples received their commission (1:6-8)
2. Christ ascended into heaven (1:9-12)
3. The disciples spent time in prayer, waiting for the Spirit (1:13-14)
4. They replaced Judas with Matthias (1:21-26)

Acts 2:1-13

Spirit Manifested

? What is "Pentecost"?

★ There were 3 major feasts for which all the men in Israel were supposed to travel to the temple in Jerusalem (Ex 23:14-19; Deut 16:16):

- ➔ **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** was observed the day after Passover, which was instituted in memory of Israel's preservation from the last plague visited upon Egypt (the death of the firstborn) and their deliverance from bondage (Ex 12:1-28).²²
- ➔ **The Feast of Harvest (Feast of Weeks, Pentecost)** celebrated the completion of the grain harvest, and occurred seven weeks or 50 days after Passover (the Greek word *pentekostos* means "fiftieth"). In the years before Jesus' birth, this festival also began to be regarded as the anniversary of the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, because this was considered to have happened fifty days after the exodus from Egypt. The prophets recognized the connection between the presence of the Spirit in our hearts and the writing of the law on our hearts, but Luke does not explicitly draw upon this symbolism.²³
- ➔ **Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Ingathering, Feast of Booths)** commemorated the Israelites' final lodging before they entered the desert, as well as the fatherly care and protection of Jehovah while Israel was journeying from Egypt to Canaan (Deut 8:7-18). Along with this dwelling in booths, the festival combined the ingathering of the labor of the field (Ex 23:16; Lev 23:39; Deut 16:13), both of which were joyful to Israel (Lev 23:41-43; Deut 16:14). Dwelling in booths was for them an image of freedom and happiness, because it was contrasted with the 'house of bondage' in Egypt.²⁴

? Do you remember why the Christians were together in one place?
See Acts 1:4.

1 In what ways was the Holy Spirit manifested to the disciples?

- ➔ Noise, wind
- ➔ Fire
- ➔ Ability to speak in other languages

2 What do these manifestations teach us about the Holy Spirit's work?

- ➔ **Wind:** Path and direction not always clear (compare John 3:8)
- ➔ **Fire:** God's operation in the Temple involved fire on the altar, and we are the temple now (1Cor 3:16; 6:19).
- ➔ **Languages:** Communication!

★ In Jewish tradition, these three manifestations were commonly associated with Mt. Sinai (Heb 12:18-19).

(2:1-4) ? How many people were filled with the Spirit and speaking in tongues on this occasion? 120 (compare 2:1-4 with 1:15)

? Why were there Jews from all over the world in Jerusalem at this time?

- ➔ Families (or the male head of each family) came to Jerusalem during certain festivals because God wanted them to be a *community*. As we have already seen, there were three specific feasts in which the men are *commanded* to come to the temple.
- ➔ After Israel was exiled from its territory in 586BC, its people were dispersed into many other areas. When it was safe again to return to Israel, not all families went. Furthermore, additional assaults upon the Jewish people by the Grecian armies (e.g., under Antiochus the Great²⁵ in the early 3rd century BC, and under Antiochus Epiphanies²⁶ in 170-168BC) further scattered Jewish families as they sought safer areas.
- ➔ Although God brought about the dispersion of Israel for their own good, it is also likely that He intended to make Himself known to the other nations. Of course, Israel rarely exhibited an evangelistic spirit, and very little accommodation was made for proselytes.
- ➔ Because travel on the Mediterranean was safer in the late spring when Pentecost was celebrated, this festival usually drew the largest crowds. Jerusalem's population would increase from its normal fifty thousand to nearly one million at this time of year.²⁷

(2:9-11) 🌐 Map of the regions from which people came

- 🌐 “Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia” (v.9), all of whom lived west of the Caspian Sea in an area where Jewish exiles were transported in the 8th and 6th centuries BC.
- 🌐 “Judea” (v.9), probably with a view to include all of Palestine and Syria, since Luke mentions it between eastern and western regions.
- 🌐 “Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia” (v.9-10), which are all parts of Asia Minor (modern Turkey).
- 🌐 “Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene” (v.10), which are in North Africa.
- 🌐 “visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism)” (v.10-11), all the way across the Mediterranean Sea.
- 🌐 “Cretans and Arabs” (v.11) – apparently inserted by Luke to cover the places he missed in his sweep from east to west..

? What was it that got everyone's attention?

? Why were the disciples speaking “in tongues”? Does God's Spirit address this same need today?

(2:11) ★ The disciples spoke about the “mighty deeds of God” (v.11), and this is consistent with the role of the Spirit explained in John 15:26. The miracle here is more than that the people *heard* the message (v.6,8,11) – the 120 disciples were actually *speaking* (v.4) in those foreign languages (v.8).

- ➔ It was already possible at that time to communicate with all of these nationalities without speaking in their native language. Almost all Jews spoke Aramaic; and, even if they were Jews of the Dispersion from a foreign land, they would speak that language which almost everyone in the world spoke at that time -- Greek. What happened was that for the first time in their lives this crowd was hearing the word of God in a way that struck straight home to their hearts and that they could truly understand.²⁸
- ➔ It’s ironic that the apostles had the same problem with the people that Jesus had with them – they accused Him of being a drunkard, too.

Acts 2:14-21

Peter's Message: Spirit Poured Out

3 What is Peter saying that this event is a fulfillment of? Read Joel 2:28-32.

(2:17) ? Why is it called “the last days” (v.17)?

- ➔ After the exile the Jews began to perceive time as divided into two ages. There was "The Present Age" which was utterly evil and doomed to destruction; there was "The Age to Come" which would be the golden age of God. Between the two there was to be "The Day of the Lord" which was to be the terrible birth pangs of the new age. It would come suddenly like a thief in the night; it would be a day when the world would be shaken to its very foundations; it would be a day of judgment and of terror. That day is described in many Old Testament passages, such as Isa 2:12; 13:6ff.; Amos 5:18; Zeph 1:7; Joel 2. ²⁹

? How is the availability of the Spirit different now than before this event?

(2:17-18) ? What does it mean to “prophecy” (v.17-18)?

Why do you suppose that prophecy is often associated with the presence of the Holy Spirit?

- ➔ Notice the importance of communication (2:1-4) and that prophecy is a tool that fulfills this need.

💡 *"The prophets were not nearly so much fore-tellers of events to come as forth-tellers of God's truth to men. ... To believe in the possibility of prophecy is to believe that God is in control and that he is working out his purposes."* ³⁰ -- William Barclay

? Are there other ways that the Holy Spirit performs this function of communication?

4 Is there still a role for prophecy today? What is it? Does it apply to *both* men and women (as in 2:17)?

- ➔ "If in its essence prophecy is God speaking, God making Himself known by his Word, then certainly the Old Testament expectation was that in New Covenant days the knowledge of God would be universal, and the New Testament authors declare that this has been fulfilled through Christ. In this sense all God's people are now prophets, just as all are also priests and kings. So Luther understood prophecy here as 'the knowledge of God through Christ which the Holy Spirit kindles and makes to burn through the word of the gospel.'" ³¹

(2:19-20) ? When did the signs that Peter mentioned occur (v.19-20)?
What was their purpose?

5 How is the availability of salvation different now than before this event (v.21)?

Acts 2:22-36

Peter's Message: Jesus Raised Up

? How does Peter say that God exhibited who Jesus was (v.22)?

➔ "Miracles" (*dunamis*), a mighty force or power (usually by implication, a miracle itself).³²

➔ "Wonders" (*teras*), "something strange," causing the beholder to marvel.³³

➔ "Signs" (*semeion*) usually refer to the distinguishing characteristics (of a person or thing).

➔ A *miracle* (or *power*) indicates its source as supernatural; *wonders* appeal to the imagination; and *signs* appeal to the understanding.³⁴

Significant Public Speeches in Acts:

1.	Acts 1:15-22	(Peter)	Replacing Judas
2.	Acts 2:14-36	(Peter)	Fulfillment of Joel's prophecy
3.	Acts 3:12-26	(Peter)	Faith in Jesus healed the man
4.	Acts 4:8-12	(Peter)	Defense for healing in Jesus' name
5.	Acts 5:29-32	(Peter)	"We must obey God rather than men"
6.	Acts 5:34-39	(Gamaliel)	"Leave these men alone!"
7.	Acts 7:2-53	(Stephen)	"You stiff-necked people!"
8.	Acts 10:34-43	(Peter)	"God does not show favoritism"
9.	Acts 11:4-17	(Peter)	God gave them the same gift as us
10.	Acts 13:16-41	(Paul)	Sabbath message in Pisidian Antioch
11.	Acts 14:14-17	(Paul)	Good news to the people of Lystra
12.	Acts 15:7-10	(Peter)	Gentiles & Jews both saved by grace
13.	Acts 15:13-21	(James)	Don't make it difficult for Gentiles
14.	Acts 17:22-31	(Paul)	Encouraged the Athenians to repent
15.	Acts 18:14-15	(Gallio)	Refused to judge matters of Jewish law
16.	Acts 19:35-40	(Ephesian Clerk)	Settle in a legal assembly
17.	Acts 20:18-35	(Paul)	Farewell to the Ephesian elders
18.	Acts 22:1-21	(Paul)	Defense before the crowd in Jerusalem
19.	Acts 22:6	(Paul)	Defense before the Sanhedrin
20.	Acts 24:2-8	(Tertullus)	The case against Paul before Felix
21.	Acts 24:10-21	(Paul)	Defense before Felix
22.	Acts 25:8-10	(Paul)	Defense before Porcius Festus
23.	Acts 26:1-29	(Paul)	Defense before Herod Agrippa II
24.	Acts 28:17-20	(Paul)	Bound because of the hope of Israel
25.	Acts 28:25-28	(Paul)	"Salvation has been sent to Gentiles"

(2:23) ? Who delivered Jesus to be crucified (v.23)?

- ➔ God
- ➔ Romans
- ➔ Jews

Everyone!

★ God had a definite plan for Jesus (the word in v.23 is a surveying term). His death was *not* a mistake or a failure.

(2:24) 6 Why is it important that God raised Jesus from the dead (v.24)?

★ Note that the “agony of death” (v.24) can also be interpreted as “birth pangs.” In John 16:19-22 Jesus relates the two concepts together.

(2:25-28) ? Read Psalm 16. What is Peter’s purpose in quoting David’s psalm?

? Read Psalm 89:1-4. How is Jesus the fulfillment of the promise to David (v.30)? Why is Jesus’ resurrection crucial to fulfilling the promise?

(2:32-36) ★ The summation of Peter’s argument is in v.32-36. In the original Greek, there seems to be a play on the word “exalted” (v.33, *hupsōo*), which simply means to elevate. It may be interpreted literally -- as in Jesus’ *crucifixion* (see John 12:32) and His *resurrection*. It may also be interpreted figuratively -- as in the *praise* that Jesus receives. In His resurrection, Jesus was *lifted up* all the way to the right hand of God. Not only did He receive David’s throne, but God gave Jesus *heaven’s throne* so that the Messiah could rule forever. And the *raising up* of Jesus enabled the *pouring out* of the Holy Spirit (which, by the way, indicates a *heavy rainstorm*, not just a drizzle³⁵). The final proof that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah is this outpouring of the Spirit, because it was the ultimate Old Testament promise of the “end-time.”³⁶ By quoting Psalm 110:1, Peter makes it clear that anyone who rejects Jesus will be brought low by the Father (just as Jesus Himself claimed in Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44). And he reminds his audience that they crucified the One whom God exalted – the very Messiah (Christ) in whom they had hoped.

(2:36) ♥ What do you mean when you call Jesus “Lord”?

Acts 2:37-47

Accepting God's Promise

7 Why were the listeners so distraught at Peter’s message (v.37)?
Have you ever felt this way?

8 What is Peter’s solution to the problem (v.38)?
Why is repentance important?

What is the role of baptism in solving this dilemma?

- ➔ In this context, Peter describes baptism in a way that is analogous to Jesus’ own glorification. Jesus was exalted, and so are we because sin is forgiven. Jesus’ resurrection enabled the pouring out of the Spirit, and baptism allows us to receive this very promise ourselves.
- ➔ Baptism publicly signifies *both* the washing away of sin and the outpouring of the Spirit, which are the key elements of “salvation.”
- ➔ Although Peter doesn’t specifically mention the need to believe, they evidently did so because they are later called “believers” (2:44).

★ To be baptized *in Christ's name* means "by his authority, acknowledging his claims, subscribing to his doctrines, engaging in his service, and relying on his merits."³⁷

(2:33) ? When the word "promise" is used earlier in this chapter (e.g., v.33), what does it refer to?

➔ The promise here (in v.39) is the gift or outpouring of the Spirit – that is the main theme of Peter's speech.

(2:39) ? Who do you suppose are those who are "far off" (v.39)?

(2:40) ? What were these people being saved *from* (v.40)?

? How does our environment affect our attitude and response regarding salvation?

(2:41) ? To what were these 3000 people added (v.41)?
How significant was this whole event for the church? Why?

★ Sometimes it is claimed that the church was "born" on Pentecost (or that Pentecost is the "birthday of the church"), but this was not the first collection of saved believers. In fact, the Greek word (*ekklesia*) had a broader meaning than the way we apply the word "church" today, often referring simply to an gathering of people (*Israel* in Acts 7:38; Heb 2:12; a *legal court* in Acts 19:39; a *mob* in Acts 19:32,41; and the *Christian assembly* in 1Cor 14:19). Christians cannot claim a monopoly on either gathering together or being "called out" by God, so God's "church" existed before anyone claimed Jesus as their Savior.

● "What happened at Pentecost was that the remnant of God's people became the Spirit-filled body of Christ." ³⁸

(2:42) ? What did the early Christians do (v.42)?

- ➔ Followed the apostles' teaching
- ➔ Fellowshipped
- ➔ Joyfully ate together
- ➔ Prayed together
- ➔ Revered the Lord with awe
- ➔ Praised God
- ➔ Distributed goods between themselves

(2:43) ? What are some of the things that you think these people were in awe about (v.43)?

(2:44-45) ? What might be the purpose of living communally – with all things in common (v.44-45)?

- ★ There was an ancient Greek saying (perhaps dating back to Pythagorus) that “among friends everything is common.” The Greek word for “common” (v.44) is *koinos*, which denotes something that belongs to the group rather than an individual.³⁹ The word translated “fellowship” in v.42 (*koinonia*) is derived from this same word that is used in v.44. It is also the root of the Greek word *koinonikos*, which means “generous,” and that is what Luke is aiming at when he describes their willingness to give up their own possessions for those who were in need. We are *all* called to be generous in this way with each other -- there should be no one in the church who is poor as long as there are those of us who are wealthy.
- (2:46) 9 How would you describe the “one mind” that they exhibited (v.46)? Have you ever experienced this? What would be its value for us?
- ➔ They were concerned for others rather than themselves. Jesus had brought them together and it was Him that they sought (not themselves) for purpose and meaning.
- ★ At the close of chapter 2 we receive a brief insight into the earliest church worship: they had *glad hearts* (v.46) while at the same time they were *filled with awe* (v.43). They enjoyed a *balance* between the formal reverence of approaching a holy God and the spontaneous exuberance of being made new and clean. We're told that they worshiped in both the *temple courts and in their homes* (v.46), combining the structure of Jewish worship with the freedom of the Spirit's universal presence. Healthy worship is neither institutional reverence nor free-form exultation *alone*. It is both. We come before the Lord in humility and wonder while He raises us to joy and excitement.

Acts 3:1-10**Sharing God's Gifts**

- ? Why do you suppose Peter and John were going to the temple (v.1)?
- ➔ For the devout Jew there were three special hours of prayer -- 9am, 12 noon, and 3pm. They agreed that prayer was efficacious wherever it was offered; but they felt that it was doubly precious when offered in the Temple courts. It is very interesting that the apostles kept up the customs in which they had been trained. It was the hour of prayer and Peter and John were going into the Temple to observe it. A new faith had come to them but they did not use that as an excuse for a licence which broke all law. They were aware that the new faith and the old discipline could walk hand in hand.⁴⁰
- (3:2) ★ The place where the man was begging is referred to as “the temple gate called beautiful.” This was probably the Nicanor Gate, which was the main eastern entrance to the temple precincts from the Court of the Gentiles. Luke's name for this gate suggests that it may have been the one made of Corinthian brass which “greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold.”⁴¹ It was about 75 feet high and had huge double doors.⁴²
- (3:2-5) ? What did the disabled man expect to receive from Peter and John?

★ Notice that the man would not look at people, probably embarrassed and dejected by his need to beg and his inability to enter the temple. We are like this man when we expect the world to fulfill our needs, and many times we too lose the ability to really look at each other. If we could only realize that God is offering to help us, we would gladly accept it and enter His presence rather than begging outside.

♥ What do you have that you can offer to help people?

(3:6) **10** How is sharing Christ's gifts better than just giving away money (v.6)?

? When a person's legs are healed, what do they usually want to do?
When a person's *soul* is healed, what would be a similar response?

★ Perhaps this episode is included here to help us understand something about the 3000+ people who received salvation and reconciliation, which is an even more marvelous healing.

Acts 3:11-26

Restoring God's People

★ The place where they assembled was a cloister or portico formed by a double row of marble columns and roofed with cedar, which ran all the way along the eastern wall of the temple's outer court. Jesus had also taught there.⁴³

(3:11) ? Why do you suppose people are so amazed at what God can do?

💡 "[The Jews] had come to the Temple to worship the God of their fathers, the God of the Exodus, of David, of the prophets. Why should they think it strange, Peter asked them, that God should continue to do mighty works? God was not dead, not a musty myth of the past; He was alive!"⁴⁴

(3:12) ? What are some ways that we also explain away God's miraculous works instead of giving Him credit (v.12)? What effect might this have on us?

Peter ★ Peter is no longer the man that he used to be.

- ➔ Compare Matt 17:4. Peter is no longer seeking center stage, but quickly giving credit to his Lord.
- ➔ Compare Luke 22:54-62. Only a few weeks earlier, Peter had run away when Jesus was condemned; now he boldly faces the same religious leaders himself.

(3:13-15) ? What were the Jews guilty of (v.13-15)?

(3:16) ? What was it that healed this man (v.16)?
Whose faith made it possible – the man's or the apostles'?

- ➔ We have no indication here that the man believed in Jesus
- ➔ The apostles did not take credit for the miracle

(3:17) ? Could the Jews use their ignorance as an excuse (v.17)? Can people today use ignorance of the gospel as a valid excuse?

(3:18) ? How had the Jews been told what to expect in the Messiah (v.18)? What are some ways that people are told about Jesus today?

? Why is it hard to accept that the Christ must suffer?

- (3:19) ? What are the reasons Paul gives for urging them to repent and turn to God?
1. *To wipe out their sin.* The Greek word *exaleipho* means to "wash off, erase, or obliterate."
 2. *To receive times of refreshing from the Lord.* The Greek word *anapsyxis* can mean "rest, relief, respite, or refreshment."
 3. *That He may send the Christ who has been appointed for you -- even Jesus.*
- ? What are the "times of refreshing" that the Lord sends to those who repent?
- (3:20) ? In what way is Christ Jesus sent to those who believe and repent (v.20)?
- (3:21) ? What things are yet to be restored by God (v.21)?
- ★ Although it sounds like Peter is talking about a future coming of Jesus, the examples of prophecies that he cites in v.22-25 point exclusively to Jesus' first coming. His focus is on his own time (i.e., "these days" in v.24), not some vague, distant future. Therefore, we must also interpret v.20-21 in a consistent fashion. Apparently Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to tell everyone that Jesus was sent for the purpose of restoring *everyone* who would accept Him, even those who repent after His crucifixion. The time of restoration is *now* and extends as long as there are people who will repent.
- (3:22-24) ? Why were Moses and the prophets looking forward to the coming of the Messiah (v.22,24)?
- (3:25) 11 How could Peter claim that the Jews who were listening to him were the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham (v.25)?
- (3:25-26) ★ Here is an early hint at the scope of the gospel promise: *everyone* on earth would be blessed, but it was for the *Jews first* (v.25-26). Compare John 4:22; Acts 13:26,46-47; Rom 1:16; 2:10.



Summary

- ◆ The *raising up* of Jesus enabled the *pouring out* of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ The pouring out of the Spirit enabled *communication* of God's message, which identifies both our problem and the solution.
- ◆ We accept the solution by
 - ➔ Trusting God in repentance
 - ➔ Trusting God in baptism
 - ➔ Following the apostles' teaching
 - ➔ Supporting and encouraging one another through prayer and fellowship



Lesson 3 "Unwrapping the Gift"

Witnessing in Jerusalem (Acts 4-7)

REVIEW

Just as the Israelites in Egypt had escaped bondage after celebrating the Passover and then were gathered as a people 50 days later at Mt. Sinai, so the people of God again celebrate both liberty and community. Jesus' sacrifice set us free from sin, and the outpouring of the Spirit (like the giving of the Law) unites and empowers all believers. Peter explained that God has offered reconciliation for anyone who repents.

(A) Courage To Face Persecution (Acts 4-5)

Acts 4:1-4

Witnesses to the People

- 1 What was it that seemed to disturb the priests and Sadducees (v.1-2)?
- ➔ The Sadducees were the ruling class of wealthy aristocrats who collaborated with the Roman politicians.⁴⁵ Their primary concern was any potential rebellion or change in the status quo.
 - ➔ The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, so it was partly a doctrinal issue.
 - ➔ Notice that no one even suggested that Jesus had not risen from the dead. This would have been an opportunity to debunk the claim of Jesus' resurrection if they had any evidence to the contrary.

(4:3) ★ Peter and John had spent at least 3 hours in the temple speaking to the Jews. We know that it was about 3pm when they entered (3:1), and it was at least 6pm when they were arrested (4:3).

(4:4) ? There are now about 5,000 believing families (v.4). What do you imagine such a crowd of new Christians would have been like?

Acts 4:5-22

Witnesses to the Leaders

- ★ Regarding this auspicious gathering (v.6), read John 18:12-14.
- ➔ Israel's high priest had always followed the lineage of Aaron (through Zadok during the time of David) until long after the return from captivity. In the 2nd century BC, the Greek ruler Antiochus IV removed the rightful high priest and replaced him with a man from a non-priestly family. After the Maccabees led a revolt that gained Israel's independence, the Hasmoneans, a family of ordinary priests, took political control. In 153 BC one of them, Jonathan, assumed the high priest's office, and later the royal title. Herod the Great descended from this same royal dynasty and came to power under Rome in 37 BC. He arbitrarily appointed and deposed high priests as he pleased. During this period until the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, five prominent families of high priests held power. Annas was the leader of one of these. His son-in-law Caiaphas, five of his sons, and a grandson also held the office. Although Annas had been replaced by Caiaphas before the time of Jesus' ministry, his influence continued (Luke 3:2; John 18:13,24).⁴⁶

(4:7) ? Why do you suppose the leaders wanted to know the particulars about this healing (v.7)?

- (4:8-10) ? What did Peter want them to know (v.8-10)?
- (4:11) ★ These same religious leaders had asked a similar question of Jesus Himself (Matt 21:23, 42-44). and Jesus quoted the same Scripture that Peter does (v.11). Jesus said that the kingdom would be taken away from them, while Peter emphasizes that salvation is found only in Jesus.
- (4:12) ? What do you suppose Peter would have thought about people pursuing a religion that doesn't include Jesus (v.12)?
- ? What are some examples of other people or things that people seek for salvation?
- ♥ In what ways has Jesus healed you?
- (4:13) 2 How could the leaders tell that Peter and John had been with Jesus?
- ➔ The "courage" that they saw in the apostles must have reminded them of Jesus Himself standing before them.
 - ➔ The Sanhedrin regarded Peter and John as "unschooled" ("unlearned," KJV) and "ordinary" ("ignorant," KJV) men. The first adjective means that they had no kind of technical education, especially in the intricate regulations of the law. The second adjective means that they were laymen with no special professional qualifications. The Sanhedrin, as it were, regarded them as men without a college education and with no professional status. It is often difficult for the simple man to meet what might be called academic and professional snobbery. But the man in whose heart is Christ possesses a real dignity which neither academic attainment nor professional status can give.⁴⁷
- (4:14) ? Why couldn't the leaders accept that Jesus was the Messiah (v.14)?
- (4:15-18) ? Why did they want to prevent the news about this miracle from spreading (v.15-18)?
- ➔ This is similar to the way in which the "Security" department in many of today's major corporations tries to "protect" employees by inhibiting the spread of bad news (like thefts or attacks) that might actually help those employees make better decisions about their own safety.⁴⁸
- (4:19-20) ♥ How do you know when God is leading you in a direction that is different from the advice of religious leaders (v.19-20)?
- ★ The apostles really could not stop speaking about Jesus because the Holy Spirit was moving them to do it (compare 1Cor 9:16).
- ♥ What has the Spirit moved you to do in such a way that you cannot resist?
- ? Why were Peter and John released?
- ➔ No basis for punishment
 - ➔ For fear of the people
- ♥ What are some areas in which you are more concerned about people's reactions than with God's will?
- 💡 *"The trouble with so many people is that the voice of their neighbours sounds louder in their ears than the voice of God."* ⁴⁹
-- H. G. Wells

*Acts 4:23-31**Witnesses to God*

★ The early church often selected prayers from the Psalms, and this is an example. In v.24, Psalm 146:6 is quoted, while v.25-26 is from Psalm 2:1-2.

(4:23-28) ? Can you find evidence in v.23-28 that they saw a connection between this interrogation by the authorities and the rejection of Jesus Christ?

→ Includes Gentiles and rulers (v.26)

→ Herod and Pilate mentioned (v.27)

(4:28-30) ? What do the disciples ask God to do (v.28-30)?

→ Whatever He purposes

→ Allow them to speak with confidence

→ Continue to heal and perform miracles

(4:31) ? What was God's immediate answer to their prayer?

*Acts 4:32-37**Grace Among Believers*

? What changes in their lives did the Holy Spirit seem to make happen?

★ Notice that they are strengthened with a greater measure of the Spirit each time they actively depend upon the Spirit. Little by little, we are seeing this magnificent gift "unwrapped" and displayed. It is also in this way that we too are strengthened in the Spirit.

(4:32) 3 How does participation in a "community" of Christians help a believer to grow (v.32)?

? What are some ways in which *grace* is contagious?

★ As the Christians were shown greater grace through healing and deliverance, they exhibited greater grace to their community. It was in practicing their witness to Jesus' *resurrection* that they were enabled to practice generosity to each other.

(4:33-35) ? How did they provide for each other (v.33-35)?

★ As an intriguing side note, the law did not permit the Levites (of which Barnabas was one) to actually own land. They were assigned 48 cities along with the necessary pasture for their cattle (extending 1,500 feet out from the city walls (Num 35:1-8). However, these cities did not cease to belong to the tribes within which they lay. Thus Levites are occasionally spoken of as belonging to other tribes, namely, those within whose territory they resided (Deut 18:6; Jdg 17:7; 1Sa 1:1; also see Deut 14:27).⁵⁰



This is the first of several times that we encounter Barnabas in this book, and each time we learn something about ourselves:

Barnabas

1. **Generous:** This quality may have been the spark for his nickname. The Greek word that is used to express the concept of generosity (*eulogian*) literally means “well spoken of” and is also translated “blessing.” When Paul was collecting for the needs of the Jerusalem saints, he said that he wanted everyone’s giving to be “a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation” (2 Cor 9:5 NKJV). The key to this attitude is found in Acts 4:33, “abundant grace was upon them all.” Someone said that “**giving is the thermometer of love.**”⁵¹ Barnabas was an encourager through his generosity, and his generosity was an expression of his love.
2. **Loyal:** It took an “encourager” to connect Paul to the rest of the Christians in Jerusalem. In 9:26-27 we first see Barnabas as someone who is *loyal and devoted to people*. The other disciples were *afraid* of Paul; after all, he had been persecuting Christians. But Barnabas was the minority that believed Paul had become a disciple. Barnabas also “stuck” with John Mark (15:36-41), whom Paul would only later consider a valuable co-worker (Col.4:10). “**There is nothing so loyal as love.**”⁵²
3. **Accepting:** When the Gentiles started joining the church, it presented a problem for some of the Jewish Christians, but Barnabas recognized God’s hand in it (11:19-26). He rejoiced and encouraged them to be true to the Lord. As a result, “considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.”
4. **Influential:** During the first missionary journey, the people of Lystra thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods (14:8-18). They thought that Paul was Hermes (Mercury) because he did most of the speaking, but they thought Barnabas was Zeus (Jupiter)! Zeus was the top deity in the Roman pantheon, and Hermes was sort of a messenger. The highest honor was given, not to Paul the preacher, but to Barnabas the encourager. He may not have said as much, but he apparently had a greater influence.

(4:36-37) ? What were the Christians doing with the land that they owned?

Acts 5:1-11

Deception Among Believers

4 What did Ananias and Sapphira do that was wrong?

- ➔ The Greek word in v.2 that is translated “kept back” (*nosphizomai*) means to “misappropriate” and in Titus 2:10 is translated “steal.” Apparently this couple “wanted the credit and the prestige for sacrificial generosity, without the inconvenience of it.”⁵³

(5:5-11) ? Why do you suppose they were punished so severely (v.5-11)?

- ★ In this act of deception there are some clear similarities with the story of Achan (Josh 7). The goods which the Christians gave up were apparently dedicated to the Lord -- just as the plunder of Jericho was regarded. But covetousness prevailed in the case of one family, and if left unpunished it could entice more of the community into idolatrous behavior. Although we cannot be certain why God deals more harshly with idolatry in some situations, it appears that in these two cases a lesson needed to be taught to the general community.

? What are some areas in which people are apt to deny their commitments to God?

? What are some things we can do to become more honest about our promises to God?

Acts 5:12-16**Unconstrained Wonders**

★ Notice that the place where Peter spoke after healing a man (3:11) has now become a meeting place for the group of believers.

(5:13) ? Why do you suppose some were reluctant to associate with these Christians?

(5:14-16) ? In your imagination, how do you picture this multitude of believers and the healings that were performed (v.14-16)?

Acts 5:17-42**Unconstrained Preaching**

? Why would the Jewish leaders be *jealous* of the Christians (v.17)?

(5:19-20) ? In what ways did the angel encourage the apostles (v.19-20)?

♥ Has anyone ever given you this kind of encouragement? Can you think of how *you* might "free" someone to do what God wants?

(5:21) ? Why do you think the apostles did what the angel said even though they knew the authorities would be angry (see 4:17)?

(5:21-25) ? Imagine that you are one of these religious leaders (v.21-25). What would you think of the apostles and their escape from prison and their refusal to do what the leaders had demanded?

? Imagine that you are one of the officers who had to take the apostles into custody *again*. What would be your thoughts?

(5:26-28) ★ The Jewish leaders reveal their main concern: the teaching of the apostles makes the leaders look bad in the eyes of the people (v.28), and they were afraid of what the people might do (v.26).

(5:29) 7 What are some ways that you have chosen to "obey God rather than men"?

? What are the roles that Peter ascribes to Jesus Christ (v.31)?

Jesus

- ➔ Right hand of God
- ➔ Prince
- ➔ Savior
- ➔ Grants repentance to Israel
- ➔ Forgives sin

? What do you suppose caused the leaders to be "cut to the quick" (v.32-33, NASV)? Compare their response to those in 2:37 who were "cut to the quick."

Gamaliel



Gamaliel (v.34) was a Pharisee and eminent doctor of the law, who was celebrated by the Jews as "the glory of the law" and was the first of only seven to ever be designated as Rabban (meaning "our master"). Son of rabbi Simeon, and grandson of the great Hillel; president of the Sanhedrin under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius; he died 18 years before the fall of Jerusalem. His counsel regarding the apostles was probably motivated by his opposition to the Sadducees (esp. since resurrection was the point at issue), but his nonpartisan wisdom generally caused him to be "respected by all the people." Gamaliel's pupil, Saul, became a leading persecutor when Stephen opposed Pharisaism; and probably Gamaliel would not altogether disapprove of Saul's zeal in such a cause, though his own tendency was to leave the claims of Christianity to be tested by time.⁵⁴

(5:34-39)



What do you think of Gamaliel's advice (v.34-39)?



Can you think of times when we ought to wait for the outcome rather than fight against someone (v.38-39)? Is our trust (faith) greater when we *wait* for God or when we *fight* for God?

(5:40)



The leaders didn't completely follow Gamaliel's advice because they didn't just let the apostles go. And being "flogged" was no mere slap on the hand. Under the Roman method the culprit was stripped, stretched out, and beaten. The instrument could be rods or twigs, or it could be thongs or whips made of rope ends or straps of leather.⁵⁵ The ends of the whips were weighted with jagged pieces of bone or metal, so that the blows would be more painful. The victim was struck on the back and loins, and sometimes (if the executioner was cruel) to the face and torso. The punishment was so terrible that the victim usually fainted and often died.⁵⁶

In a news article about the lead actor in Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of Christ," MSNBC News reported that "the prolonged scourging sequence is as agonizing to watch as the Crucifixion ... [Jim] Caviezel [the actor who portrayed Jesus] was chained to a post with a board set up behind him to absorb the blows. At one point, [Mel] Gibson instructed the two actors inflicting the beating to hurl their lashes overhead as if throwing a baseball. Caviezel took a blow to his back after one of the actors aimed poorly."

"It just extended over the board and hit me with such a velocity that I couldn't breathe," Caviezel said. "It's like getting the wind knocked out of you. The stinging is so horrific that you can't get air."

"I turned around and looked at the guy, and I tell you, I may be playing Jesus, but I felt like Satan at that moment. I turned to him, a couple of expletives came out of my mouth."

Moments later, Caviezel was struck again, the lash slicing the gash in his back.⁵⁷

Although the Jews were acquainted with scourging (or "flagellation") from their period in Egypt, the Jewish law seems to suggest the use of rods and was the first to introduce the limit of 40 lashes (Deut 25:3). Whips were reintroduced by the Syrians during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc 6:30; 7:1), and eventually this method became customary under Jewish law (Matt 10:17; 23:34; Acts 22:19; 26:11), but the traditional limitation of the number of blows was still preserved.⁵⁸

Paul mentioned that he had also received this punishment *five times from the Jews* during his ministry (2Co 11:24). Although Luke does not record any such punishment inflicted by Jews,⁵⁹ he does describe Paul being “severely flogged” (16:22).

- (5:41) ? Why were the apostles *happy* about what happened (v.41)? How did it affect their actions? See Matt 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23.
- (5:42) ? Using the "Gamaliel Principle" from v.38-39, what should the Jewish leaders conclude about the apostles' motivation and purposes (v.42)?

(B) Courage To Face Death (Acts 6-7)

Acts 6:1-6

Servants Chosen

6 What was the complaint that arose among the disciples (v.1)?

- Jews who were natives of Palestine spoke primarily Aramaic, a derivative of the Hebrew language, and they tried to maintain a *Hebraioi* culture. But the Jews who had lived in the Mediterranean world outside of Palestine (like Barnabas, who was from Cyprus) spoke Greek and often did not know Aramaic.⁶⁰ These *Hellenistai* thought and behaved like Greeks.⁶¹ Many of the "Diaspora Jews" returned to Jerusalem to live, and they used the Septuagint version of the Bible (which was translated in Alexandria) instead of the original Hebrew or the Chaldaic targum.⁶² The Greek-speaking Jews were looked down upon by the "orthodox" Aramaic-speaking Jews, even after they became Christians.
- This is a first-century version of the need for "meals on wheels." Without any kind of Social Security program, there was little support available for people with no resources of their own. The Jews had a temple fund to help the poor, but Christians were probably excluded. The church apparently had begun to establish its own common fund,⁶³ but some potential recipients were being neglected due to prejudice.
- The problem was larger than feeding people; some believers were being treated with less honor and the role of these special servant was to reconcile the groups together.

? Why did the apostles choose not to do this work themselves?

- The main priority for one servant was not the main priority for *all*. The apostles knew their priorities and then *put first things first*. Although the apostles continued to serve others, their primary focus needed to be on the spread of the gospel message (after all, being an *apostle* means being "sent out"). They did not get distracted from their top priorities by other beneficial activities.
- There was a *precedent* for this in the Old Testament. They simply did what Moses had done at the urging of his father-in-law (Exod 18:13-26), and spread the responsibility.
- It was *delegation*, not *abdication*. The apostles did not stop serving people after this event. Although they knew that they should *delegate this* specific activity, they did not *abdicate* their own responsibility for service when others took on the task. Rather than "pass the buck," they equipped the workers.
- It was a *task*, not a *career*. The activity did not become a *permanent* assignment for all seven of the servants. Philip's ability to travel outside Jerusalem (8:5,26,40) meant that they either completed what needed to be done, or managed to do it with less people.

➔ It was a *service*, not a *position*. There is no indication that these seven men were *elected* to some sort of "office" with the title of "deacon." In fact, the men are *not even called deacons* (although they were clearly acting as "servants" in the general sense). However, the Greek word *diaconia* is applied to *both* the *social work* of serving the widows (v.1) and the *pastoral work* of the apostles (v.4).

(6:2-4) **7** Who selected the servants to do this work (v.2-4)? What were the criteria?

➔ Although the initiative was taken by the apostles, the members of the congregation were the ones who chose the seven.

(6:5) ➔ All of the men who were chosen (v.5) had Greek (not Hebrew) names,⁶⁴ suggesting that they were Hellenistic Jews with a personal interest in the problem to be solved. At least one of them (Nicolas) was a "proselyte," a Gentile who had converted to Judaism.

★ The "*laying on of hands*" was a way of transferring blessing or authority (e.g., to perform a task). We find it occurring early in the Old Testament among the Levites (Num 8:10) and by Moses (Deut 34:9). Jesus also performed this action for blessing (Matt 19:13,15) and for healing (Matt 9:18). In the early church the laying on of hands was associated with healing, the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17), the setting apart of persons to particular offices and work in the church (Acts 6:6), the commissioning of Barnabas and Paul as missionaries (Acts 13:3), and the setting apart of Timothy (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). The ritual was accompanied by prayer (Acts 6:6). The laying on of hands was not a magical or superstitious rite that gave a person special power. It expressed the idea of being set apart by the entire church for a special task.⁶⁵

Acts 6:7

? What do you suppose attracted so many Jews to follow Jesus?

♥ If you were a Jewish priest, what would it mean for you to become a Christian?

? How would a priest's life be affected by such a decision?

? Does the church offer a role that is similar to the priesthood?

➔ We are *all* offered the opportunity to be priests in Christ's kingdom (1Pe 2:4-5,9).

Acts 6:8-15

Stephen

Stephen's Witness

? What does it mean to be "full of grace" (v.8)?

What does it mean to be "full of power"?

How do these characteristics relate to Stephen being "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (v.5)?

➔ "One sure sign of the fullness of the Spirit is willingness to accept the servant role, even as Christ did. Many are unwilling to accept a humble task, feeling it to be unworthy of them. But Stephen sought no glory or recognition for himself, only the privilege of serving as God led him."⁶⁶

? Why do you suppose Stephen performed wonders and signs?

★ Until this time the only people in the New Testament who performed "signs and wonders" were Jesus (2:22) and the apostles (2:43; 5:12). Stephen is the first exception, manifesting what was promised (2:17-21). Some have argued that those like Stephen, who were not apostles, were special cases that were not repeated after the apostolic age. Perhaps it is true that such manifestations required the "laying on of hands" by an apostle, and that we should expect the miraculous gifts to fade away when the church's love had matured sufficiently (1Cor 13:8-13). It is certainly clear that miracles were primarily clustered around periods of fresh revelation from God: Moses receiving the law, the prophetic witness of Elijah and Elisha, and the messianic ministry of Jesus and the apostles.⁶⁷

We should not be too quick to dismiss the possibility of additional "signs and wonders" at any other time when God chooses to confirm His message. The fact that we have the Bible today does not preclude miraculous manifestations among those whose belief and love are not yet mature enough to put the "childish ways" behind them. Perhaps we should even *expect* God to confirm His truth in special ways on the frontiers of Christianity.

(6:9-10) ★ Stephen was teaching about Jesus in the Jewish synagogues in Jerusalem, and among them was the *synagogue of freedmen*, which was attended by freedmen who had formerly lived in four different regions.

Pompey, after overrunning Judea, in the year 63 BC, carried an immense number of Jews as prisoners of war to Rome, where they were sold as slaves. They were afterward manumitted, with liberty to adhere to their own religion; but Tiberius, as Tacitus informs us (Annals ii. 85), expelled them or their children, to the number of four thousand, from Italy on account of their religion. Of these many would no doubt settle in Palestine, and reside in Jerusalem.⁶⁸

One of regions from which these Jews had come was Cilicia, making it practically certain that young Saul of Tarsus, the brilliant student of Gamaliel, was present and tried his wits with Stephen. His ignominious defeat may be one explanation of his zest in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1).⁶⁹

? Why do you suppose these Jews argued with Stephen?

★ There are always plenty of people who want to say negative things about someone who is trying to serve God. Regardless of their position, vocation, or culture, those who want to serve the Lord will meet opposition -- often from the established religious society. Let us not be the ones who criticize those who are sincerely trying to follow Christ.

(6:11-14) ★ The Jews were preoccupied with two particular subjects which are evident in their arguments:

- ➔ **The Temple** -- The Jews thought that Jehovah was so completely identified with the temple that its existence guaranteed his protection of them.⁷⁰ It is the same sort of attitude that we Americans have about our "Christian heritage": we've held on to the structures without exhibiting faith in our lives, but we still think God is *on our side*.
- ➔ **Moses and the Law** -- The Jews insisted on certain rites and beliefs that would identify them as God's people, and they confused those traditions with the law itself. It is the same sort of attitude that many Christians have toward the Bible -- we profess to hold it up as truth, but what we actually believe is more a collection of behaviors that originated only a few decades ago. Like the Jews who opposed Jesus and Stephen, we confuse God's Word with the cultural behaviors that we're comfortable with.

? Had Jesus ("this Nazarene") said anything about destroying Jerusalem and/or the temple?

- ➔ Compare Matt 24:1-2; Luke 21:5-6; also John 2:19.
- ➔ What Jesus meant was that the temple and the law would be superseded by the one who would *fulfill* them -- the Messiah (Matt 12:6).⁷¹

(6:15) ? What do you think it means that Stephen's face was like that of an angel (v.15)? Who do you know that you could say that about?

- ➔ This was exactly what happened to Moses' face when he came down from Mt. Sinai with the law (Exod 34:29ff). Stephen had been accused of opposing the law, so God showed His approval of Stephen's interpretation in the same manner that He had shown approval for Moses' ministry of the law.⁷²

Acts 7:1-50

Stephen's Message: God's House

? What did the high priest want to know?
Did Stephen answer the question?

? What are the major themes in Stephen's address?

- ➔ *Abraham* (v.1-7) followed God's guidance, whereas Stephen's accusers wanted to hold onto the status quo.
- ➔ *Joseph* (v.8-16) led his family out of danger, whereas Stephen's accusers wanted to hold onto their "inheritance" at any cost.
- ➔ *Moses* (v.17-36) also answered God's summons, unlike the Jewish leaders who opposed Stephen in order to jealously hold onto their privileges.
- ➔ *The Prophets* (v.37-53) were persecuted by the same sort of people who had chosen to worship their blessings instead of the God who gave them.

💡 *"The amount of space Luke devoted to Stephen's address -- over twice as much as to any other in Acts -- is an indication that he saw it as a pivotal event in the history of the early church. the speech was not a defense of Stephen himself; it was a defense of the gospel he preached."*⁷³
-- Paul E. Pierson

8 How does Stephen's response address their preoccupation with Moses and the temple?

? How many times in this passage does Stephen point out that the people rejected Moses? Notice v.27, 35, 39.

- ? Can you find some examples that Stephen gave of God's people being *removed* from a particular place? Notice v.3-4, 15, 36, 43 (exile)
- ? How had the Jews become attached to things that were "made by human hands."?
 - ➔ The building and structures (and even the city) were not what what important to God.

Acts 7:51-53**Stephen's Message: Disobedience**

- ? What was the problem?
- ? What does it mean to be "stiff-necked" (v.51)?
 - ➔ Unable (or unwilling) to turn
- ? What does it mean to be "uncircumcised in heart and ears"?
 - ➔ Covered so that one can't hear or understand
- (7:51) ? What does it mean to "resist the Holy Spirit" (v.51)?
- 9 How can you know whether you are resisting or submitting to the Holy Spirit?
- (7:52) ? Why do religious people persecute prophets (v.52)?
- (7:53) ? Why do you think the people who received God's Word did not obey it (v.53)? Can you think of any parallels to this today?

Acts 7:54-60**Stephen's Martyrdom**

- ? What caused the Jewish leaders to be "cut in the heart" (v.54)?
- ? What are some other examples in Acts of people feeling convicted by what they heard? See Acts 2:37; 5:33.
- (7:55-56) ? Why do you suppose Stephen was given a vision of heaven at this particular moment, since it was obviously perilous for him (v.55-56)?
- ★ Stephen's remark about seeing Jesus is the last time that the term "Son of Man" is used in the New Testament -- and the *only* time in the New Testament that anyone in other than Jesus used it! These words recall Dan 7:13-14, in which the prophet saw the Son of man being given authority, glory, and sovereign power over all peoples and nations while men of every language worshiped Him. Thus, at the hour of his death, Stephen's understanding of the gospel was confirmed. He was given a vision of the universal dominion of Christ (as we understand when we connect it with Daniel's vision) and of the universality of His people.⁷⁴ *Stephen was the first disciple to truly grasp that God was not limited to one place or one people.* This is the first time anyone has built upon Jesus' teachings about a universal kingdom.
- (7:57) ? Why didn't they want to hear Stephen saying what he saw (v.57)?

- ♥ Have you ever "covered your ears" to something God could have revealed?
- ♥ What are some things that you've been blessed by God to see, but which might have infuriated some people?
- ★ Here is an interesting contrast to how Jesus was condemned. Apparently the Jews were allowed (by their own leaders, not necessarily the Romans) to stone someone who spoke or acted against the temple. And that is what Stephen was accused of (6:13-7:1). Ironically, Jesus was accused of the same thing (Matt 26:59-61), but He was turned over to the Roman authorities for punishment because they claimed they had no authority to execute capital punishment (John 18:31).
- ★ For some background about stoning as a form of punishment, read Deut 17:2-7; Lev 24:1-4. The usual method of stoning began with the criminal being taken to a height and thrown down. The witnesses had to do the actual throwing down. The fall itself may have killed the person, but if not, great boulders were hurled down upon him until he died.⁷⁵
- (7:58) ? What was Saul's role in this execution (v.58)?
- (7:59-60) **10** Can you identify some similarities between Stephen's last words and Jesus' last words (v.59-60)? Compare Luke 23:34,46.
 - ➔ Since the statements that Luke records for both of them are similar, perhaps he is consciously making a connection.
- ★ The Greek word for "fell asleep" (Greek *koimao*, derived from *keimai* -- "to lie [down]") is the source of the English word "cemetery."



Summary

- ♦ The gospel makes some people angry and violent, but the believers begin to "unwrap" the gift of the Spirit.
 - ➔ The apostles are strengthened to face the authorities.
 - ➔ The disciples prayed for God's will, not their own.
 - ➔ The new community develops, despite persecution.
 - ➔ More Jews are converted, despite the sins of some believers:
 - Deceit (ch.5)
 - Prejudice (ch.6)
 - ➔ Stephen is the first to completely give his life for Christ.



Lesson 4 "Overcoming Barriers"

Going to Judea & Samaria (Acts 8-9)

REVIEW

Not everyone is happy about this "gospel" that is spreading. Satan uses several weapons to attack the young church:

1. **Authority** of the Jewish leaders to punish believers (Peter & John threatened)
2. **Greed** to compromise the generosity of believers (Ananias & Sapphira)
3. **Prejudice** to divide the new community (Hebrews vs. Hellenists)
4. **Violence** to diminish their commitment (martyrdom of Stephen)

The believers respond with prayer, generosity, and confidence in God. The shocking tragedy of Stephen's death became a catalyst for missionary zeal. And Stephen's prophecy is fulfilled as Jerusalem and the temple begin to fade from importance. But first we find an angry young man ...

Acts 8:1-3

Overcoming Persecution

? What causes a person to want another person dead?

1 What are some reasons that religious people use to persecute other people?

💬 "Fanaticism is only found in individuals who are compensating secret doubts."⁷⁶ – C. G. Jung

🏆 What religious groups are you inclined to persecute? Why?

(8:3) ★ When Luke states that "Saul began to *destroy* the church," the Greek word that he uses is *lymainomai*, which appears nowhere else in the New Testament. However, it is used in the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament in Psa 80:13, which describes wild boars devastating a vineyard.⁷⁷

? What would be a better way to handle conflicts?

? Why do you suppose the apostles remained in Jerusalem?

➔ Curiously, the ones who "went out" from Jerusalem were not the ones who were "sent out" by Jesus (i.e., the apostles).

Acts 8:4-24

Overcoming Culture

👤 There was an apostle named Philip (1:13) and a servant named Philip (6:5). Since we are told that the apostles stayed in Jerusalem (8:1), this must be the servant who was selected in 6:5. Apparently this group of men didn't all continue distributing food to the widows among the Hellenistic Jews, because we now find them traveling outside Jerusalem. Perhaps their primary function was to reconcile the Hellenistic Jews with the others so that special attention to serving tables wasn't needed indefinitely. This would certainly be a lesson for servants today: *it is better to resolve an issue by reconciling the affected parties than it is to make a "career" out of addressing the symptoms of the problem.*

Philip

- (8:5) **2** What sort of cultural obstacles would a Jew have to overcome in order to present the gospel to a Samaritan (v.5)?



Samaritans

The people of Samaria were descendants of non-Jews that the Assyrians had brought there after they took Israel's Northern Kingdom into captivity. The Assyrian king Sargon II completed the conquest of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, and by his own accounts carried off 27,290 inhabitants. He neither desolated nor completely depopulated the land, but he did repopulate it in 715 BC. Additional colonists were brought in by Esarhaddon in 680 BC, and then again by Osnapper (Ashurbannibal) in the mid-7th century. Then Israel's Southern Kingdom was exiled (586 BC), and when some returned to Jerusalem, they treated the Samaritans with suspicion and animosity (Ezra 4). Their relationship worsened with time, to the extent that Samaritans were publicly cursed in the Jewish synagogues and were not allowed to become proselytes.⁷⁸



Who are the "Samaritans" that your church is reluctant to visit?



What do you suppose a Samaritan, having experienced disregard by Jews, would think about a Jew bringing them the gospel?

(8:6-8)



What seems to have attracted the multitudes (v.6-8)?
What attracts people to the gospel today?

(8:9-11)



Why do you suppose Simon performed magic for the people of Samaria (v.9-11)? How does this compare with Philip's purpose for being there?



What are some acts that people do today to get attention? Why do audiences confuse these acts with acts of God?

(8:12)



What did Philip preach (v.12)?



Why were the believers baptized (v.12)?



What do you suppose attracted Simon to the gospel?



Although the people confused Simon's magic with the power of God, Simon recognize the difference.

(8:14-15)



Why did the apostles send Peter and John to Samaria (v.14-15)?



The primary reason for the apostles' visit appears to be because the Samaritans had not received the Holy Spirit. The way that Luke writes that they were "only" (or "simply") baptized into the name of Jesus suggests that they realized something was missing.⁷⁹ Either they were missing the universal Spirit-baptism that was described in ch.1-2, or they thought they were missing out on miraculous gifts.

- A.** If they were lacking the universal gift of the Spirit, then we need to know what happened. We're not told that the apostles supplemented Philip's teaching, so it must not have been deficient. What the apostles did was to ask God that these people might also receive what all of the previous believers had received. If our assumptions are correct, then the answer is only found in other examples of conversions that occur on the "frontier" of the established church. We'll find later that when Cornelius is converted (ch.10), God places a special emphasis on the pouring out of His Spirit, so it might be that God is providing a special affirmation that these Samaritan believers are welcome in the kingdom.
- B.** On the other hand (and I think more likely), these new believers may have assumed that they would also be able to perform signs (like Philip was doing) after they were baptized, and this is what necessitated an apostolic visit. In this case, we would have to assume that the reference to their baptism was intended to mean *both* their water-baptism and their Spirit-baptism, inseparably linked. Our difficulty in initially assuming this perspective is attributable to our traditional dissociation of water-baptism and Spirit-baptism. Like Simon the Magician, the new believers were looking for the more obvious spiritual gifts. The indwelling of the Spirit was a given, because they had been *baptised*. But they wanted the sensational manifestations.

★ Beyond the question of their baptism, there are some general lessons here for us:

1. The majority of believers (who were Jewish) needed to know that these "foreigners" were really acceptable to God, so the apostles were called in. Otherwise, there could have been a division between believers "as converts from the two sides of the 'Samaritan curtain' found Christ without finding each other."⁸⁰
2. The new converts themselves may have wondered whether they would be treated as "second-class citizens" in the church, since that is how they had been treated by the Jews. Sending the most respected leaders is a way to welcome anyone who is a "Samaritan."
3. At the most basic level, the main point seems to be for the purpose of showing what marvelous things God had done among the Samaritans.

John

★ This is the last mention of John in Acts. Since he does not seem to be in Jerusalem in Acts 12 -- when his brother is murdered and Peter was arrested -- John may have gone elsewhere. He spent much of his later life in Ephesus, so he may have set off for Asia Minor shortly after this.

(8:16) ? Had the believers mentioned in v.16 received the Holy Spirit as promised in Acts 2:38?

(8:18-19) ? What did Simon observe about how the Spirit was "given"?

★ Many Christians think of the Holy Spirit as some kind of "electricity," turned on at conversion and operating in a constant (and even imperceptible) fashion throughout the life of the believer. But this passage and others suggest that there is more complexity to the indwelling of God's Spirit.

The promise of Acts 2:38 and the expectation of John 7:38-39 indicate a broad pouring out of the Spirit into every believer (as promised by Joel), but yet there is an additional "application" of the Spirit which accompanies the laying on of the apostles' hands (including Paul -- Acts 19:6). This action of the apostles has similar results to God's own intervention with His Spirit (Acts 10:44-45), and the purpose of these occurrences seems to be consistent with Jesus' explanation in John 16:7-11, 13-14 -- to show the distinction between sin and righteousness and to glorify Jesus.

It appears that the extra measure of the Spirit given through the apostles helped the disciples manifest the purposes of God more clearly, for the result is what we observe in Christians who have grown close to Jesus in a life of devotion. Sometimes we find the recipients exhibiting miraculous gifts, but this is not always mentioned, so the point of the "laying on of hands" may have been to quickly endow some with a measure of the Spirit that all could desire and receive as a result of persistent faithfulness.

In a time of persecution, the span of time between new birth and martyrdom could be short, and the apostles may have equipped some more rapidly to acquire God's strength.

(8:18-23) ? Why did Simon want the same power that Peter and John had (v.18-23)?

(8:20-24) ? What was Simon's problem (v.20-24)?
How was sin (iniquity) holding Simon in "bondage"?
How could it be cured?

★ Ever since this event, "the attempt to turn the spiritual into the commercial, to traffic in the things of God, and especially to purchase ecclesiastical office," has been referred to as "simony." 81

(8:24) ? How does prayer overcome sin (v.24)?

Acts 8:25-40

Overcoming Race

♥ Has the Lord ever led you into places or circumstances that were different from your expectations (v.26)?

- Philip may have thought he should also be returning to Jerusalem, but an angel sent him beyond Jerusalem to an uninhabited place on the road to Gaza. There he met someone who was even more foreign than the people of Samaria.

Ethiopian Eunuch

(8:27) **4** Who was this man to whom Philip was sent (v.27)?

- ➔ From Ethiopia – at that time its territory corresponded to what we call the “Upper Nile” (roughly from Aswan to Khartoum).
- ➔ A Eunuch – usually a man with significant authority who (for the security of the royal household) was rendered incapable of sexual license. The term eventually became more of a title than a physical description.
- ➔ Court official of Candace, queen of Ethiopia – “Candace” was not a personal name, but a dynastic title for the Queen Mother, who performed certain functions on behalf of the king.⁸²
- ➔ In charge of the queen's treasure
- ➔ A Jewish proselyte (foreign believer) – Since Luke does not present him as the first Gentile convert (that happens in ch.10), this man must have been a full convert to Judaism.



This eunuch was quite wealthy and influential, because he had a copy of Isaiah. An entire synagogue might have difficulty obtaining a copy, but he had somehow obtained one. Also, he was literate enough to read it in a language that was foreign to him. Perhaps he had been exposed to the new teachings about Jesus while in Jerusalem and was now curious about these prophecies.

(8:29) **?** How did Philip know what to do (v.29)?

Did the Spirit provide many details about Philip's mission?



The "chariot" (v.29) may have been a four-wheeled "carriage," since the same Greek word could refer to either.

(8:30-31) **?** Why couldn't the eunuch understand the Scripture on his own (v.30-31)?



How well do *you* understand the Old Testament prophets?



5 Why isn't simply reading Scripture enough to be able to understand it? What else is needed? Where do you find help?

(8:32-33) **★** The quotation in v.32-33 is from Isa 53:7-8 and it reflects the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., the Septuagint). It had been translated about 200 years earlier in Alexandria, not far from Ethiopia.

(8:35-36) **?** How might Philip have introduced Jesus using this passage from Isaiah?



Clearly Philip's teaching included something about baptism, because the eunuch knew what it was. Why would Philip include *baptism* as a part of his explanation of who Jesus was?



As a eunuch and as a foreigner, this Ethiopian would have been accustomed to being excluded from many Jewish ceremonies. Now this preacher comes to him and tells him about a Savior who accepts *anyone* who has faith. It is not surprising that a clever man of authority would test this preacher's statements the first chance he got. He sees a pool or stream of water and wants to know why *he* shouldn't be baptized *like any other believer* who has been accepted by Christ.


- (8:37) ? What is Philip's criteria for the eunuch to be baptized (v.37)?
 ☆ Notice that the perspective of the writer in this section is that *anyone* who accepts the teaching about Jesus would *want* to be baptized. Rather than pressing for the Ethiopian to be baptized, Philip gives him *permission* when it is clear that faith is present.
- (8:37) ? What does it mean to "believe with all your heart" (v.37)?
 ♥ What do you believe about Jesus?
 Have you been baptized into Jesus? What is (or was) your reason?
- (8:39) ☆ Although the Eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, he was now leaving it – and may never have returned. Whereas Jerusalem had been the focus of all worship, we are seeing Stephen's prophecy (esp. 7:48-50) fulfilled as the prominence of Jerusalem diminishes.
- (8:40) ☆ Philip finds himself in *Azotus*, which is called *Ashdod* in the Old Testament. It is a city near the Mediterranean coast north of Gaza, so Philip apparently left the road that goes on to Gaza (v.40).

Acts 9:1-9**Overcoming Hatred: the Crisis**


- ? Why do you suppose Saul was so belligerent toward the Christians?
- (9:2) 6 Why would Saul expect to find Christians in the *synagogues*?
 ➔ The earliest Christians were Jews, so it was natural for the believers in Christ to continue meeting in synagogues. In fact, early church worship followed the synagogue pattern with Scripture reading, prayer, and a sermon. 83
- (9:2) ? Why do you suppose the early church was known (even to Jews) as "the Way" (v.2)?
- (9:4) ? What did Jesus want to know from Saul (v.4)?
 ? Did Saul think that he was "persecuting" anyone? Who did he think he was attacking?
 ♥ Would Jesus ever feel that He was treated the same way by you?
- (9:7) ? Who witnessed this event?
 ➔ Since Saul's companions also heard the voice, it was not simply a personal vision given to Saul, but an actual visitation by Jesus.
 ➔ Compare the accounts in 22:9 and 26:13-14.
- (9:8-9) ? What immediate effect did this event have on Saul (v.8-9)?
 ➔ Blind
 ➔ Obedient
 ➔ Fasting

Acts 9:10-22**Overcoming Hatred: the Healing**

- ? How different was the manner in which the Lord got Ananias' attention, compared with the way He got Saul's attention (v.10)?

- (9:11-12) **7** What was Ananias asked to do (v.11-12)? Why do you suppose the Lord used Ananias to do this rather than simply do it Himself?
- (9:13-14) **?** Imagine that you are Ananias. How would you respond to the Lord, knowing the intentions of Saul (v.13-14)?
 → Notice how Ananias addressed Saul, as “brother”!
- ♥** Has the Lord ever sent you into a seemingly risky situation?
- (9:15-16) **?** What did the Lord have in mind for Saul (v.15-16)?
 → Chosen vessel
 → Witness to the Gentiles, kings, and Israel
 → Suffer for Jesus' name
- Saul**
-  Read [22:6-21](#) (esp. v.17-21) and [Gal 1:11-2:10](#) to get the whole story about Saul. When Saul looked back on what Jesus had done with him (Phil 3:12), he says that Jesus *seized* him (Greek *katalambano*), which might be a way of saying that before Saul could *arrest* any Christians, Christ *arrested* him.⁸⁴
- ?** How would you compare this account of Saul's conversion with the summary that he gives later in 26:9-18?
- (9:17) **♥** Notice that when Ananias laid his hands on Saul, he addressed him as "brother" (v.17). How difficult would it be to forgive someone who had intended to harm you?
- (9:18) **?** Why was Saul baptized (v.18)?
- (9:20) **♥** Have you ever changed directions in an obvious way when you realized that you were wrong (v.20)?
- (9:21) **8** How would you expect the Christians in Damascus to react to Saul's change (v.21)?
 → The Greek word that is translated “raised havoc” (*portheo*) means “ravaged,”⁸⁵ and it can also be translated “mauled.”⁸⁶ This is consistent with the “wild boar” image that was raised in 8:3, indicating the “raging fury” that obsessed Saul (as he admits later in 26:11). He had been filled with hatred and prejudice. But he was no match for the Spirit of God.

Acts 9:23-31**Overcoming Hatred: the Welcome**

-  Luke says that “many days had gone by” (v.23), and it was actually *three years* that passed while Saul was in Arabia (Gal 1:17-18). At that time the northwest tip of Arabia extended nearly to Damascus.⁸⁷ Although we don't know the purpose of his trip, it would seem reasonable that (like the other apostles) he needed to spend time with Jesus (see Eph 3:3; Rom 16:25; Gal 1:11-12) – and three years was how long the others had spent!
- (9:23-25) **?** What do you suppose that the Jews in Damascus (i.e., the ones who expected him to be their champion) thought about Saul's change (v.23-25)? Why would they want to *kill* him?

- (9:26-27) ? In both Damascus and Jerusalem, what did it take for the disciples to associate with Saul (v.26-27)? Why?
- 9 How is Barnabas living up to the nickname he was given in 4:36?
- ♥ Who could *you* become an advocate for, so that they can be welcomed by other Christians?
- 💡 “It is not only that converts must join the Christian community, but that the Christian community must welcome converts.”⁸⁸ – J. R. W. Stott
- (9:30) ☆ We don't know much about what Paul did in Cilicia (where Tarsus is located) and Syria, nor how long he was there. Paul mentioned it briefly in Gal 1:21-24, and it may have been where he received the visions and “thorn” described in 1Cor 12:1-10.
- (9:31) ? What are some things that contributed to the church's increase (v.31)?

Acts 9:32-43**Overcoming Sickness & Death**

- ☆ The Greek word for "saints" (v.32) is *hagios*, which means "separate," "holy," or "sacred."⁸⁹
- (9:33-35) ? How did Aeneas' healing affect other people?
- 10 Are there ways that *we* can heal people in Jesus' name?
- (9:36-39) ? What kind of person was Tabitha (aka Dorcas) (v.36-39)?
 ➔ Her Aramaic name was “Tabitha,” and her Greek name was “Dorcas.” Both mean “gazelle.”⁹⁰
- ? Why do you suppose the disciples sent for Peter?
- ? In what ways can a godly person's death serve God's purposes?
- (9:40-42) ? What are some things that you can learn from this event about death and resurrection (v.40-42)?
- ♥ How do you suppose people would react in your town if someone were raised from the dead?



Summary

- ◆ The Spirit causes the gospel to overcome all barriers:
 - Persecution (the Jews)
 - Culture (the Samaritans)
 - Race (Ethiopian)
 - Hatred (Saul)
 - Sickness & Death (Aeneas & Tabitha)
- ◆ As a result the church experienced (9:31):
 - Peace
 - Strength
 - Encouragement from the Holy Spirit
 - Numerical growth
 - Godliness (living in the fear of the Lord)



Lesson 5 "Big Changes"

Going to the "Nations" (Acts 10-12)

REVIEW

In the last lesson we witnessed the Spirit accomplishing things that believers by themselves cannot achieve. Our fleshly nature is divisive, and our own efforts (even when well-intentioned) often fall short of being constructive. But when we let the Spirit take over, amazing feats happens:

1. Persecution is overcome (the Christians & the Jews)
2. Cultural differences take a backseat to truth (Philip & the Samaritans)
3. Racial barriers are broken down (Philip & the Ethiopian)
4. Hatred is dissolved, and the angry man becomes the zealous believer (Saul)
5. Sickness & death are no longer to be feared (Aeneas & Tabitha)

But as we will see in this section today, there are still some changes needed.

Acts 10:1-16

A Pair of Visions



Centurions were captains of 100 soldiers in the Roman army. They were Gentiles, not Jews, and they understood trust and faithfulness in a way that God's own people couldn't grasp.

Centurions were by no means at the top of the military hierarchy (there were 60 centuries in a legion); but they had exhibited sufficient obedience and skill and good conduct to be promoted several times. They usually began their military careers as common soldiers, and were not from the elite Roman families. Their duties were to drill the soldiers, inspect their arms, food and clothing, and to command them in the camp and in the field.


The Roman army had 25-30 legions with each legion typically made up of 6,000 men. Each legion was divided into 10 cohorts, and each cohort usually contained 5-6 centuries (led by a centurion). There were 5 cohorts in Judea at the time of Herod Agrippa I -- one of them (containing 10 centuries) was in Jerusalem, and at least two were stationed near Caesarea.⁹¹



Caesarea was a city on the shore of the Mediterranean, on the great road from Tyre to Egypt, about 70 miles northwest of Jerusalem, at the northern extremity of the plain of Sharon. It was built by Herod the Great (10 BC), who named it after Caesar Augustus, hence called Caesarea Sebaste (Gr. Sebastos = "Augustus"), on the site of an old town called "Strato's Tower." It was the capital of the Roman province of Judaea, the seat of the governors or procurators, and the headquarters of the Roman troops. It was the great Gentile city of Palestine, with a spacious artificial harbour. It was adorned with many buildings of great splendour, after the manner of the Roman cities of the West. It still retains its ancient name Kaisariyeh, but is now desolate.⁹²

Cornelius

- ? What kind of person was Cornelius?
- ? Why do you think God would work with a Gentile rather than only the Jews?

 Cornelius was part of the Italian Cohort, which was based in Caesarea. We don't know what He prayed, but we might speculate from Peter's message that Cornelius was simply asking that he be acceptable and welcome in the presence of God.

There was a term for Gentiles who had accepted the Jewish moral standards and who worshipped in the synagogues, but who had not yet been circumcised (which was required for a proselyte). Such a person was called a "God-fearer" (e.g., see 13:16, 26), and that is what Cornelius is called. Although he was "respected by all the Jewish people" (10:22), he was still an outsider with respect to Israel's covenant.

- ★ It was a sore point with the Jews that God would occasionally speak to someone outside their "chosen" nation. Although God had intended to bless *all* nations through Israel, they had misconstrued their election as God's favoritism.⁹³ Beware anyone who tells you that God only works through one exclusive set of people and only answers their prayers – even the apostle Peter was going to get his perspective adjusted! God chose a centurion to teach the young church about *accepting all believers* as members of the kingdom.

- ? Do you suppose that Cornelius expected his prayers to be answered (v.4)?
- ? What do you suppose Peter first thought his vision was about?
 - ➔ Tempting him in his hunger (like Jesus, Matt 4)
 - ➔ Testing his faithfulness

1 Why had God declared some animals to be unclean (v.14)? See Lev 11; Deut 14. Why was He now changing the rules (v.15)?

- ♥ Can you think of some examples of our own reluctance to accept what God has cleansed?

*Acts 10:17-33**An Awkward Meeting*

- ? Does it appear that Peter knew why he was being sent to Cornelius (esp. v.29)?

♥ Do you recall any time when God's Spirit placed you in a situation without you knowing the purpose?

- ? Why did Peter refuse to be worshiped by Cornelius (v.26)? What does this say about people today who assume spiritual authority over others?

2 Why do you think Peter made it clear that he wouldn't normally associate with a Gentile (v.28)? Are there people that we treat this way?

- ♥ Which people do you avoid religiously?

- ? What sort of people did Jesus associate with and get ridiculed by the religious people?

Acts 10:34-48

A Surprising Reconciliation

- 3 What did Peter learn from this experience?

➔ Perhaps this is why God arranged for Peter to be the one to help Cornelius. Any disciples who were in Samaria would have been closer to Caesarea than Joppa was, but maybe Peter needed Cornelius as much as Cornelius needed Peter.

What did Cornelius learn?

➔ For one thing, God listens to the prayers of people “outside” the established religious group(s).

- ? What are the elements of "good news" that Peter shared with Cornelius?

- ? What had Jesus told His disciples to do (v.42-43)?

- ? How is Jesus our Judge (v.42)? Compare John 3:17-21.

- ? What was Peter's explanation of how to be saved from sin (v.35, 43)?

- ? Why do you suppose Peter and his companions were amazed that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Cornelius' family (v.45)?

- ? Why did Peter assume that Cornelius' family should also be baptized in water (v.47-48)?

- ? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this event?

➔ Given to Jews (v.38)

➔ Given to believers (v.45)

➔ In the same way that the disciples on Pentecost were enabled to speak in “tongues” and bridge the communication gap between nationalities, the Spirit here enabled Cornelius' family to bridge the communication gap *between Jews and Gentiles*. Previously, Peter had been the messenger of good news; here he is also the recipient of the good news regarding the Gentiles.

- ★ Cornelius and his family received the Holy Spirit and were baptized, but that's not the main point of the story. *Cornelius recognized God's acceptance*. And perhaps more significantly, *Peter* understood God's acceptance. The lesson is that "in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him" (v.35).

- ? Does the Holy Spirit still work in ways that the "religious establishment" doesn't expect?

- ? Does God “accept” other religious devotions besides following Christ?



➔ The breadth of God's acceptance is explicitly stated as across “every nation” (v.35). God shows no partiality toward race, culture, heritage, or rank, but He does indeed exhibit a preference for “what is right,” and salvation is only found in Christ (4:12).

- ? If you were in Peter's position today, how would you respond?








*Acts 11:1-18**A Hesitant Acceptance*

- 4** Why were the Jewish Christians upset with Peter (v.2-3)?
- ?** Why are some Christians concerned about *who* is taught the gospel?
- 5** What can we do to become more accepting of all types of people?
- ?** How does Peter describe the way in which Cornelius' family received the Holy Spirit (v.15)? Compare 2:2-4; John 20:22; Luke 24:45-47. How does this compare with the way believers receive the Holy Spirit today?
- ?** Have the first 10 chapters of Acts changed your understanding of what it means to be baptized in (or with) the Holy Spirit?
- ?** Since the gift of the Spirit that Cornelius received is the same as that which all believers receive, why do the outward manifestations (tongues, prophecy, or neither) vary so much?
- ?** Would you be surprised today if someone received an uncommon manifestation of the Holy Spirit? Why?
- ★** Clearly, the Spirit is given to those who believe, but not always *after* the believer has submitted to being baptized.
- ?** What do you think convinced these Jewish Christians (who were stubborn in regard to anything that might "dilute" their Jewish traditions) to accept the Gentile believers (v.18)?
- ➔** It was the recognition that this had been like another "Pentecost" experience that caused them to accept the new believers.

*Acts 11:19-30**An Affirmed Mission*

-  The gospel spread from Caesarea (where Cornelius lived) northward to Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon) and seaward to Cyprus – which is only natural, since the Phoenicians were renowned seafarers and Barnabas was from Cyprus. It also spread farther north to Syrian Antioch. There is an ancient tradition that Luke was from Antioch and that he was one of these converts (v.21,24).
-  **Antioch** was founded in 300 BC by Seleucus Nicator, one of Alexander the Great's generals. He named it 'Antioch' after his father Antiochus, and its port, fifteen miles west along the navigable river Orontes, 'Seleucia' after himself. Over the years it became known as 'Antioch the Beautiful' because of its fine buildings.⁹⁴ Its population was 500,000, and its main street was four miles in length, flanked by a double colonnade with trees, fountains, and magnificent mansions.⁹⁵ It was called 'the third city of the empire,' after Rome and Alexandria.⁹⁶
- 6** Why did the Jerusalem church send Barnabas to Antioch (v.22)? What did he do there (v.23)?

Barnabas

-  What do you think it means to be "full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (v.24)?
-  What would it take for you to be like Barnabas?
-  Many people "were brought" to the Lord (v.24) – more precisely, they were "added" to the Lord (*prostithemi*). This Greek word is the origin of the English word "prosthetics." Notice that they were not just added to the church, but *to the Lord*.
-  It has been about 7-8 years since Saul left Jerusalem in order to escape the threats against him; but that was only at the end of ch.9! Luke has filled that gap with only a couple stories about Peter, and there is no explanation about what Saul was doing during that time – perhaps he was preaching in Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21-23). Barnabas apparently remembered what Saul's mission was supposed to be, so he goes to Tarsus to get him. Since Gentiles are being received into the church, it is time for Saul to begin his ministry.
-  Notice that it was in the first church with significant numbers of Gentiles that the disciples were first called "Christians." Apparently the Jewish believers weren't looking for a (new) label for themselves.
- 7** Why were there prophets in the church (v.27)? What was their role?
- ➔ Spiritual gift
 - ➔ No indication that it would cease
 - ➔ Forth-telling as well as fore-telling
 - ➔ Enabled to see what others could not
-  Who are some people today who help you see what would otherwise be unseen? How can you tell if such a person has been given a gift of prophecy?
- Moses' test (Deut 13:1-13; 18:21-22)
 - Paul's description of prophecy as a gift (1Cor 13:2; 14:22, 29-33, 37-38; Eph 4:11-13)
 - Peter's explanation about the nature of prophecy (1Pet 1:21-22)
 - The angel's remarks in John's vision (Rev 19:10)
-  There is no historical record of single famine that covered the "entire Roman world" during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54), but there were several major shortages across the empire at that time. In the first year of Claudius' reign, Italy suffered from a failure of crops; in his fourth year it was Palestine that suffered; in the eighth and ninth it was Greece; in the eleventh, Italy again. It was the second of these events (A.D. 45-46) that Agabus prophesied.⁹⁷ We know from the historian Josephus that the want was so great that many people starved to death.⁹⁸

- ? Do these early Christians have any reservations about combining resources to help another congregation (v.29-30)?
What are some examples today of ways that church congregations should pool resources in order to offer relief and support?

*Acts 12:1-19***An Affirmed Petition**

- ★ The scene of events in this section shifts back to *Jerusalem* (see 11:2). The destructive power of the world is now contrasted with the saving power of God that was described in ch.11. Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great and the nephew of Herod Antipas who tried Jesus (Luke 23:7-12; Acts 4:27). He did in fact possess the title of “king,” as it was conferred upon him by the Emperor Caligula.⁹⁹


- ? Why was Herod persecuting Christians?
→ Herod Agrippa I was anxious to preserve the Roman peace in Palestine, and for this reason he tried to ingratiate himself to the Jews by observing the law and by persecuting the church (but the Jews despised him anyway).

- ? Why do you suppose God would allow one of the 12 apostles to be murdered so soon after they had been commissioned (v.2)?

- ? What effect do you think this would have on all the disciples?

- ? Why did Herod delay Peter's execution (v.3-4)?

→ The Jewish law did not permit trials or sentencing during Passover.¹⁰⁰

-  Peter may have been imprisoned in the Tower of Antonia, remnants of which still stand today at the northwest corner of the temple area.

- 8 Can you think of ways that political leaders cater to religious people today without really being obedient themselves?

- 9 How could we help our leaders *stand* for truth rather than patronize it?

- ★ Peter was guarded by four groups of four soldiers ("quaternions"), totally sixteen in all (v.4).

- ? How would you have felt if you were Peter?

- ? How was the church helping Peter (v.5)?
What do you suppose they were doing that made their prayer "fervent"?

- ? Why do you suppose the Lord seems to time His actions to occur at the latest possible moment (v.6)?


- ♥ How have you experienced God's timing in your own life? What impact did God's timing have on you?

- ? What did Peter think was happening at the time (v.7-11)?

- ? How does this explain what the visions they received were like?
→ Much like a dream

- ? Why did Peter choose to go to Mary's house after he was rescued (v.12)?

**Mary &
John Mark**

(12:12)  This woman named Mary, who owned the house where the disciples were praying for Peter's release from prison, was the mother of a disciple named John Mark. Presumably, Rhoda was her servant. John Mark was Barnabas' cousin (Col 4:10), so Mary was also Barnabas' aunt. At the end of this chapter, we find Saul and Barnabas taking John Mark back with them to Antioch (v.25), but during the first missionary journey John Mark will return to Jerusalem (13:13) – probably to his mother's house. This in turn will cause a disagreement between Saul and Barnabas (15:37-40).

? What had the people who were at Mary's house been praying for (v.13-16)? So why were they surprised to see Peter at the gate?

♥ Can you think of times that you have prayed earnestly to God but were unprepared for a positive answer?

★ Peter probably thought he shouldn't linger long enough to get arrested again (v.17)! So he asked that they inform the church leaders, one of whom seems to have been Jesus' half-brother, James (because the apostle James, the brother of John, had been killed).

★ In Roman law, a soldier who allowed his prisoner to escape was liable for the penalty to which the prisoner had been condemned.¹⁰¹ So the expected penalty here was a life for a life. The guards took Peter's place in death. Compare them with Jesus:

Guards

Obedient to Herod
Intended Peter to die
Held him in chains
World imprisons us the same way

Jesus & the angel

Obedient to God
Intended Peter to live
Gave freedom
Jesus frees us the same way

Herod then went to Caesarea from Jerusalem to settle another matter.

Acts 12:20-23

An Extraordinary Fall

? How did the people of Tyre and Sidon try to appease the king and turn away his anger?

- ➔ Persuade the king's chamberlain
- ➔ Asked for peace
- ➔ Praised him

? How did Herod receive their actions?

★ The man who thought he could judge nations (in v.21 we are told he was on his judgment seat) was *judged by God*. This should be a sobering lesson for us about setting ourselves up as judge over others. When we trust God to judge, He gives us life. But if we try to sit on God's throne, our inner decay and corruption will eat us up. Compare Nebuchadnezzar's experience (Dan 4).

Acts 12:24-25

An Extraordinary Increase

? Do you recall what the mission was that Saul and Barnabas had been assigned?

- ➔ Relief for the brethren in Judea (11:27-30).



Summary

- ◆ From beginning to end, this section is all about people who don't want to change their perspective, even when confronted with truth. But God has a way of reversing events.
 - Peter had to be confronted *four times* with God's plan for the Gentiles":
 1. The vision of the unclean animals (which itself was given *three times*)
 2. God's direct instruction to go with the six men from Caesarea.
 3. Cornelius' testimony about how God had prepared him for Peter's visit.
 4. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius' household.
 - The Christians in Jerusalem did not immediately welcome the Gentile converts:
 - ➔ Peter had to convince them regarding the conversion of Cornelius' family
 - ➔ They had to send Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to check out the conversions there
 - Herod preferred his prestige over God's glory.

When Chapter 12 Opens: 102

- James is dead
- Peter is in prison
- Herod is triumphing

When Chapter 12 Closes:

- Herod is dead
- Peter is free
- The Word of God is triumphing



Lesson 6 "Learning to Welcome Diversity"

1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)

REVIEW

The plan for the church to go into "all the world" had a difficult start just outside its own doorstep.

1. Gentiles were interested in following Christ, but Jewish believers had trouble accepting them.
2. Herod tried to squash the Christians by murdering James and arresting Peter.
3. People in Palestine were suffering from hunger due to a famine.

In every case, God dealt with the issue - sometimes through His Spirit and sometimes through His church. Now it's time to reach out even farther.

Acts 13:1-3

The Missionaries Sent Out

- ?** What is the difference between *prophets* and *teachers* (v.1)?
- (13:2) **?** What do you think it means to "minister to the Lord" (v.2)? How do we do this? To what extent might *fasting* have been a necessary part?
- (13:3) **1** How did the church send Barnabas and Saul on this mission (v.3)?
- ➔ Fasted
 - ➔ Prayed
 - ➔ Laid hands on them

? In what ways do churches "send out" people today? Would it help to send them off in this same manner?

★ Notice that the center for evangelistic activities has shifted from Jerusalem to *Antioch* since chapter 11 (compare 11:22,26,27). The church has begun to accept Gentiles, thus preparing the way for Saul's ministry among the Gentiles. Evidence of this is found in the names of the leaders in Antioch (v.1) -- Simeon's nickname is Niger, which in Latin means "black." Lucius was from North Africa. Manaen had been "brought up with" Herod (the Greek word *sunthropos* means "foster-brother") and may have been either a friend or part of an extended family.¹⁰³

Acts 13:4-12

The Missionaries Opposed

- 🌐** Show the route of the missionaries.
- (13:5) **?** What seems to be the purpose of this trip?
- ?** Why did they go to the Jewish synagogues to preach the word (v.5)?
- (13:6-8) **?** Why did Bar-Jesus (aka Elymas) oppose Paul and Barnabas (v.6-8)?
- ➔ The name Bar-Jesus means "son of salvation" or "son of Joshua."
 - ➔ Bar-Jesus seems to have taken an Arabic name ("Elymas") for himself that was equivalent to the Aramaic term "magus." Both the Aramaic and the Arabic terms could refer to a wise man, astrologer, or sorcerer.¹⁰⁴

- (13:9) ? Why do you suppose Saul's name changed to "Paul" (v.9)?
- ➔ It was customary for Hellenistic Jews to have two names: one Hebrew and another that was either Greek or Latin. It is for this same reason that Barnabas' cousin John was also called Mark (12:25) and that Simeon was also called Niger (13:1).¹⁰⁵
 - ➔ Since Saul assumes his role as the apostle to the Gentiles, it is appropriate for Luke to use his Gentile name throughout the remainder of this book.

- (13:9-11) ? Why do you suppose Paul exhibits so little tact in his dealings with Elymas (v.9-11)?

- ➔ The name that Paul calls Bar-Jesus was a play on the man's name. Instead of being a "son of salvation," he was acting like a "son of the devil" (or "son of the slanderer").

★ Apparently the Holy Spirit allowed Paul to see into the heart of Elymas (v.9), and Paul's exclamation of what he saw may have been quite extemporaneous. Unless we are led to see a person's motives this clearly, we should be slow to make accusations. The Spirit knew what would lead the proconsul to believe.

Luke apparently intends for his readers to understand that Sergius Paulus was the first Gentile convert with no prior association with the Jewish religion.¹⁰⁶

Acts 13:13-43

The Good News Offered to the Jews

★ John Mark (who was Barnabas' cousin) returned to Jerusalem (v.13) – possibly to his mother's house. This will lead to a serious disagreement between Saul and Barnabas later (15:37-40). Although we don't know the reason for John Mark's departure, the journey beyond would have been considerably more difficult. The climb from sea level up to the Taurus Plateau was about 3500 feet in an area that was notorious for bandits (perhaps recalled by Paul in 2Cor 11:26).

- (13:14) ★ It appears that Paul and Barnabas spent little time evangelizing Perga until their return trip. Some commentators have speculated that Paul may have had an illness that would be assuaged by the cooler temperatures at the higher altitude in Galatia, and so they hastened up to Pisidian Antioch. The suggestion is that this illness was the one he mentioned in Gal 4:13-15, and that it somehow affected his eyesight.¹⁰⁷

- (13:14-15) ? How did Paul approach the Jews in Pisidian Antioch (v.14-15)?

- ➔ On the Sabbath, when they were gathered for worship anyway
- ➔ He "sat down" until *invited* to speak


- (13:17-19) ? Where does Paul begin in his recounting of Israel's history (v.17)? Why?


? What are some things that God did in the 450 years that began in Egypt (v.17-19)?


- (13:20-25) ? What kinds of leaders did Israel have during their history (v.20-25)?
 ? How was David different from the other leaders in Israel? How did David please God?
 ♥ What aspects of God's "heart" do you exhibit?
 ? How many references can you find to the promise that Christ would be a descendant of David?
- (13:24-25) ? Why do you suppose God had John prepare the way for the coming of Jesus (v.24-25)?
- (13:27-28) ? Who does Paul blame for condemning Jesus (v.27-28)? Did the Jews or Gentiles in Antioch share any guilt in the crucifixion?
- (13:29) ★ Concerning some of the things written about what would happen to Jesus (v.29), see Luke 18:31-33; 24:44-49. For some prophecies about Christ, see Psa 22; Psa 69; Isa 53; Dan 9:6; Zech 13:7.
- (13:30-31) ? Why was Jesus' resurrection important (v.30-31)? Does it help to know that there were witnesses to His resurrection?
- (13:32-33) ? Can you find some references to the promise of resurrection (v.32-33)?
 ➔ Notice that Paul makes a similar argument from Psa 16:10 that Peter did in 2:24-33.
- (13:38-39) ? What is the freedom that believers have but that those who followed the Law of Moses did not have (v.38-39)?
- (13:40-41) ? Why do you suppose that people often don't recognize God at work (v.40-41)?
 ♥ What are some assumptions that you have that could potentially prevent you from recognizing that God is at work?
- (13:43) ? What advice did Paul and Barnabas give those who believed what they heard (v.43)? How might we apply this today?


Acts 13:44-52***The Good News Accepted by the Gentiles***


- 2 What did they want more than the good news about the Messiah (v.44-45)? Are we guilty of wanting the same things?
- (13:47) ★ The quote in v.47 (from Isa 42:6 & 49:6) points out the irony here. Israel was supposed to be a guide (a "light") for all of the nations (Isa 42:6), but Israel rejected the true Light (Isa 49:6), opening the door for the Gentiles by her *disobedience* rather than as a good example.
- (13:48) ? Why were the Gentiles so happy about this (v.48)?
 ★ There is a glimpse here of God's foreknowledge. The ones who believed were the ones who "had been appointed to eternal life." this does *not* indicate a lack of choice on *their* part, but rather that it was proceeding exactly according to God's plan.


(13:50)  Why do you suppose the Jews incited the leaders to do what they wanted (v.50)? Was their purpose religious or political?


 How can we tell when our purposes become more political than religious?

(13:51)  What does it mean that Paul and Barnabas "shook off the dust of their feet" (v.51)? Can you think of any similar expressions today? Is it ever appropriate for us to do this? If so, when?

 Late in Paul's life, he wrote to his beloved friend Timothy and recalled the terrible way that he had been treated during this trip (2Tim 3:10-11). So the expulsion of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch was apparently not without violence.


 The Roman province of Galatia was divided into three regions: Pisidia, Phrygia, and Lycaonia. **Pisidian Antioch** had been a Roman colony, and some remnants of its aqueduct are still standing. It was the primary governing and military center of the southern half of Galatia. ¹⁰⁸


 **Iconium** (present-day Konya) was a Greek city that had agricultural and commercial roots.


(13:52)  How could the disciples be joyful in spite of being driven out of town (v.52)?


Acts 14:1-7


The Jews Reject the Presence of God


 Show the location of Iconium, followed by Lystra and Derbe.

 Is there a "manner" of teaching the gospel that influences more people to believe?

 What are some examples of teaching methods that work well? Some that don't?

(14:2)  Why do those who disbelieve want others to also disbelieve?


(14:3)  What seems to be the purpose of the miracles that the apostles performed in Iconium?

 What are some factors that are causing the spread of the gospel on this missionary journey?











- ➔ God bearing witness to His Word (v.3)
- ➔ Preaching (v.1)
- ➔ Persecution (v.5-6)

Acts 14:8-17

The Gentiles Accept the Presence of "Gods"

 How do you suppose Paul could see the faith of the man who was lame?

 How does *your* faith show when people speak to you?

- (14:11-13)  How did the people think that Paul could perform this miracle?
-  In the Greek pantheon of gods, Zeus was the chief god and Hermes was a messenger or herald. We're told that Paul was thought to be Hermes because he was speaking, but we are not told why they thought Barnabas was Zeus. Perhaps the noble character that Barnabas had exhibited among other Christians (e.g., 4:36-37) was also evident among these people. As far as we know, Barnabas was never a prominent preacher like Paul, and yet the people of Lystra attributed a higher position to him than to Paul. Certainly this is an encouragement to the many who serve Christ behind the scenes, out of the limelight – those who lead through encouragement and generosity rather than eloquent speech and great signs.
- (14:14) **3** Why is Barnabas referred to as an apostle here? (see 13:2-4)
-  An apostle is simply someone who has been “sent.” The distinction for any “apostle” is who initiated the “sending.” The Twelve were commissioned by Jesus, and others were appointed by churches.
 -  There were others also: e.g., Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16:7)
- (14:14-18) **4** How did Barnabas and Paul react to being considered gods? How does it compare with the way many people respond to popularity today?
-  They reacted *slowly* because the people were speaking in the Lycaonian language.
- (14:15-18)  How is our God bigger than other gods?
-  How is our God evident even to those who don't know Him?
-  Why do you suppose the apostles still had difficulty restraining the people from worshipping them?
-  Who are some people that are worshiped today? Why do people think that these individuals are so special?
-  About fifty years prior to Paul and Barnabas visiting Lystra, the Latin poet Ovid had narrated in his *Metamorphoses* an ancient local legend. The supreme god Jupiter (Zeus to the Greeks) and his son Mercury (Hermes) once visited the hill country of Phrygia, disguised as mortal men. In their incognito they sought hospitality but were rebuffed a thousand times. At last, however, they were offered lodging in a tiny cottage, thatched with straw and reeds from the marsh. Here lived an elderly peasant couple named Philemon and Baucis, who entertained them out of their poverty. Later the gods rewarded them, but destroyed by flood the homes which would not take them in. It is reasonable to suppose both that the Lystran people knew this story about their neighborhood and that, if the gods were to revisit their district, they were anxious not to suffer the same fate as the inhospitable Phrygians. Apart from the literary evidence in Ovid, two inscriptions and a stone altar have been discovered near Lystra, indicating that Zeus and Hermes were worshiped together as local patron deities. **109**

Acts 14:19-28**Strengthening the Disciples**

? Why would the Jews in Antioch and Iconium care whether Paul was teaching Gentiles in Lystra?

- ➔ Threatened by Jewish conversions
- ➔ Disgusted that Paul (a Jew) would associate with Gentiles
- ➔ Angry that Paul had been a “traitor” to Judaism

(14:19-20) ★ Stoning was a common method of capital punishment in Israel (although Roman authorities limited its use). The reason that Paul was *dragged out* of the city was that stoning was to take place *outside* the settlement or camp (Lev 24:14,23; 1Ki 21:10,13). This could easily qualify as the suffering that Paul later described in Gal 6:17 (“I bear on my body the marks of Jesus”) and in 2Cor 11:25 (“once I was stoned”). It is not clear why Barnabas did not receive the same treatment.

Deeds that were punishable by stoning included certain cases of disobedience (Josh 7:25), child sacrifice (Lev 20:2), consultation with magicians (Lev 20:27), blasphemy (John 10:31-32), Sabbath-breaking (Num 15:32-36), the worship of false gods (Deut 13:10), rebellion against parents (Deut 21:21), and adultery (Ezek 16:40).¹¹⁰

? Why do you suppose no one prevented this stoning?

? How could Paul get up and go back into the city after such a beating?

- ➔ It is also amazing that Paul was able to travel the 60 miles from Lystra to Derbe.

♥ What can you do that will prepare you to be able to respond to attacks in the same way as Paul?

(14:21-22) ? What risks were Barnabas and Paul taking by returning to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch?

? What do you suppose these two missionaries did that strengthened and encouraged the disciples? What are some ways that *you* can do this for someone?

(14:22) ? What does it mean that tribulation is associated with entering the kingdom of God? Compare John 16:33. What is the cause of the struggles?

(14:23) 5 What are “elders”? Why do you suppose they were appointed in “every church,” even though these were young churches with new Christians?


- ➔ If these churches had been composed of only Jewish converts, then we might assume that elders in the Jewish community would be strong candidates. Also, if Israel had been evangelistic, we might assume that many non-Jews might have had some godly preparation.
- ➔ It's more likely that the only moral preparation that many of these non-Jews had was their knowledge of their own Greek philosophers. Even pagan cities had wise leaders who were respected for their guidance. Sometimes God shares His wisdom in unexpected places.

? What sort of people do you suppose they chose as elders? How did they choose them?


➔ It was later that Paul wrote down the sort of qualities that elders should possess (1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), but it's reasonable that he was looking for these traits when selecting elders at this time.

? Why do we sometimes hesitate to appoint elders (or abandon this example in favor of some other approach)?


(14:26-28) **6** What are some things that Paul and Barnabas probably reported to the church in Antioch, which had sent them on this trip? How successful was this trip?

(14:28)  Luke says that they remained a “long time” in Antioch, and it was probably a year or more. After having traveled through Galatia for about *two years*, another year or so in Antioch would allow time to regain strength and health. It is possible that Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians at this time. When Paul returns to Jerusalem for the church council, it will have been *14 years* since he was first there as a believer (Gal 2:1).

James

 This is the period in which many commentators suggest that **James** wrote the letter that is named after him. Parts of the letter (e.g., James 2:14-26) appear to have been occasioned by a misunderstanding of Paul's message by the people to whom James wrote. Therefore it may have been written as early as AD 44.¹¹¹ Clearly it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70), and some scholars see a prophecy of that event in James 5:1 and suggest that the letter was written as later, shortly before James died (AD 62).¹¹²

Galatians

 It is possible that Paul wrote the letter to the **Galatians** while he was in Antioch for a “long time” (approximately AD 48-50). This would require that Paul had visited Jerusalem just after the first missionary journey, but before this period in Antioch (although the visit is not mentioned in Acts), because Gal 2:1-9 explains that Paul had just recently been in Jerusalem.

Various parts of the letter offer brief insights into his trip to Galatia and the group of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who wanted to impose some requirements on the Gentiles, but there is no mention of the decree set forth by the council in Jerusalem.

There is obvious consistency between Paul's sermon in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch and the major themes found in the Galatian letter (i.e., *faith, justification, law, and grace*).

Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)*Acts 15:1-5***Requirements for Gentiles**

★ The issue that now confronted the rapidly-growing church was how to incorporate the large numbers of Gentiles into a group that was previously Jewish. This was not simply a “reform movement” within Judaism. In fact, the Jewish Christians weren't anxious to see their traditions upset, as evidenced by the group of Jews that came from Jerusalem to Antioch. They were not opposed to evangelizing the Gentiles, but they were determined that the Gentiles must conform to ways of the “Jewish church,” submitting not only to baptism, but also circumcision. Apparently they had convinced both Peter and Barnabas for a while (Gal 2:11-16).¹¹³

7 Why would the Jewish Christians think that being circumcised was necessary to be saved?

(15:2) ? Why was the solution to seek council in *Jerusalem*?

(15:3) ? Why was the conversion of the Gentiles such joyful news? (Recall that in 11:1-2 they weren't too thrilled about it)

(15:4) 🕒 Paul is returning to Jerusalem 14 years after his first visit as a believer (9:26-29; Gal 2:1). Although Paul had helped carry a contribution from Antioch to Jerusalem (11:30), either the visit was very short or Paul didn't actually enter the city, because he doesn't mention it in Gal 2:1.

(15:5) ? What additional requirements did the Pharisees want to lay on the Gentile Christians besides circumcision? Why?

*Acts 15:6-11***Salvation is a Gift, not a Yoke**

? Do you recall which event Peter is referring to in v.7? See 10:19-48.

(15:10-11) ? How is being saved by grace different from being saved by law?

★ Notice that Peter recognized that no one actually could bear the burden of following the law of Moses. The Jewish Christians weren't trying to help the Gentiles, but wanted them to endure what they had.

8 What are some “yokes” that Christians today place on new believers, which are more burdensome than God intended His grace to be?

*Acts 15:12-21***Salvation is a Release, not a Burden**

? Who was James?

➔ The apostle James was murdered in 12:2, so the traditional assumption has been that this was the half-brother of Jesus.

➔ He was later known as “James the Just” because of his reputation for godly righteousness.¹¹⁴

? What was James' argument regarding the acceptance of Gentile believers?

(15:15-18) ? Read Amos 9:11-12. Why do you suppose James quoted this passage to support his argument?

(15:19-21) **9** What did James recommend that the Gentiles should do? Why? What about circumcision (after all, wasn't that the main issue at the beginning of this chapter)?

★ James realized (after listening to Peter) that the salvation of the Gentiles was not what was in danger here, but rather the faithfulness of Jewish believers. His instruction was for the Gentiles to be considerate of Jewish traditions, but not to burden the Gentiles with anything that would obstruct God's grace. The Jews wanted to make the Gentiles *conform*, but James gave instructions for *how to live together with differences*. Some have suggested that James delivered the Eleventh Commandment: "Thou shalt not hassle."

(15:19) ♥ What are some ways that we could follow James' advice and stop "troubling" people who turn to God?

Acts 15:22-35

Special Delivery

? Whose voices carried the most weight in this discussion: the apostles or the elders? Why?

★ The book of Acts provides some valuable insight into the manner of correspondence in the first century. There are two letters contained within the book:

1. Acts 15:23-29 (*From the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, & Cilicia*) -- They place no burden on Gentiles except to be considerate of the Jewish practices
2. Acts 23:25-30 (*From the Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, to Governor Felix*) -- His reason for sending Paul under heavy guard

? Why were Judas and Silas sent along with Barnabas and Paul to deliver the letter?

- ➔ They were leaders in the Jerusalem church (v.22)
- ➔ They could corroborate the report of Barnabas and Paul.

(15:31) ? How was the letter from Jerusalem received in the church at Antioch? How did Judas and Silas help?

♥ What are some lessons that you can learn here about communication and problem-solving among churches?

- Send encouragers to deliver and explain a message (v.32)
- Involve the whole congregation (v.30)
- Spend time with each other (v.33)

Galatians

An alternative date for Paul's letter to the *Galatians* is after he returned to Antioch from the Jerusalem council (AD 50). In this case, the events described in Gal 2 coincide well with Acts 13-15, but it is curious that Paul does not specifically mention the decree of the council. Certainly Paul shows the Galatians that their salvation is not dependent upon the law (Gal 2:15-21) – just notice how similar Peter's remarks (Acts 15:11) are to Paul's words (Gal 2:16). But the brief mention that Paul was only encouraged to “remember the poor” (Gal 2:10) doesn't seem to do justice to the council's final decision.

Yet another perspective on the date of the Galatian letter is that it was written after Paul's 3rd missionary journey to the churches in Northern Galatia, either from Ephesus (AD 53-56) or from Macedonia (AD 56). Although some of the early church fathers preferred this date for the letter, there is no record of Paul (or Barnabas, who is mentioned frequently in Galatians) actually visiting the supposed recipients in North Galatia. Other adherents to this view point to the similarities between *Galatians* and *Romans* (which was written in AD 57). In this study, we prefer the earlier date (with the recipients assumed to be in Southern Galatia) because it is unlikely that Peter and Barnabas would have acted as they did (Gal 2:11-21) after the Jerusalem Council – and surely Paul would have mentioned the council's decision.¹¹⁵



Summary

- ◆ The mission is focusing more on reaching Gentiles (while still welcoming Jews), and learning how to live together in unity:
 - ➔ “Saul” is now “Paul,” reflecting this shift in his own identity.
 - ➔ Paul and Barnabas encounter new experiences among the Gentiles, but suffer terribly at the hands of jealous Jews.
 - ➔ Antioch welcomes the missionaries' results, while Jerusalem considers how two cultures can reside together in one faith.
 - ➔ The church's decision is to respect the believer's freedom from law while encouraging believers to be considerate of differences between people.



Letters to Jews & Gentiles

REVIEW

The spread of the gospel had begun in Jerusalem, launched by persecution and the strengthening of the Holy Spirit. It was now almost 10 years later, after the Samaritans obeyed the gospel, followed by an Ethiopian proselyte, then a God-fearing Centurion, and finally all kinds of Gentiles who knew nothing of the law of Moses. The church watched and cheered at each new surprise:

1. The Jerusalem leaders investigated Peter's experience and praised God (11:18)
2. The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to meet the Gentile converts in Antioch, and he rejoiced at the evidence of God's grace (11:23)
3. Paul and Barnabas went to new regions, and reported in Antioch what God had done (14:27)
4. The apostles and elders decided in Jerusalem that the Gentiles should not be burdened with the law of Moses, but should be considerate of the Jews (15:19-20).

But even as the old "walls" are coming down, new "walls" are being constructed. The Jerusalem Council was necessary because Christians were beginning to divide along the lines of responsibility and freedom. Just before the council, two letters were written that express how each perspective fits into the whole. In those letters, we can see the issues formulating, ultimately resulting in a crisis.

Faith that Motivates (James 1-5)

☘ *"[James] ruled the Church of Jerusalem thirty years, that is until the seventh year of Nero, and was buried near the temple from which he had been cast down. His tombstone with its inscription was well known until the siege of Titus and the end of Hadrian's reign. Some of our writers think he was buried in Mount Olivet, but they are mistaken."*¹¹⁶

– Jerome (early 5th century)

Acts 8:1-4

Acts 11:19; 12:1-3

James 1:1-18

Why Trials?

- 1** To whom was James' letter written?
- 2** What attitude does James expect his readers to have toward trials? Why? How is it possible?
- ? Why must faith be tested? (v.3)
- ? What is the purpose of perseverance? (v.4)
So then, what is the end result of testing?
- ★ Apparently, this concept regarding trials wasn't easy for believers in the first century either. James recommends that they ask God to help their understanding.
- ? Has God been generous in answering your requests for wisdom and understanding?
- ? How is God involved when we are tested?

James 1:19-2:26***Trials Show How Faith Responds*****Test #1: Response to the Word (1:19-27)**

- ? How does anger inhibit listening?
- ? What does James recommend as a solution?
- ➔ Get rid of the bad influences
 - ➔ Humbly accept God's Word (v.21)
 - ➔ Do what the Word says (v.22)
- 3** What would you say is the definition of “religion” that most people live by? What is James’ definition of “religion”? (v.26-27) How is it different?

Test #2: Response to Our Neighbors (2:1-13)

- ? What is the problem with treating people unequally?
- ? Who are those who are poor in the eyes of the world? (v.5) Why has God chosen them?
- ? How does the law give freedom?
- 4** Why is mercy better than judgment? (v.13)
- ? So why do so many people seek justice rather than mercy?

Test #3: Response to God (2:14-26)

- ? What is it about faith that saves us?
- ? Can you think of some additional examples of faith without action? Why is it worthless (dead)?
- ? Why was Abraham’s action considered part of his faith (v.21-23)? Did Abraham believe God before he offered Isaac, or was that the beginning of his faith?
- ? Who was Rahab (v.25)? How did she exhibit her faith?
- ★ James is saying that we need both faith and works, but he is also suggesting something more. He is explaining that our works express the substance of our faith in a manner like our spirit expresses the inner substance of our body.

James 3:1-5:20***Trials Show What Faith Produces*****Test #4: What Our Speech Reveals (3:1-12)**

- ? Can anyone keep himself/herself perfectly in check?
- ? What are the analogies that James uses? In each example, who is in control?
- ➔ Horse directed by rider Horse is *not* in control
 - ➔ Ship directed by rudder Ship is *not* in control
 - ➔ Forest ignited by a spark Forest is *not* in control
- ? How do we know what will come out of our mouths (v.9-12)?

? Even though we can't control our tongues (3:8), what *can* we control that will affect what comes out of our mouths?

Test #5: What Our Relationships Reveal (3:13-4:12)

? What is James' advice for those who know they are going to influence others?

? What are some differences between wise teachers (3:13) and those who "presume to be teachers" (3:1)?

? What causes quarrels between Christians?
Why do we want things we don't have?

? Why does James refer to the readers as "adulterous people" (v.4)?

? What are some ways to submit to God and resist the devil?

? How is speaking against your brother equivalent to speaking against the law (v.11-12)? Compare 2:8.

Test #6: Will It Last? (4:13-5:20)

? Is it wrong to plan ahead?

➔ We must shift our focus from what *I* am doing to what *God* is doing.


? What happens when wealth is hoarded? What happens when it is given away?

➔ We must shift our behavior from focusing on what *I have* to what *God has*.

? What sort of behavior does James recommend in anticipation of the Lord's coming (v.8-9)?

5 What are some ways that prayer helps us persevere?

- ➔ Strength in times of trouble
- ➔ Expression of joy and praise
- ➔ Healing
- ➔ Forgiveness

 *"Mr. MacDonald asked the inhabitants of the island of St. Kilda how a man must be saved. An old man replied, "We shall be saved if we repent, and forsake our sins, and turn to God." "Yes," said a middle-aged female, "and with a true heart too." "Ay," rejoined a third, "and with prayer"; and, added a fourth, "It must be the prayer of the heart." "And we must be diligent too," said a fifth, "in keeping the commandments." Thus, each having contributed his mite, feeling that a very decent creed had been made up, they all looked and listened for the preacher's approbation, but they had aroused his deepest pity. The carnal mind always maps out for itself a way in which self can work and become great, but the Lord's way is quite the reverse. Believing and being baptized are no matters of merit to be gloried in--they are so simple that boasting is excluded, and free grace bears the palm."*¹¹⁷ – Charles Spurgeon

Grace that Liberates (Galatians 1-6)*Acts 13:38-43****The Source of Grace****Acts 15:1-2**Gal 1:1-2:21*


? To whom was this letter written? What had happened to Paul and Barnabas in the cities of that region?


6 What had happened in the Galatian churches since Paul and Barnabas were there?

(1:11-17) **?** How did Paul receive the gospel that he preached?

- ➔ Not from any men (v.11-12,16-17)
- ➔ By revelation from Jesus Christ (v.12)
- ➔ God called him by His grace (v.14)
- ➔ God revealed Jesus in Paul (v.15)

(1:13-17) **?** How does Paul's account of his conversion compare with Luke's report in Acts 9? Also compare Paul's descriptions of it in Acts 22 & 26.

(1:18-24)  Paul's first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian was 3 years after his conversion. Luke describes it in Acts 9:26-30, but does not mention the three year period. Similarly, we don't know much about his trip to Cilicia (where Tarsus is located) and Syria, nor how long he was there. Luke mentioned it in Acts 9:30, and it may have been where he received the visions and "thorn" described in 1Cor 12:1-10.

(2:1-2)  We're not told what the revelation was that had prompted Paul to go to Jerusalem again – unless he is referring to his experience many years earlier on the road to Damascus. Using Paul's explanation of when he returned to Jerusalem, it was either just after his first missionary trip or just before it. If it is the visit that Luke mentions in 11:30, then Luke's order of events relative to Herod's death (12:23) in AD 44 is questionable. Nevertheless, it would have been prior to the Jerusalem Council, because it is very unlikely that both Peter and Barnabas would have showed the prejudice described in 2:11-13 immediately after the council. If our assumptions are correct, then Luke doesn't mention this particular trip to Jerusalem – perhaps because it was an "private" visit (2:2).

(2:4) **?** What are the "freedoms" that we have in Christ?

? Why did some "false brothers" would want to spy on these freedoms? How could their schemes cause believers to become "slaves"?

(2:6) **?** Why is it important to Paul (and to the Galatians) that no one in Jerusalem supplemented Paul's message in any way?

(2:9) **?** Why were some leaders in the church regarded as "pillars," but others (even though they were also apostles) were not?

(2:11) **?** Who were the people who caused Peter and Barnabas to disassociate with Gentiles?

(2:14) **?** What was hypocritical about the behavior of Peter and Barnabas?

- (2:15-16) **7** How are we “justified” (i.e., declared to be in the right) with God? What role did the Jewish law have in justification?
- (2:15-21) **★** Perhaps there are hints in v.15,17 about what actually precipitated the problem among the Jewish believers. Apparently the church had become *concerned about sin*, and it may have taken various forms:
1. If God justifies bad people, then why should we try to be good? Without the law, we could do as we please and not suffer the consequences of sin. Paul would say that those who are “in Christ” are no longer the same people with the same fleshly desires. When we turn our will over to His will, we don't desire sin like we once did.
 2. Justifying bad people isn't fair! A doctrine of justification through faith in Christ without requiring any works of the law would lower the ethical standards and encourage “good Jews” to break the law. Paul replies that the law points to Christ and should not be treated like a destination; The law is fulfilled, not broken, by our redemption in Christ Jesus.
 3. What if we sin after our conversion – how can we be justified again? Since Christ could only die for us once, then we must have to do something (like one of the Jewish rituals) to be cleansed again. To this Paul replies that it is not just our status before God that has changed – a person who has been united with Christ is *a new person who is dead to the old law*. It is impossible to go back to the law and remain a new person.

Gal 3:1-4:10**The Promise of Grace**

- 8** What is our part in receiving God's Spirit?
- (3:8) **?** What did God mean when he told Abraham that “all nations will be blessed through you”?
- (3:10-14) **?** How is the law (or any set of rules) a “curse” for those who try to follow it?
- (3:15-18) **?** Which was supposed to have the top priority – the promise to Abraham or the law of Moses? Is that the priority that Israel chose?
- (3:19-25) **?** If the law could not do what was needed, then why was it given?
- (3:26-29) **?** What does it mean to be “clothed with Christ”? What does this do for us that the law of Moses could not do?
- (4:1-7) **?** Why is it better to be a “son” than to be a “slave”? What are some privileges of “sonship” that we receive by faith in Christ?
- (4:8-11) **★** Not all of the recipients of this letter were Jews. Paul and Barnabas had led many Gentiles to Christ during their first missionary trip, and the “slavery” from which they were redeemed was not to the law of Moses, but to the gods of this world. Paul is perplexed that after being freed from the tyranny of their own oppressive world, they would readily accept the oppressive regulations imposed by the Judaizing Christians. They were offered freedom and chose instead to swap one form of slavery for another.
- Paul isn't condemning the observance of special events (v.10) – he is lamenting that these people have allowed themselves to again be controlled by superficial rules rather than by the Spirit of God.

Gal 4:12-31**The Examples of Grace**


- ? How had the Galatians treated Paul when he first visited them? How were they regarding him now (v.16)?
- (4:17-18) ? What seems to be the real reason why some teachers had led the Galatian Christians back to following the law?
- (4:19) ♥ How do you know whether “Christ is formed in you” (v.19)?
- (4:21-31) ? What do you suppose the Judaizing Christians would have thought about Paul's comment that they were (figuratively) the children of *Hagar* rather than the children of Sarah?
- ? Since the children of Sarah are the children of promise, what should have been Israel's view of the promise versus the law (v.28)?
- ➔ Paul is expressing the irony that Israel would choose to be children of the slave woman, Hagar, instead of acknowledging their own mother.

Gal 5:1-12**The Acceptance of Grace**

- ? Why do you suppose that when people are freed from some form of “slavery,” they will often accept another form of servitude in its place?
- (5:4) ? What does it mean to “fall away from grace” (v.4)?
- (5:5) ? How do Christians become righteous, if it is not by following laws?
- (5:6) ? What are some examples of “faith expressing itself through love” (v.6)?
- (5:9) ? How was the problem in Galatia like “yeast” (v.9)? How can a church inhibit that kind of process?
- (5:10-12) ☆ We see Paul get a bit emotional in his letter here as he considers what the false teachers deserve compared to what he has endured. In the old covenant the penalty for false teaching was that the individual be “cut off” from Israel (Num 15:30-31). In fact, the paradox of circumcision was that only those who submitted to their flesh being “cut off” could avoid being “cut off” from their inheritance in Israel (Gen 17:14). So Paul now perceives that those in Galatia who persisted in “cutting off” the flesh for circumcision might be thorough and cut *everything* away, because the result is going to be that they are “cut off” from God's kingdom.

Gal 5:13-6:18**The Fruit of Grace**

- ☆ The focus of Paul's writing now returns to the issues mentioned at the end of chapter 2. Apparently some were using their redemption as a license to sin – perhaps in an “obvious” way (v.19). Rather than continuing to focus on the worldly things that we once did, Paul says that we should focus on:
- ➔ Loving each other (v.13-14)
 - ➔ Serving each other (v.13)
 - ➔ Living by the Spirit (v.16)
 - ➔ Following the guidance of the Spirit (v.18)

- (5:19-21) ? As long as we're Christians, why does it matter how we live?
- ➔ Paul is saying that what is visible on the *outside* is indicative of the quality of life *inside* us. The nature of the spirit (or Spirit) within in us directly affects our behavior.
 - ➔ “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” (v.24)
- (5:22-23) 9 How does the Spirit *produce* fruit?
- ★ Paul is still dealing with the issue of sin in chapter 6. But now he addresses how to help Christians who are ensnared by sin. We get the sense from these verses that some of the Galatians were comparing their behavior to others', and they were proud of what they saw.
- (6:2) ? How can we “carry each other's burdens” without being dragged down into the same problems that the other person has?
- (6:6) ? What should teachers receive from their students?
- (6:7-9) ? In what ways do we “sow seed” into our lives that will eventually produce a harvest of fruit?
- (6:11)  Paul seems surprised at his own writing, but perhaps he is pointing out why the script that the recipients see has changed. He often dictated his letters to an amanuensis and then added his authentic signature to the end (e.g., 2Thes 3:17). But this time he pens the closing summary himself. Various explanations for his “large-letter edition” include:¹¹⁸
- Paul**
- ➔ Bad penmanship
 - ➔ Bad eyesight
 - ➔ To show that he has to treat them like immature children
 - ➔ Emphasis upon the severity of the subject
- (6:12-16) ? What points are emphasized by Paul in his personal summary (v.12-15)?
- ➔ Those who advocate circumcision are only interested in superficial appearances.
 - ➔ They want to avoid persecution as Christians (from Jews?).
 - ➔ They want to feel proud of their impact and influence.
 - ➔ The only good boasting is in the cross of Christ.
 - ➔ What is important is becoming a *new creation*, not the carving up of our flesh.
- (6:17) ? What might have been the “marks of Jesus” that Paul bore on his body?
- ➔ Violence when expelled from Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:50)?
 - ➔ Stoned and left for dead in Lystra (Acts 14:19)?
 - ➔ Paul's “thorn in the flesh” (2Cor 12:7)?
 - ➔ Other violence mentioned by Paul in 2Cor 11:24-25?
- ★ Paul began and ended this letter with the theme that has been his focus: *grace* (1:3; 6:18). Our salvation (our *justification* before God) is a *gift*. And when we impose rules for salvation on other people, we jeopardize the gift for them and for us.



Summary

- ◆ **James** says that we need to know what our faith is made of, and testing helps us set our anchor more securely. Our behavior is important because it exhibits the strength of our commitment.
- ◆ **Paul** told the *Galatians* that God's grace has freed us from slavery to sin. We are no longer subject to rules and regulations because they were only intended to lead us to Christ. Our behavior now expresses the depth of our relationship with God's Spirit.
- ◆ Think about how each of these perspectives, if taken to an extreme, could produce a conflict in the church. The Jews begin to emphasize the importance of behavior over faith, and the Gentiles pursue freedom while neglecting God's grace. The Holy Spirit enabled the Jerusalem Council to avert a tragic separation by announcing that:
 1. The Jews should not inhibit the grace that God has given the Gentiles
 2. The Gentiles should be considerate of the Jewish religious culture



Lesson 7 "New Leaders"

2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 15-18)

REVIEW

When Christ is introduced to people, they typically perceive Him in their own culture. The Jews saw Him as the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. The Gentiles saw Him as God coming to mankind to free us from our fleshly nature. We looked at two letters (James & Galatians) which speak to Jews & Gentiles in their cultures:

1. James says that we need to know what our faith is made of, and testing helps us set our anchor more securely. Our behavior is important because it exhibits the strength of our commitment.
2. Paul told the Galatians that God's grace has freed us from slavery to sin. We are no longer subject to rules and regulations because they were only intended to lead us to Christ. Our behavior now expresses the depth of our relationship with God's Spirit.

The danger in this emerging diversity is that the groups might not discover how to live together when their cultures clash. The Holy Spirit enabled the Jerusalem Council to avert a tragic split by deciding that:

1. The Jews should not inhibit the grace that God has given the Gentiles
2. The Gentiles should be considerate of the Jewish religious culture

Their decision paved the way for the next missionary expedition.

Acts 15:36-41

Losing a Companion

10 How does the launching of the 2nd missionary compare with the beginning of the 1st missionary journey (13:1-3)?

- ➔ No explicit mention of the Holy Spirit's direction
- ➔ Paul's decision rather than the church's commission
- ➔ The 1st was with fasting, prayer, & laying on of hands; the 2nd was with some disagreement – but also with the commendation of the church.

? What might be some reasons for returning to the places where they had already proclaimed God's Word?

(15:37-38)

? Why was Paul reluctant to take John Mark with them?
See 12:25; 13:5,13

? Who was John Mark?

- ➔ Barnabas' cousin (Col 4:10), so Barnabas may have been looking out for his own family.
- ➔ Barnabas lived in Cyprus, and Mark may have as well (15:39)
- ➔ John Mark's mother, Mary, lived in Jerusalem (12:12), so she may have been the reason he returned.
- ➔ All we know is that John Mark's exit apparently angered Paul (15:38)
- ➔ The problem between Paul and John Mark was evidently resolved and Paul later wanted him close by (2Tim 4:11)

John Mark

- ? Who was Silas?
- ➔ Probably a Hellenistic Jew, converted to Christ
 - ➔ Helped carry the letter from the Jerusalem Council to Antioch (15:22)
 - ➔ A prophet and an encourager (15:32)
 - ➔ Roman citizen (16:38)
 - ➔ Shared preaching responsibility with Paul in Corinth (2Cor 1:19)
 - ➔ Regarded by Peter as a faithful brother (1Pet 5:12)
 - ➔ Helped Peter write his first letter (1Pet 5:12)

- (15:40) ? What does it mean to be “committed” – or “commended” (14:26) – to the grace of God?

Acts 16:1-5**Gaining a Companion****Timothy**

- 11 How would you describe Timothy?

- ? What else do we know about him?
See 1Cor 4:17; 1Tim 1:2; 4:14; 2Tim 1:1-6.

- ➔ Both Timothy and his mother were probably converted during Paul's first visit to Lystra, which had been about 4-5 years earlier.

- ? How might God have been helping Paul by sending him Timothy?

- (16:3) 12 Paul just delivered a letter to Syrian Antioch explaining that Gentiles were not required to be circumcised. So why does Paul have Timothy circumcised?

- ➔ It was because of the *non-Christian Jews*, not the Jewish Christians.
- ➔ It was to make Timothy acceptable in Jewish circles, *not* for Timothy's own salvation.
- ➔ Paul was prepared to become like one under the law in order to reach those who were under the law (1Cor 9:19-20).

- (16:4) ? What “decrees” or instructions were Paul and his companions delivering to these churches? See 15:22-31.

Acts 16:6-40**Philippi: Eager to Serve**

- 13 What are some ways that God directs Paul during this trip?


- ➔ Told beforehand by the Holy Spirit to avoid Asia (v.6)
- ➔ Prevented by Jesus' Spirit from entering Bithynia (v.7)
- ➔ Beckoned in a night vision to come to Macedonia (v.9-10)


- ? Why might the Spirit *prevent* the gospel from being presented in a particular area?


- 14 What are some ways that God directs your walk with Him?


How do you know whether God is the one doing it?


- ➔ Paul “concluded” (v.10, NIV, RSV) or “assuredly gathered” (AV) that God wanted them to preach the gospel in Macedonia. The Greek word (*syμβιβάζω*) means to infer something from a variety of data. 119

 Show locations on a map: **Syria** (15:41); **Cilicia** (15:41); **Derbe** (16:1); **Lystra** (16:1-5); **Phrygia and Galatia** (16:6) – prevented from entering **Asia** (16:6); border of **Mysia** (16:7) – prevented from entering **Bithynia** (16:7); **Troas** (16:8-10) – where Paul received the “Macedonian call;” **Samothrace** (16:11); **Neapolis** (16:11); **Philippi** (16:12-40). Mysia wasn't actually a Roman administrative region but an old name for the most north-westerly section of Asia Minor.¹²⁰ The trip from Troas to Neapolis is 150 miles by sea, and they sailed it in 2 days (16:11), whereas on their next trip it would take 5 days sailing in the opposite direction (20:6).


(16:10-12)  The narrator changes here from speaking of the missionary party as “they” to referring to them as “we.” Apparently Luke, the author of this book, joined the group in Troas and traveled with them to Philippi. This may have been his home town, city he seems to describe it with some pride (v.12).

(16:12)  The city of **Philippi** was previously known as Dathos, but was enhanced renamed by Philip II, King of Macedon and the father of Alexander the Great. It was famous for having been the place where several battles were fought during the civil wars of the Romans, including the decisive battle between Brutus and Antony. It was here that Brutus killed himself after losing the battle.¹²¹ Philippi was a Roman colony, which meant that it was made up largely of Roman citizens and located at strategic point in the empire. As such, its population enjoyed special privileges, such as self-government, freedom from imperial taxation, and the same rights as citizens in Italy.¹²²

 Apparently there was no Jewish synagogue in Philippi, either because of insufficient men (at least 10 were required) or by order of the town authorities. There was, however, an unofficial meeting place of a group of Jewish women and a number of God-fearers outside the city by the river.¹²³ The Jews often located their synagogues and oratories near water, for the convenience of the numerous washings before and during their religious services.¹²⁴

(16:14)  “Lydia” may have been her proper name, or it may mean “the Lydian,” designating the older name for the region in which Thyatira was situated. This area was famous for the manufacture and use of purple dye, and Lydia had brought this business to Philippi. This woman was a Gentile who had accepted the highest elements in Judaism by becoming a proselyte. She was also a woman of means, with a family, servants, and a home that could accommodate the missionary party.¹²⁵


Lydia

 What does it mean that the Lord “opened her heart”?

(16:14-15) **15** What were the “steps” in Lydia's conversion?

 In what ways do we also need God's help to respond to His Word?

- ★ The obvious progression in this story is that God opened Lydia's heart, and she opened her house. Let God have your heart, and you'll find it much easier to let other people into your life. And God will reach *their* hearts, too.
- (16:16-18) ★ Most modern versions don't really help us understand how this slave-girl was possessed by a “spirit of divination” (ASV, NASV, RSV) or “fortune-telling” (KJV). For all we can tell from our English translations, the spirit may have been sent by God! But in the original Greek language, she literally had a “spirit of a python.” In classical mythology, a snake guarded the temple of Apollo and the Delphic oracle at Mount Parnassus. Apollo was thought to be embodied in the snake and to inspire his female devotees, called “pythonesses,” with clairvoyance.¹²⁶ Luke was familiar enough with the local mythology to know how the general populace attributed this kind of evil spirit.
- (16:18) ? Why do you suppose Paul waited “many days” before casting out this spirit?
- (16:19-21) ? How did the girl's masters respond to Paul's action? What was their accusation against Paul?
- ➔ They hid the real reason for their anger (the impact on their finances)
 - ➔ They accused Paul of disturbing the peace, which was much more serious
 - ➔ They framed their accusation to appeal to local prejudice against Jews
 - ➔ As a result, Paul and Silas were *severely* flogged ([see notes on 5:40](#)).
- (16:27) ★ When a prisoner was given into the custody of a soldier or jailer, that person was totally responsible for the prisoner. If the prisoner escaped, the officer in charge would be put to death in place of the prisoner. Therefore, when God shook this jail open, the jailer knew he was doomed and prepared to kill himself quickly.
- ? Why do you suppose that Paul and the other prisoners did not escape (unlike the situation in 5:17-23)?
- (16:30) ? How do you suppose the jailer knew about “salvation”? See 16:25.
- ➔ After being “severely flogged” (16:22), a punishment which was often fatal, the jailer would not have expected to hear singing! Even the other prisoners were listening (v.25), so the jailer was probably influenced (before drifting to sleep).
- ★ After the jailer washed the prisoners' wounds, the prisoners made sure that the jailer was also washed – for his sins. Although people today sometimes question how entire households could believe at once (e.g., 16:15), the narrator makes it clear here that the whole family did indeed believe. Our society differs from theirs in assuming that such decisions can only be made individually. But in a patriarchal society such as theirs, the elder family members received much more respect and their direction was readily adopted without question. And notice the great joy in such a family for having obeyed.

(16:38)  The magistrates were fearful because the Roman law considered an insult offered to a citizen was effectively an insult to the whole Roman people.¹²⁷ The penalty for such a transgression could be as severe as death and confiscation of property.¹²⁸ The magistrates apologized (RSV) to Paul and Silas; and although they realized that they could not expel these Roman citizens from the city, they begged them to depart.¹²⁹ There is a remarkable addition here, both in the Greek and Latin of the Codex Bezae. It is as follows: "And when they were come with many of their friends to the prison, they besought them to go out, saying:-We were ignorant of your circumstances, that ye were righteous men. And, leading them out, they besought them, saying, Depart from this city, lest they again make an insurrection against you and clamour against you."¹³⁰ A year later, Paul alludes to this event, pointing out the shamefulness of how they were treated (1Thes 2:2).


? Why do you suppose Paul chose to embarrass the magistrates rather than “turn the other cheek”?

16 Why do you think Paul didn't consider his own suffering as an indication that God was directing him elsewhere? Compare 16:6-7.

Acts 17:1-9


Thessalonica: Eager to Oppose

★ Notice that Luke again refers to the travelers as “they,” so he probably stayed behind in Philippi. The next destination, Thessalonica, was a hundred miles away on the well-used *Via Egnatia* through Amphipolis and Apollonia. Although Luke focuses only on the 3 weeks of working among the Jews, Paul's letters to the Thessalonians suggest that the missionaries actually stayed several months and were most effective in evangelizing the pagan Gentiles. Among them were Aristarchus and Secundus, who continued to travel with Paul (20:4; 27:2).¹³¹

 **Thessalonica** was a large and populous city on the Thermaic bay. It was the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia, and was ruled by a praetor. It was named after Thessalonica, the wife of Cassander, who built the city. She was so called by her father, Philip, because he first heard of her birth on the day of his gaining a victory over the Thessalians. The synagogue that Paul preached in was the chief synagogue of the Jews in that part of Macedonia. This city is now the most important town of European Turkey, under the name of Saloniki, with a mixed population of about 85,000.¹³²

? If Paul's primary mission is to the Gentiles, why does he continue to go first to the synagogues?

(17:3) ? How did Paul explain to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah? What do you suppose might have been some of the “evidence” that he used?


(17:5-9)  Why do you think the Jews became jealous? What were their accusations against the disciples? Why would they stir up the town rather than confront the disciples themselves?

- ➔ The word “crowd” (*demos*) was the “assembly of the people” or (we might say) the “citizens' council.” As a free city, Thessalonica was proud of the privilege to be self-governing. According to several ancient inscriptions referring to Thessalonica, the city was ruled by a body of five “politarchs” (which is the word that Luke uses to describe them).¹³³
- ➔ The city officials decided to let them go, but the conditions were probably more severe than simply “posting bail.” The rulers extracted some security from Jason and the others that Paul and Silas would leave town and not return, recognizing that there would be significant penalties if the agreement were broken. It was probably this legal ban which Paul saw as Satan preventing him from returning to Thessalonica (1Thes 2:18).¹³⁴

 Do Christians today face similar trials?


Acts 17:10-15

Berea: Eager to Accept

 Berea was a city of Macedonia 45 miles west of Thessalonica.¹³⁵ Sopater, one of Paul's later companions, belonged to this city, and his conversion probably took place at this time (Acts 20:4). The city is now called Verria.¹³⁶

17 How was the response of the Bereans different from the response of the Thessalonians? What do you suppose made them different?

- ➔ The manner in which these people “received” the message was “with great eagerness” (*prothumia*), literally predisposed to accept it.¹³⁷ It must have been quite refreshing (as it would also be today) to discover people who *want* to believe.
- ➔ They “examined” (*anakrino*) the Scriptures in the way that a judicial investigation should take place (the same word is used in 4:9 and 24:8): it implies integrity and absence of bias.¹³⁸
- ➔ The converts probably included Sopater, son of Pyrrhus (mentioned in 20:4).

 How eager are you to search the Scriptures? Do you read your Bible daily as the Bereans did?

 Show locations on a map: From Philippi they went through **Amphipolis** and **Apollonia** (17:1); then to **Thessalonica** (17:1-9); **Berea** (17:10-14); **Athens** (17:15-34). The trip from Berea to Athens was about 300 miles by sea.

Acts 17:16-34

Athens: Eager to Question



Athens has the longest history of any city in Europe and is named after its patron goddess, Athena. It has been continuously inhabited for at least 3,000 years and for a time presided over its own empire – more specifically known as “the Delian League,” an association of Greek city-states in the 5th century BC. Its cultural achievements in this same period are said to have laid the foundations of western civilization. In 338 BC the armies of Philip II defeated the Greek cities, effectively ending Athenian independence. The conquests of Philip's son, Alexander the Great, widened Greek horizons and made the traditional Greek city state obsolete. Athens remained a wealthy city with a brilliant cultural life, but ceased to be an independent power. In the 1st century BC, after 200 years of Macedonian supremacy, Greece was absorbed into the Roman Empire.¹³⁹



The number of Greek deities is unknown, but the most important ones, known as the Olympian gods, are listed below:¹⁴⁰

Aphrodite (Venus)	goddess of love and beauty
Apollo (Apollo)	god of the arts, archery, and divination
Ares (Mars)	god of war
Artemis (Diana)	goddess of the hunt & protector of children
Athena (Minerva)	goddess of wisdom, war, and crafts
Demeter (Ceres)	goddess of agriculture and fertility
Dionysus (Bacchus)	god of wine, mysteries, and the theater
Hephaestus (Vulcan)	god of smiths and metal-workers
Hera (Juno)	goddess of marriage; consort of Zeus
Hermes (Mercury)	god of merchants; messenger of Zeus
Poseidon (Neptune)	god of the sea and earthquakes
Zeus (Jupiter)	god of the sky; ruler of Olympus

(17:18-21)



What did the people in Athens think about Paul's teachings?

- ➔ The *Epicureans*, or “philosophers of the garden,” were founded by Epicurus (d.270BC). They thought that the gods were remote and did not influence human affairs. The world operates by chance, so people should pursue pleasure that is detached from pain, fear, and passion.
- ➔ The *Stoics*, or “philosophers of the porch,” were founded by Zeno (d.265BC), and derived their name from the *stoa* (painted colonnade next to the marketplace where they taught). They acknowledged a pantheistic god who is everywhere. They emphasized fatalism and taught people to live in harmony with nature and reason, enduring pain if necessary.¹⁴¹
- ➔ The term “babbler” was an Athenian slang word (*spermologos*), literally meaning “seed-picker,” and referring to scavenging birds. It was applied to beggars who forage for food, and then later to teachers who unscrupulously plagiarize from others, offering only a “ragbag of other people's ideas and sayings.”¹⁴²
- ➔ The 4th century preacher Chrysostom surmised that the Athenians thought Paul was introducing two “foreign gods,” a male god named Jesus and his female consort Anastasis (“resurrection”).¹⁴³

(17:21)




What are some examples of how we prefer to hear “new” things?

- ➔ The way the media focuses on minority views




The *Areopagus* is literally the Hill of Ares, the Greek god of war. The Roman counterpart to Ares was Mars, so it is also called Mars' Hill. It is the name of a bare rocky place, some 377 feet high, immediately NW of the acropolis of Athens and separated from it by a narrow declivity. Steps cut in the rock lead to the summit, where benches, rough and rock-hewn, can still be seen overlooking the Agora (marketplace). In ancient times the “Council of the Areopagus” assembled at this spot (although they also met in the Stoa Basileios, or “Royal Porch”). This council was composed of city fathers and in early times exercised supreme authority in political as well as religious matters. Originally, it was the central governing body of Athens, but under the democracy, it was a primarily the court with jurisdiction over cases of homicide and certain other serious crimes. Under the Roman empire it reverted once more to interest in educational and religious matters. It is quite understandable, therefore, that Paul was brought before the council (possibly on this hill, or else on the “Royal Porch” in the marketplace) to explain “this new teaching” (v.19).^{144 145}


- (17:22-24) ? Why do you suppose Paul began his speech by focusing on one of their gods rather than introducing a “new” God?
- (17:24-31) ? How does Paul describe his God?
- ➔ God is the creator of the world, so He does not live in temples (v.24).
 - ➔ God gives life and everything else, so He doesn't depend on our works (v.25).
 - ➔ God determined the times and places for all nations; therefore we should seek Him (v.26-28).
 - ➔ God is the Father of all mankind, so He is not like an idol (v.28-29).
 - ➔ God will judge the world, and He will not overlook our ignorance (v.30-31).
- (17:24-29) ? What has God done to enable us to seek Him as He truly is?
- ➔ Read Deut 30:11-20. God is not far away (v.27).
- (17:28) ? Is it okay to quote secular authors in order to help people find God?
- ➔ Paul quotes the 3rd century Stoic author Aratus, who was from Paul's native Cilicia, and the quote echoes an even earlier poem by the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes. Apparently Paul recognized truth in some non-Christian authors, because he will later quote Menander (1Cor 15:33) and Epimenides (Titus 1:12).¹⁴⁶
 - ➔ Paul's primary reason for quoting this particular author is to point out the inconsistency of the Athenians. They professed to be children of the gods, but represented them as lifeless idols.
- ? What are some examples of how we might help people see their need *in their own terms* (like Paul did) rather than by using our jargon?
- “All idolatry tries to minimize the gulf between the Creator and his creatures, in order to bring him under our control. More than that, it actually reverses the respective positions of God and us, so that, instead of our humbly acknowledging that God has created and rules us, we presume to imagine that we can create and rule God.”¹⁴⁷ J. R.W. Stott
- (17:30-31) **18** According to Paul, what does God want everyone to do? Why?


- (17:31)  Paul explains here how Christianity differs from other religions. Whereas the other “gods” were notoriously capricious in their dealings with mankind, our God has a set standard by which He will assess everyone. And our God has proven it by raising Jesus from the dead.
- The thing that made some of them disbelieve was probably not the notion of immortality, but rather that our physical bodies are somehow related to it. Many Greeks already believed in immortality of the spirit, but their philosophers had taught that body and spirit were disconnected; i.e., the spirit could remain noble and pure even while indulging the flesh. The idea that God might become a man and inhabit flesh – or that our treatment of our physical bodies is connected to our spirituality – was a new and difficult teaching.

Acts 18:1-17**Corinth: Eager to Work**

 Whereas Athens was a great *intellectual center*, **Corinth** was a great *commercial center*. When Julius Caesar rebuilt Corinth in 44 BC, he made it the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia; he also repopulated it with freed Italians and slaves from every nation. It was ideally situated on the Isthmus between the Ionian Sea and the Aegean Sea so that it was the commercial link between Rome, the capital of the world, and the East. With an eastern port at Cenchrea (18:18; Rom 16:1) and a western port at Lechaeum, Corinth derived income from the transport of cargoes across the narrow isthmus (a distance less than five miles).¹⁴⁸ The city soon became a melting pot for the approximately 500,000 people who lived there at the time of Paul's arrival. Merchants and sailors, anxious to work the docks, migrated to Corinth. Professional gamblers and athletes, betting on the Isthmian games, took up residence. Slaves, sometimes freed but with no place to go, roamed the streets day and night. And prostitutes (both male and female) were abundant.¹⁴⁹ The sexual promiscuity was so well known that *korinthiazomai* meant to practice immorality, and *korinthiastes* was a synonym for a harlot.¹⁵⁰ At Corinth the apostle Paul established a flourishing church, made up of a cross section of the worldly minded people who had flocked to Corinth to participate in these various pleasures (1 Cor 6:9-11).

 How did Paul meet Priscilla and Aquila?

 Do you think you could meet more people this way and help them know Jesus?

 Sometime around 49-52 A.D Emperor Claudius expelled all of the Jews from Rome. Since the earlier Christians were often regarded as a Jewish sect, they were expelled, too. The decree, it is said by Suetonius, was issued on account of disturbances among the Jews, and he especially mentions someone named “Chrestus”. This name is similar enough to “Christus” that we should probably understand the problem to have been caused by Jews persecuting the Christians. The cause of the trouble did not concern Claudius, and so without making inquiry, all Jews were expelled – at least temporarily.¹⁵¹

Priscilla & Aquila



This is our first encounter with a married couple who provide a tremendous example for us:

- ➔ Aquila was a native of Pontus, which is in northern Asia Minor on the Black Sea. That's a long way from Rome, and the social cultures would have been as different as New Mexico and New Jersey.
- ➔ Aquila was a Jew, although the names "Aquila" and "Priscilla" are both Latin (Roman). We don't know whether Priscilla was Jewish or where she was from, but it was a common custom for Jews outside of Palestine to take Roman names.¹⁵² Aquila's name means "eagle"¹⁵³ and Priscilla's name means "little old woman" (diminutive of Prisca).¹⁵⁴ Assuming that these names were given to them as adults, we might rightly infer that they were a mature couple. They had learned to adapt in marriage, in society, and perhaps in other ways as well.

1. **They learned together:** Since Aquila is referred to as a Jew, it is possible that they had not yet become Christians. Perhaps Paul taught them while they worked together or while he was in the synagogue. And regardless of when they became Christians, sharing time with Paul had to have been a learning experience. So it is no coincidence that we find them addressing the same issues as Paul – e.g., the incompleteness of the baptism of John (compare Acts 18:24-26 with Acts 19:1-7). Couples that learn together *grow closer*. Marriage partners drift from each other when their interests only draw them in different directions.

*To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong admit it,
Whenever you're right, shut up.*

– OGDEN NASH ¹⁵⁵


2. **They suffered together:** Priscilla and Aquila were expelled from Rome along with the Jews. Driven from their home, their work, and their community, they accepted their exile *together* and strengthened their bond by facing the struggle together. Couples that suffer together also *grow closer*.
3. **They worked together:** Paul found the couple because they shared the same trade – tent-making. And notice especially that Priscilla and Aquila were in business *together*. They were partners in their livelihood, just as many people are today. It's one thing to divide up responsibilities and assume certain roles, but it's quite another thing to actually *work together*. It means getting past what is merely cultural in our roles and actually treating our spouses with respect and love.

*Happily married couples appreciate what they each bring
to the relationship. Their union is more than just the
process of addition. One plus one now equals a deep sense
of valuing and being valued.¹⁵⁶*

– Jim and Sally Conway, in *Marriage Partnership*

(18:5) ? When had Paul asked Silas and Timothy to rejoin him?

- ➔ They were separated in Berea when the Jews from Thessalonica stirred up contention (17:13)
- ➔ Paul's desire was to return to Macedonia, because he had been called to go there (16:10). However, he was prevented from returning (17:9; 1Thes 2:18).
- ➔ Paul wanted Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens (17:15-16)
- ➔ After staying in Berea (17:14), Silas and Timothy visited Thessalonica (1Thes 3:2). They brought Paul some good news about the church there (1Thes 3:6), and also a financial gift from Philippi (2Cor 11:9; Phil 4:15-16).

(18:6-8)  When the Jews became abusive toward Paul, he left without taking even the *dust* of their synagogue with him. He gave up on them with a statement borrowed from Ezek 33:1-9. As God's watchman, Paul had given the Jews ample opportunity to repent, so the responsibility was theirs alone. Apparently the one in charge of the synagogue (Crispus) got the message (v.8).



To what extent are we responsible for converting people to Christ?

(18:9-10)



If you were Paul, what are some things that could have made you afraid?

➔ Later, when Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he told them that he had felt weak and fearful (1Cor 2:1-5). Perhaps he was intimidated by their arrogance and their bold immorality, and in order to avoid being distracted or tempted by their behaviors, he chose to “know nothing ... except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

(18:12-13)



What was the Jews' accusation against Paul? Was it valid?



Gallio

Gallio (v.12-16) was the younger brother of Seneca, the great Stoic philosopher and tutor of Nero as a child. Seneca spoke appreciatively of his brother's tolerant kindness. Gallio became proconsul of Achaia in AD 51-52, and this was certainly the Lord's plan to fulfill the promise to Paul (v.10). This judgment by Gallio established a precedent in Achaia that effectively protected the missionaries from legal prosecution.



Sosthenes

A new synagogue ruler, Sosthenes, had replaced Crispus, who had become a Christian. One of his first responsibilities was apparently to take the blame for this incident with Gallio. Perhaps he also left the synagogue to become a believer, because when Paul writes to the Corinthian church, someone named Sosthenes is greeting them along with Paul (1Cor 1:1).

(18:17)



What causes religious people to turn on their own leaders when they fail to reach their objectives? Can you give any examples of this today?



“All legalists need a scapegoat.”


▶ Compare 1Cor 1:1. Maybe Sosthenes became a believer (either before or after being beaten).




1&2 Thessalonians





While Paul was in Corinth he wrote two letters to the *Thessalonians*. Since he was prevented from returning to them in person (17:9; 1Thes 2:18), he sent Timothy to find out their progress. He was overjoyed with the report of their faithfulness and love, and wrote his first letter to tell them so. A few months later, he wrote another letter to them, attempting to correct some misunderstandings (or false teaching) about the return of the Lord.



*Acts 18:18-22**The Return Trip*


 Show locations on a map: From Athens they went to **Corinth** (18:1-18); **Cenchrea** (18:18); **Ephesus** (18:19-20); **Caesarea** (18:22); **Jerusalem** (18:22); **Antioch** (18:22). Notice that the missionary team visited 3 major capitol cities:


-  *Thessalonica* was a capitol city in Macedonia
-  *Corinth* was capitol of Achaia
-  *Ephesus* was capitol of Asia


 What sort of vow (or promise) was Paul fulfilling?

(18:18)  The original Greek text is not clear whether it was Paul or Aquila who made this vow, although most commentators interpret it to be Paul. We also don't know whether this was a Nazarite vow, which could take several forms (Num 6), but usually included abstinence from wine, avoiding dead bodies, and letting the hair grow. It might last 8 days, a month, some other definite period, or even a whole lifetime. Paul appears to be having his hair cut at the expiration of such a vow, although he delayed the completion of the proper ceremonies until he reached Jerusalem (21:23-24).¹⁵⁷ This might explain the haste with which he left Ephesus (18:21) if he was trying to reach Jerusalem within the prescribed thirty days.¹⁵⁸ Why did Paul make a vow?

-  It was common for the Jews to make such vows to God, as an expression of gratitude or devotion for His deliverance. Certainly Paul had been spared through much danger and suffering, so he may have been expressing his feelings toward God in the way that was familiar to him.
-  Perhaps Paul may have been trying to convince the Jews that he did not despise their law, and was not its enemy. It was not wrong for him to adopt a Jewish custom if he was not imposing it on others, and it may have produced a benefit among the Jews he taught.

 What are some promises that people make to God today? Why are they making promises?

(18:20-21)  Why do you suppose Paul didn't stay longer in Ephesus?

(18:22)  Here Paul ends his 2nd missionary journey, but quickly goes out to support the new churches in Galatia and Phrygia. Notice that he went “up” to the church in Jerusalem and “down” to Antioch. This is because Jerusalem was at a higher elevation than Antioch. Whereas we often use compass designations for directions, they described the way more in terms of geography, cities, and landmarks.



Summary

- ◆ This section began with a disagreement and a split, but ended with new companions and leaders:
 - ➔ Timothy (16:1-5) – Lysia
 - ➔ Lydia of Thyatira (16:14-15) – Philippi
 - ➔ A Jailer (16:29-34) – Philippi
 - ➔ Jason (17:5-9) – Thessalonica
 - ➔ Some prominent Greek women & men (17:12) – Berea
 - ➔ Dionysius, an *Areopagite*, and Damaris (17:34) – Athens
 - ➔ Priscilla & Aquila (18:2-3,19) – Corinth
- ◆ In each place, Paul goes first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles – continually vindicating his mission to the Gentiles.



Community of Witnesses

REVIEW

On their 2nd missionary journey, Paul and Silas (and now Timothy, too) were called to preach to the people in Macedonia. Many people are receptive to the gospel, but there is persecution as well.

1. Philippi: Lydia and the jailer believed
2. Thessalonica: Jason was a faithful follower
3. Berea: Prominent Greek women and men were converted

When Paul left Thessalonica, it was under conditions laid down by the town leaders with Jason (17:9) - apparently banning Paul from reentering the city. What a disaster - banned from the main city in the region where he was called to preach! But look at it another way: here is an opportunity for the emerging leaders to exercise their calling. Taught by Paul, trained by Paul, and now sent by Paul to be his ambassadors. Today we'll find out about the Thessalonian church from the two letters that Paul wrote to them shortly after he was there.

Faithful Progress (1 Thessalonians 1-5)

Acts 17:1-8

The Gospel Magnified

1Thes 1:1-10

? What does Paul remember about the Thessalonians?

(1:5-7) ? How was the gospel introduced to them?

(1:6-10) 1 How did the Thessalonians respond to the gospel? See also 2:13-14.

? How would you describe their conversion?

(1:10) ? What does it mean to "wait" for Jesus?

1Thes 2:1-12

The Gospel Delivered

? Why would anyone think that Paul's work was futile?

(2:2) ? What had Paul and Silas suffered at Philippi?

(2:3-4) ? Why did Paul persist in preaching, in spite of suffering?

(2:3-12) ? How could the Thessalonians know that Paul sincerely brought them truth without any intent to manipulate them?

1Thes 2:13-20

The Gospel Accepted

? What had the Thessalonians grasped that was most important for them?

! "There is more to knowing the Word than knowing the words."

(2:13) 2 How does God's Word "work in you who believe" (v.13)?

(2:14-16) ? Has Paul become anti-Semitic?

- ➔ His point is not to bash Jews, but to indicate that the Thessalonians have suffered in a manner similar to the Jewish believers.
- ➔ Far from accusing only Jews, Paul is explaining that *Gentiles* have persecuted the Thessalonian church just as much as the Jews have.

(2:17-18) ★ Paul wanted to return to Macedonia because he had been called to preach there. But he was prevented – probably by the agreement made with Jason that Paul could not reenter the city (recall the [comments](#) on Acts 17:5-9).

(2:19-20) ? Why did Paul consider the Thessalonians his “glory and joy”?

♥ Whom do you consider your “glory and joy” in the Lord?

1Thes 3:1-13

The Gospel Reported

? How did Paul resolve the problem of not being able to return to Thessalonica?

♥ Who have you trained to replace you when the need arises?

(3:3-4) ? Is the church today destined for afflictions like Paul expected?

(3:6-10) ? What did Timothy report after visiting the Thessalonians?

(3:10) ? What do you suppose was “lacking” in their faith that Paul desired to complete?

(3:11-13) ? What does Paul pray that God will do for them?

1Thes 4:1-12

Keep Growing – How the Church Exhibits Faith

3 Why do you suppose Paul wanted them to excel in their walk with God *even more* than they already were?

(4:3-8) ? What does Paul exhort them to do?

(4:4) ★ Paul's encouragement to be pure in v.3-5 uses language that might be difficult for us to understand. Whereas the reading in the NIV is that each person should “control his own body,” the RSV says that each person should “know how to take a wife for himself.” The literal translation (which none of the major versions adopt) is that each should “acquire his own vessel.” This “vessel” (*skeuos*) can be one's body (as in 2Cor 4:7), and perhaps a spouse's body (1Pet 3:7). Since the verb used here (*ktasthai*) typically means to *acquire* (not to *possess*),¹⁵⁹ then we should probably conclude that Paul is admonishing the Corinthians on *how to get a partner*, not in lustful orgies with the temple prostitutes, but in a manner that is *honorable and holy*. Given Corinth's reputation (which made it synonymous with sexually-transmitted diseases), this seems to be the best translation.

(4:9) ? How does God teach His children to love each other?
How does the Holy Spirit help?

(4:11-12) ? Can you speculate from this passage what behaviors were especially difficult for the Thessalonians?

1Thes 4:13-5:11

Keep Watching – How the Church Exhibits Hope

? Who is it that is “asleep”? Why does Paul use this terminology?

- (4:13-14) **4** How is a Christian's perspective on death different from everyone else's?
 ? How can we exhibit this hope so that it helps other people?

- (4:13-18) ★ Paul's emphasis is on what happens to the dead (and the living) when Jesus returns. He is not trying to describe the details of Jesus' coming, but rather what will become of those who have been faithful – especially faithful unto death. He wanted them to have comfort (v.18) in knowing there will be a great reunion of the saints.

● “There is a story about two men who were observed holding banners on the street. One banner proclaimed,

THE END OF THE WORLD IS NEAR

The other proclaimed,

THE WORLD WILL NEVER END

An observer was overheard commenting, “One is an optimist, and one is a pessimist, but I’m not sure which is which!” **160**

- ♥ What are *your* thoughts and hopes about seeing loved ones after this life?

- (4:17) ? In Acts 1:11, two angelic men stated that Jesus would return in a manner similar to His ascension. Is Paul's description of Jesus' return consistent with that statement?

➔ Notice that Paul describes the *saints* ascending in a manner similar to Christ

- (5:1-2) ? Why was it unnecessary for Paul to provide dates and times for Jesus' return?

- (5:2-3) **5** What will be happening when Christ comes?

➔ Will it be predictable? No, it's like a thief breaking in when no one expects it.

➔ General calamity all around? No, it's more likely to be a period of complacency.

- (5:3) ? Who is it that will experience “destruction”? See v.9.

- (5:4-11) ? What should be our behavior while we wait for Christ's return?

- ? What does Paul mean that we should be “alert and sober” (v.6)?

- (5:8) ? How are faith, hope, and love like a suit of armor for us?

1Thes 5:12-28 *Keep Building – How the Church Exhibits Love*

- ♥ Who are the ones who “diligently labor” among *us*?
 Who has charge over you? Who gives you instruction?

- (5:12-13) ? How can we show appreciation for those people who serve and lead us?

- (5:13) ♥ Are the members of your church known for living in peace with one another?

- (5:14) **6** Can you think of some areas of discipline that are lacking today and need some admonishment?

- ♥ How would you have to change in order to be patient with *all* people?

- (5:15) ? What would politics look like if all candidates followed v.15?
- (5:15-22) ? How does this list compare with the list in Gal 5:22-23?
- ? How can we rejoice, pray, and give thanks *non-stop*?
- (5:19) ? How do we know when we “quench” the Spirit?
- (5:20) ? What are some ways that we show that we despise prophetic gifts?
- (5:21) ? Can you recall any places that Paul has visited where the people examined everything and kept what was good? See [comments](#) on Acts 17:10-15.
- (5:23) ? What do you think Paul intended by praying that their spirit, soul, and body be *preserved* complete?
- ♥ How do you want to be found when the Lord returns?

Hopeful Watching (2 Thessalonians 1-3)

2Thes 1:1-12

Christ Revealed

- ? How were the Thessalonians doing with the admonitions that Paul gave them in his previous letter? See 1Thes 4:9-12.
- (1:5) ? How does their faithfulness show that God's judgment is right?
- 7** What makes us “worthy” (v.5,11) to be in God's kingdom?
- (1:7) ? What is this event in which Jesus “shall be revealed from heaven”?
- (1:6-10) **8** What will happen when Jesus is revealed?
- ? What role do the faithful have in this event?
- (1:11-12) ? How does our faith bring glory to our Lord Jesus?

2Thes 2:1-17

Evil Revealed

- ? How might someone argue that Christ has already returned? Why would this upset people?
- (2:3-4) **9** What has to happen before “the day of the Lord”?
- (2:4) ? What are some examples of God being replaced with an ungodly substitute?
- (2:4-8) ? Why do you suppose Paul isn't more specific in describing the details of this event?
- ➔ He may not have known any more
 - ➔ He may have been protecting the readers from additional persecution from someone else reading the letter
 - ➔ He may have already told them the details (v.5)
 - ➔ It may be a general principle that has multiple fulfillments
- (2:6) ? In general, what “restrains” lawlessness?

★ It is not often in history that an individual has blatantly and arrogantly attempted to take God's throne for himself. Paul says that the process of this particular evil is already in action (v.7), so he wasn't peering into a distant future to locate "the man of lawlessness." It would be easy (and perhaps correct) to point to the self-deification of the Roman emperors and be satisfied. But is it really necessary to look for anyone other than *ourselves* as an example of lawlessness?

(2:10-12) ? Who is deceived by Satan and his accomplices?

(2:10-12) 10 Why are people deceived by Satan?

- ➔ Satan is powerful
- ➔ They rejected truth and believe lies
- ➔ God allows it
- ➔ So that they will receive judgment

(2:10-12) 📖 What are some ways that our culture today encourages people to abandon truth and accept lies?

★ We all have in us the propensity to *be* this "lawless one." Each of us chooses to accept or reject the truth. We either bow to God or sit on His throne. God's Spirit and those who witness to Him hold back some of the evil influence, but ultimately you'll reap what you sow. Obeying the gospel means suffering some afflictions, but the penalty of eternal destruction is much, much worse. Praise God that He has allowed you to see through the lies, and like the Thessalonian Christians, you have held on to truth.

★ This is a difficult section to understand, but there are some timeless principles here that will help us at any time:

- ➔ Satan's primary weapon is *deception* (e.g., recall Gen 3:1-6).
- ➔ The truth in Christ is our best defense against deception and lies.
- ➔ Whenever evil is revealed, Christ is also revealed.

(2:13) ? How did Paul know that God had chosen the Thessalonian church?

- ➔ They believed
- ➔ The Spirit had set them apart from the world

(2:16) ★ Notice that Paul ends this chapter with a prayer of comfort and *hope*. When he opened the letter, he commended the Thessalonians for their *faith & love*, but he did not mention this third important component. It appears that they lacked the kind of hope that would enable them to endure trials, and that is why Paul focuses on the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Thes 3:1-18

Obedience Revealed

? What sort of *discipline problems* did the Thessalonian church seem to have?

(3:6-12) ? What are some ways that Christians unwittingly enable co-dependence of people who lack self-control?

- ? What is Paul's solution for breaking the cycle of unhealthy dependency within the church?
- (3:10) ? Paul is *not* saying that “God helps those who help themselves.” He is saying that relationships and responsibility are *both* necessary. Either component without the other inhibits real growth in the church. Where are we?

Responsibility ↔ Relationships
 “Lone Ranger” “Social Club”

Balance = people who are both capable & cooperative

- (3:14) ? What is Paul's advice for Christians that refuse to be obedient to the apostles' instructions? Should we practice this?
- ★ Terminating fellowship with someone presupposes that there was a desirable atmosphere of fellowship to begin with. The purpose of disassociating is that the individual will want to return. If there has been no previous relationship building with a person, it is pointless (and harmful spiritually) to “terminate” the relationship. In such a case, we would be treating the person as an enemy rather than as a brother – and thereby disobeying Paul's instruction ourselves!
- (3:16) ♥ In what way do you need to receive peace from the Lord today?



Summary

- ◆ When Paul wrote to the newly-formed church in Thessalonica, there really wasn't much for him to tell them. He was as happy with them as a parent is when a child wins that first sports event.
- ➔ They understood that God's Word isn't just a book to recite – the Spirit actually works in us through the Word.
 - ➔ They shared their *faith* with everyone, and even Paul heard about it second-hand.
 - ➔ They were exemplary in their *love* for each other (in spite of persecution).
 - ➔ Paul helped them with their *hope*, which had been a bit misled.



Lesson 8 "Spiritual Warfare"

3rd Missionary Journey (Acts 18-21)

REVIEW

During Paul's 2nd missionary journey, he was called (in a vision) to preach in Macedonia, but then was thrown out of the capitol city of Thessalonica and banned from returning. So to follow up with them he sent Timothy as his emissary. The report that Paul received about them made him rejoice, and he sent two letters to them.

1. They shared their **faith** with everyone, and Paul heard about it second-hand.
2. They were exemplary in their **love** for each other (in spite of persecuted).
3. Paul helped them with their **hope**, which had been a bit misled.

Some time after returning to Antioch, Paul went back to Galatia to strengthen the churches. We're not told who went with him, and the trip seemed to have less fanfare than either of the first two.

Acts 18:23-19:10

Recognizing the Spirit of Jesus

Apollos

1 What are some things that you discover about Apollos from this passage?

- ➔ Jew from Alexandria (a major center for learning)
- ➔ Eloquent in speech
- ➔ Mighty in the Scriptures
- ➔ Knew the way of the Lord
- ➔ Fervent
- ➔ Teacher
- ➔ Acquainted with John's baptism

? What was missing in Apollos' relationship with God?

? Who taught Apollos the complete truth? What are some ways that believing couples today can effectively spread the gospel?

- ➔ Although some conservative churches today have trouble with women teaching men, there is a New Testament example of it here.



Ephesus, which means "desirable,"¹⁶¹ was the largest city in Asia Minor, with a population of about 300,000. It was built at the mouth of the river Cayster and its harbor was once the most popular seaport in the region, although the silting from the river has now separated the site from the sea by at least five miles.¹⁶² It was a major cultural center, boasting the largest theater in the world, with a capacity estimated between 25,000 and 50,000.¹⁶³ Ephesus was also the location of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: the temple of Diana (or Artemis in Greek mythology). The city is now totally abandoned and has been for over a thousand years.

(18:26) **2** How would you describe Priscilla and Aquila's method of teaching?

➔ **They recognized what was needed.** All too often we assume that people need what we want to provide, and that causes confusion (or worse, rejection). Apollos knew about Jesus, and he knew about John's baptism, so what was the problem? We get a better idea in Acts 19:1-7, where Paul encounters the same issue. There we're told that they didn't know about the Holy Spirit and were therefore baptized again into "the name of the Lord Jesus." The issue was that John only pointed the way to Jesus. Although John did baptize for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4), it was at Pentecost that the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled (2:16-21).

"John's preaching was a necessary stage because there are two stages in the religious life. First, there is the stage in which we awaken to our own inadequacy and our deserving of condemnation at the hand of God. That stage is closely allied to an endeavour to do better that inevitably fails because we try in our own strength. Second, there is the stage when we come to see that through the grace of Jesus Christ our condemnation may be taken away. Closely allied with that stage is the time when we find that all our efforts to do better are strengthened by the work of the Holy Spirit, through whom we can do what we could never do ourselves." 164 – William Barclay

➔ **Priscilla and Aquila approached Apollos discretely.** They didn't refute him or debate him in public. They wanted to reach him, not drive him away. Too often our agenda is to show that *we're* right rather than to encourage *others* to find truth. You should "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ..." (1Pet 3:15)

➔ **They "explained to him the way of God more accurately."** They didn't tell him he was all wrong and needed to change everything – instead they started at the point where Apollos understood correctly, and then worked from there forward. It doesn't help to tell people they're wrong (even when they are) – mostly you'll get defensive postures and dismissive looks. If a person has any desire at all to serve Christ, then they've got *something* right. We need to start with that. By the way, that's what Paul did in Athens with people who didn't even know who God was (17:16-31).

? What are some examples of (Old Testament) Scriptures that Apollos might have used to demonstrate that Jesus was the Christ?

(19:1-5) ★ Since Paul taught Priscilla and Aquila, and they in turn taught Apollos, we might expect that they would be teaching similar things. And indeed, ch.19 provides additional insight into the issues they addressed.

3 What were these disciples in Ephesus lacking in their relationship with God (19:1-5)?

➔ The issue wasn't belief, because they already believed. The issue wasn't even baptism, because that seems to have been an accepted assumption for entering a new spiritual path. The issue was whether they had received the Holy Spirit, and in order to rectify this deficiency, they were baptized *into Jesus*.

? Why do you suppose that Paul couldn't just lay hands on them so that they could receive the Holy Spirit? Why did they have to be *baptized into Jesus* first?

(19:10) ? Why do you suppose Paul was willing to stay in Ephesus now for at least two years (in 20:31, Paul claims it was 3 years total), but in 18:20-21 would not stay long at all?

- ➔ Needed to return to Jerusalem and Antioch to complete his mission (18:22).
- ➔ Needed to first strengthen other churches (18:23).
- ➔ Wanted to get to Jerusalem in time to complete his vow (18:18).



So successful were Paul's efforts in this region that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (19:10). Probably during this period the seven churches of the Apocalypse were founded, not by Paul's personal labors, but by missionaries whom he may have sent out from Ephesus, and by the influence of converts returning to their homes.¹⁶⁵

Acts 19:11-20

Recognizing the Spirit of Demons



Why does God present miracles and signs in one place but not another?



When has God performed mighty works in your life?

Who were the specific people *through whom* He worked in those instances?



When Moses was confronted with the magicians of Egypt, he first beat them on their own ground, and then led the way where they could not even pretend to follow. It was somewhat thus with the sorcerers of Ephesus. As scrolls and rhymes were thought powerful against calamity, so it pleased God to work in this one place "works of power, not the ordinary, by the hands of Paul"; marvels of supernatural healing, wrought, without word or even presence, by means of handkerchiefs or aprons brought from his body.¹⁶⁶

(19:13-16)



Why would Jewish exorcists, who didn't believe in Jesus, use His name to cast out evil spirits?



What is an evil spirit? Is it the same as a demon? Does Satan have forces at work for him today?



How do people deal with evil today?



How do we get the strength to overcome evil? How is evil defeated?

(19:18-19)



The Greek word in v.19 that is translated "sorcery" (periergos) is translated in 1Tim 5:13 as "busybodies." It literally means to "work all around,"¹⁶⁷ perhaps suggesting activities that required some skill or "sleight of hand." The Ephesian magicians used certain combinations of letters or words, known as the "Ephesian Letters," which were believed to be effectual in expelling diseases, or evil spirits. These letters were to be pronounced with certain intonations of voice or written on parchment and worn as amulets or charms. Thus, Plutarch (Sympos., 7) says, "The magicians compel those who are possessed with a demon to recite and pronounce the Ephesian letters, in a certain order, by themselves."

Furthermore, Clemens Alex. (Strom. ii.) says, "Androcydes, a Pythagorean, says that the letters which are called Ephesian, and which are so celebrated, are symbols, etc." They were used as a means of guaranteeing success, avoiding danger, providing comfort, and even saving Ephesus during their war with the Milesians.¹⁶⁸

- ? What are some ways in which magic like this is practiced today?
- 5 What are some ways that people have power over other people? Is such power usually regarded as evil?

Acts 19:21-41**Recognizing the Spirit of the World**

- ? How do you think Paul made his plans for where to go next?
- ♥ How do you usually make plans for where you will be?
- ★ Regarding Paul's desire to visit Jerusalem and Rome, compare Rom 15:23-25. It would be later after he had visited Macedonia and Achaia that he would complete his goal of returning to Jerusalem –and it would be as a messenger delivering relief for the saints there.
- (19:22) ? Since Paul had an intended itinerary already in mind, why do you suppose he remained in Asia (specifically Ephesus) for a while longer?
- (19:22) ★ Erastus was a fairly common name at that time, so we can't be certain of the actual identity of this man. Paul sent Erastus with Timothy to Macedonia before him – apparently so that the churches could prepare for Paul's visit. Paul later refers to someone named Erastus who seems to be a citizen of Corinth (Rom 16:23; 2Tim 4:20), but we don't know whether he is the same person that he sent with Timothy. However, some interesting archaeological evidence was found in 1929 that relates to the Erastus mentioned in the epistles. Excavations in Corinth uncovered a block of marble in a paved square near the theater, with the Latin inscription,¹⁶⁹

ERASTVS. PRO. AED. S. P. STRAVIT

It is an abbreviation of **ERASTUS PRO AEDILITATE SUA PECUNIA STRAVIT**, which translates as "Erastus, commissioner of public works [aedilis], laid this pavement at his own expense." The office of *aedilis* was a high-ranking public official belonging to the Roman ruling class. Paul identifies him in Rom 16:23 as "the city treasurer" (*oikonomos*), which is **not** the Greek equivalent of the Latin *aedilis*; rather the *oikonomos* is equivalent to the lesser office of *arcarius*. If Paul was referring to the same man, then he was *aedilis* either before or after Paul wrote his letter.^{170 171}

- ★ *For extra study:* How did Timothy and Erastus "minister" to Paul (v.22 NASV translation)?
- (19:23) ? What is meant by "the Way"? Why do you suppose it was called that?
- (19:24-27) ? What was the problem for the church in Ephesus? What were the craftsmen most concerned about?

? Why were the people in Ephesus so obsessed with Artemis (Diana)? Can you think of any “rallying cries” that the world shouts today?

★ Artemis (or Diana in Roman mythology) was known variously as the moon goddess, the goddess of hunting, and the patroness of young girls. The temple at Ephesus housed the multi-breasted image of Artemis which was reputed to have come directly from Zeus (See 19:35).¹⁷²

The temple of Artemis was awesome in its immensity. It was 180 feet wide and 377 feet long, and it stood on a platform which was larger still. The roof was supported by 117 60-foot columns. These were 6 feet in diameter and 36 of them were sculptured at the base with life-sized figures.¹⁷³

Not only was the temple of Diana a place of worship, and a treasure-house, but it was also a museum in which the best statuary and most beautiful paintings were preserved. Among the paintings was one by the famous Apelles, a native of Ephesus, representing Alexander the Great hurling a thunderbolt. It was also a sanctuary for the criminal, a kind of city of refuge, for none might be arrested for any crime whatever when within a bowshot of its walls. There sprang up, therefore, about the temple a village in which the thieves and murderers and other criminals made their homes. Not only did the temple bring vast numbers of pilgrims to the city, but it employed hosts of people apart from the priests and priestesses; among them were the large number of artisans who manufactured images of the goddess Diana, or shrines to sell to the visiting strangers.¹⁷⁴

6 What are some “sacred cows” today that people would rally around if you spoke against them?

- Society will rally around groups that have been victimized and publicized.
- Religious groups will rally around practices that they benefit from in some way.
- Almost anyone will sound a call to arms if they sense that their power or control is being eroded.

♥ What are some examples of businesses that are in conflict with the church today? What should a Christian's attitude be toward such business people?

★ The theater (Greek *theatron*) was literally a “place for seeing” shows or spectacles. It was the place for large outdoor public gatherings of any sort (like our sports stadiums). They were often built as amphitheatres into a hillside, and the one at Ephesus was of enormous size, capable of seating somewhere between 24,000 and 56,000 persons¹⁷⁵

(19:29) ? Who were Gaius and Aristarchus?
See Acts 20:4; 27:2; Col 4:10; Philemon 24.

★ The Greek word for “church” (*ekklesia*) was not originally a religious term. In this chapter we find it used in its original fashion – as an assembly of people (v.32,39,41). Jesus chose the same word to describe His disciples (Matt 16:18), but it was a term which had previously been applied to Israel (Acts 7:38).

(19:35-40)



Why do you suppose the town clerk's advice calmed everyone down?

- ➔ They all knew that the Roman authorities did not tolerate riots.
- ➔ They probably also knew Demetrius' character and why he would complain.

1 Corinthians



During the 3 years that Paul was in Ephesus (21:31), he wrote to the church in Corinth. He had previously been in Corinth for 1.5 years during his second missionary journey. And shortly before Paul arrived in Ephesus, the church had sent Apollos to Corinth. It is very likely that Paul had already written them one letter (which is lost), and now he is addressing some of the problems in the Corinthian church that have worsened since he was with them. Remember, Corinth was a city of indulgence, and Christians often have difficulties leaving worldly pursuits behind. Although Paul strongly admonishes them, he never loses sight of his love for them and the genuineness of their salvation. He also uses this letter to prepare them to contribute to a monetary gift that will be given to the church in Judea (1Cor 16:1-4).

Acts 20:1-6

Traveling with Paul



Map: Ephesus – Macedonia – Greece (Decided *not* to sail to Syria). Then Greece – Macedonia – Philippi – Troas. The time was around the feast of unleavened bread. We actually learn more about this period of Paul's travels from his letters than we do from the sketchy summary given by Luke.



What sort of things determined Paul's itinerary?



Have conflicts ever determined the direction that you have taken?
How do you recognize God's guidance at those times?

(20:4)




Look up other references to Paul's companions:

- ➔ Sopater of Berea (Rom 16:21)
- ➔ Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 27:2; Col 4:10; Phe 24) and Secundus of Thessalonica
- ➔ Gaius of Derbe (Acts 16:23)
- ➔ Timothy of Lystra (Acts 16:1; 2Cor 1:1,19; Phil 2:19; 1Tim 1:1; 2Tim 1:2)
- ➔ Tychichus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 2Tim 4:12; Titus 3:12) and Trophimus (Acts 21:29; 2Tim 4:20) of Asia Minor


Luke apparently rejoined Paul at Philippi (where he has probably been since Acts 16).

2 Corinthians

 While he was in Ephesus for 3 years, Paul apparently made a quick trip to Corinth and then wrote a letter to them, both of which we know nothing more than the hints in 2Cor 2:1,13; 7:13; 13:2. After Paul left Ephesus, he went to Philippi (which is in Macedonia), where his friend and coworker Titus arrived from Corinth with good news from the church (2Cor 2:12-13; 7:5-7). It was at that time that Paul wrote “*Second Corinthians*,” although it was probably his *fourth* letter to the church in Corinth. In it he described his plan for the financial gift more completely, citing the example of the churches of Macedonia (2Cor 8:2,4).

★ Luke doesn't provide many details about this part of Paul's trip, but he probably traveled overland from Philippi to Thessalonica and Berea (20:2). Paul mentioned later that he preached the gospel “as far round as Illyricum” (Rom 15:19), and it was probably at this time that he journeyed farther across Macedonia.¹⁷⁶

Romans

 Paul mentioned Paul had wanted to go to Rome for some time (Rom 1:13), and while he was in Corinth, he wrote to the church in Rome. It was a place that Paul had not evangelized himself, but two of his closest companions (Priscilla and Aquila) were residents of Rome and had already headed back there (Rom 16:3). Paul sent his letter with Phoebe, who lived in one of Corinth's two port cities, Cenchræe (Rom 16:1). Paul's plan at that time was to also visit Rome after returning to Jerusalem, possibly as part of a longer trip to Spain (Rom 15:24-25). Since he had not yet had an opportunity to teach in Rome, his letter to them is one of the best general presentations that we have about the gospel and its impact on believers.

Acts 20:7-12**Worshiping with Paul**

? Why were the disciples meeting together on this occasion?

- ➔ To “bread bread”
- ➔ To hear Paul before he left Troas

(20:7) ? When were they meeting?

















- ➔ Sunday (first day of the week)
- ➔ At night
- ➔ The division between days wasn't at midnight like we would assume, but at dusk (~6pm). Thus the evening that would be considered part of the first day of the week would most likely be what we consider Saturday evening.

7 Since this is the only mention in the Bible of disciples worshiping on Sunday, what do you suppose we should apply from this to our weekly assemblies?

(20:7) ? What are some *good* reasons for a preacher to extend his message longer than expected?

(20:9-12) ? Imagine for a moment that you are one of the people listening to Paul. How would you feel about the events that occurred?

*Acts 20:13-38**Advice to Shepherds*

-  Show journey and locations on a map.
- (20:16)  Why did Paul go to Miletus instead of Ephesus?
-  Who were the “elders” of the church? See [comments](#) on 14:23.
- (20:18-21)  How does Paul describe his work in Ephesus (20:18-21,31-35)?
- (20:22-25)  What did Paul know about his future? How?
Have you ever received a glimpse of your own future?
-  Paul may have actually misinterpreted the time frame of his future afflictions. He seems fairly certain that the Ephesians would not see him again, but Paul's later epistles seem to show that he did indeed return to Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3; 3:14; 4:13) and Troas (2 Tim 4:13) and Miletus (2Tim 4:20).¹⁷⁷ Of course, it would be about 7-8 years before he would visit again and Nero was the emperor at that time, so perhaps the events of that period would be such that *these elders* would not be around to see him again. It is quite possible that *they* were the ones who would be gone (perhaps even martyred).
- (20:27)  What does it mean that Paul told them the “whole will (purpose) of God” (v.27)?
- (20:28-32)  What does Paul want the Ephesian elders to do?
- (20:28)  How does the Holy Spirit make people into “overseers”?
(Note: Paul had not yet written the descriptions in 1Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9)
- (20:29-30)  What are some examples of “savage wolves” that destroy churches?
How can they be distinguished from shepherds?
- (20:31)  Why do you suppose that Paul spent more time in Ephesus (3 years) than in many other towns?
- (20:31-35)  How did Paul treat the Ephesians during the 3 years he was with them?
- ➔ Admonished them with tears (v.31)
 - ➔ Did not covet material wealth (v.33)
 - ➔ Showed an example of working for a living (v.34)
 - ➔ Showed an example of generosity (v.35)
- (20:35)  Why do you suppose the Gospels do not record this saying of Jesus?
-  What are some ways that Jesus taught the principle quoted by Paul?
- (20:36-38)  How would you describe these elders' feelings for Paul?
What causes people to feel this close to each other?
-  Can you think of someone who has been like Paul to you?

*Acts 21:1-14***Warnings to Paul**

Follow the completion of Paul's trip on a map.



In what ways might the Holy Spirit have informed these disciples about the danger to Paul in Jerusalem? Why do you suppose the Spirit didn't just tell Paul directly?



When has the Spirit spoken to you through someone else?

(21:5)



Why did Paul pray with people each time he departed (see 20:36; 21:5)? How would prayer help *you* face dangers?

(21:8)



Who were the “seven” of whom Philip was one? See 6:3.



Notice that the men who were selected in 6:3 are still referred to as “the seven” even though one of them (Stephen) was murdered shortly after they were appointed. There are a couple possible reasons why they are referred to in this manner:

- ➔ Most likely, this is the point in time where Luke is told about the “seven” and so he related Philip to them here.
- ➔ It is also possible that the group of seven developed some notoriety and were considered a special case of servants. Otherwise, there might have been others mentioned.



If you had been one of the disciples accompanying Paul, how would you have responded to what Agabus said? What if you were Paul himself – how would you respond?



Why doesn't Paul interpret these messages as the Holy Spirit *preventing* him from going to Jerusalem?

*Acts 21:15-25***Advice to Paul**

What was James' role when we last met him in this book? See 15:13-21. What was the issue they addressed at that time?

(21:20-21)



After Paul describes what God has been doing among the Gentiles, what is it that the Jerusalem elders are most concerned about?

- ➔ They are rejoicing about the great response among the Jews
- ➔ They have been told that Paul has been teaching *against* Jewish traditions



Had Paul actually been teaching against Jewish traditions?

(21:23-24)



What did the elders recommend that Paul do? Why?



Perhaps Paul did not arrive in Jerusalem within the time expected to complete his vow (see comments on 18:18 and 21:18), so the church leaders recommend a subsequent observance of a similar vow at Jerusalem (21:24).¹⁷⁸



Summary

- ◆ In his account of Paul's third missionary journey, Luke focuses on the *spiritual warfare* that takes place as the gospel is introduced and as the church's foundation solidifies.
 - Priscilla and Aquila (and Paul, too) explain to people the necessity of receiving the Holy Spirit.
 - In Ephesus Paul confronts evil spirits, sorcery, and idolatry.
 - Paul has several new companions from the regions he visited: Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Tychichus, and Trophimus (Gaius and Timothy were still with him from the second journey).
 - In Troas there is a tragic accident, but Paul is able to bring the boy back to life.
 - He concludes the trip by *warning* the Ephesian elders – for the church's safety.
 - But then in Caesarea, Paul receives some *warnings* himself – for his own safety.



Spirituality

REVIEW

On the 3rd missionary journey, Luke focuses on the *spiritual warfare* that takes place as the gospel is introduced and as the church's foundation solidifies

1. The emphasis in Acts 19-21 is on events in Asia Minor (Ephesus, Troas, & Miletus).
2. People learn about the availability of the Holy Spirit ("baptism of the Spirit").
3. Paul confronts evil spirits, sorcery, and idolatry.

Although Luke doesn't provide much detail, part of this missionary trip includes visits to churches around the Aegean Sea, and various letters along the way.

Today we'll continue the theme of "spirituality" by looking at Paul's letters to the Corinthians.

Introduction to the Corinthian Correspondence

Visits

1. Acts 18:1-18

Letters

1. Referred to in 1Cor 5:9.
Contained in 2Cor 6:14-7:1?
2. 1 Corinthians, delivered by Timothy (perhaps when Timothy was sent ahead in Acts 19:22?).

2. Referred to in 2Cor 2:1; 13:2

3. Referred to in 2Cor 2:4; 7:8.
Delivered by Titus (2Cor 2:13; 7:13). Contained in 2Cor 10-13?

3. Acts 20:1-4

Events

Paul's initial visit to Corinth was during his 2nd missionary journey. According to 1 Cor 2:1; 3:2; 11:2, it seems that this was the only visit before the writing of the canonical 1 Corinthians.¹⁷⁹

Sometime after his first visit, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth, often called "*The Previous Letter*." Some think that it is actually contained in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, and that when Paul's letters were collected around AD 90 the arrangement was confused.¹⁸⁰ Others claim it is long lost.

On his 3rd missionary journey, Paul's first major destination was Ephesus, where he stayed longer than any other mission city. During this period he received news about the Corinthian church from Chloe's people (1 Cor 1:11), from Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17), and from a letter to Paul from the Corinthian Church (1 Cor 7:1). In response to these reports, he wrote 1 Corinthians and Timothy carried it to Corinth (1 Cor 4:17).

Apparently the letter did not resolve the problems in the church, and Paul was forced to interrupt his stay in Ephesus with a hurried, painful visit to Corinth (cf. 2 Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2). Luke did not record this visit, perhaps because he was not with Paul at the time (Acts 19).

Because the second visit did not put an end to the issues, Paul anguished over another letter, often called *The Severe Letter*." Since there had been only one visit prior to 1 Corinthians, it must be a different letter. Many scholars claim that the letter is contained in 2 Cor 10-13,¹⁸¹ but others say it is lost.

Paul's anxiety for the church was so great that he could not wait in Troas for Titus, so he hurried on to Macedonia (2 Cor 2:13; Acts 20:1). There he met Titus and learned from him that the letter had produced encouraging results. From Macedonia Paul wrote the canonical 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 7:6-16) to strengthen and prepare them.

Paul followed up this last letter with his final recorded visit to Corinth, lasting about three months. He collected their contribution and began his return to Jerusalem.

We cannot possibly cover the entirety of both of these letters in one class. Therefore we are going to focus on what Paul teaches about **gifts**:

1. The gifts given to believers - "spiritual gifts"
2. The gifts given by believers - "the collection for the saints"

Spiritual Discipline (1 Corinthians 1-16)

Acts 18:1-11

Acts 19:1-3

1Cor 1-4

First Reply: On Divisions

★ Someone named Sosthenes is with Paul as he writes this letter. It may be the leader of the Jewish synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:17). The previous synagogue ruler had just become a Christian, and the angry Jews took Paul to court. But the Roman proconsul through out the case, and the Jews vented their anger on the new ruler, Sosthenes. Perhaps he figured he'd rather suffer as a Christian!

(1:7) **1** What are "spiritual gifts" (1Cor 1:7)?

? How can we know whether a church is "mature" or "immature"? How does the level of talents or abilities in the individuals affect the *maturity* of the group?

(1:12) ? What sort of people would prefer to follow *Paul*? How about *Apollos*? How about *Peter (Cephas)*? What are some attitudes we have that are similar to these?

(2:4-10) ? How had Paul received God's wisdom?

(2:11-16) **2** What does it mean to be "spiritual"?

(3:1-23) ? How can we know whether a church is "mature" or "immature"? How does the level of talents or abilities in the individuals affect the *maturity* of the group?

(4:6-13) ? Why do we sometimes consider the gifts we have from God as accomplishments that we have achieved on our own?

1Cor 5-6

Second Reply: On Discipline

(5:1-12) ? Why do Christians sin?

(5:9-11) ? What is the point of withdrawing fellowship from someone? Do you think the manner in which we commonly "fellowship" with each other is effective in retaining believers and encouraging purity?

(6:1-8) ? Why is it better to have a dispute mediated by Christians rather than take it to court?

(6:9-20) ? How does Paul advise his readers to treat their bodies?

1Cor 7-16

Third Reply: On Doctrines

(7:1-40) **Marriage** (7:1-40)

? What are the instructions that Paul gives to those who are married? How about to those who are *not* married?

- (7:20-24) ? Why are slaves not advised to seek their freedom?
- (8:1-13) **Spiritual Freedoms** (8:1-10:33)
- ? What are our spiritual “freedom”?
- ? How can exercising our freedoms cause spiritual problems for others?
- (9:1-27) ? What was Paul's attitude toward his own spiritual freedoms?
- (10:1-33) ? What should be allowed to limit our spiritual freedoms?
- ? Is it possible (and appropriate) to apply 10:31-33 to *everything* we do?
- (11:1-33) **Spiritual Worship** (11:1-33)
- ? Are Paul's instructions in this chapter focused on the church's public assembly? What evidence can you find?
- ? Can you speculate what the problems in the Corinthian church might have been?
- (11:3-16) ? How does Christ act as “head” over us? How can men imitate Him? What does it mean to submit to such a “head”? How are women to practice this? Compare 1Tim 2:8ff; Titus 2:3-4; 2Chr 34:22ff.
- ★ In first-century Greece, men and women dressed similarly except for a head-covering (Greek *kalumma*) worn by women. This was not the same as an Arab veil, but covered just their hair. The only women who did not wear them were the high-class mistresses of influential Corinthians and perhaps the temple prostitutes. Also, slave and convicted adulteresses had their heads shaved. The standard attire in worship assemblies was no different than what was expected in any public gathering, but it was different from traditional Jewish assemblies. In Jewish temple-worship, women were separated and kept out of sight from the men. And the men always prayed with their heads *covered*. Therefore, Paul's instructions actually gave them the *freedom to follow social norms* (rather than Jewish traditions) during worship assemblies. He tells the men to pray with their heads *uncovered* (11:4), and he expects the women to take an *active* (although submissive) part in prayer and prophecy (11:5).¹⁸²
- (11:17-32) ? What does it mean to partake of the Lord's Supper in “an unworthy manner” (11:27)?
- (12:1-31) **Spiritual Gifts** (12:1-13:13)
- 3 How can we recognize which gifts are given by God?
- 4 How do spiritual gifts help the church?
- (13:1-13) 5 Why is love more important than *all* the different kinds of spiritual gifts?
- (13:8-12) ? What does it mean to become “perfect” (i.e., mature) spiritually?

(14:1-40)

The Practical Use of Spiritual Gifts (14:1-40)

- ? Why do you suppose Paul wants his readers to “desire ... the gift of prophecy” (14:1)?
- ? How does Paul instruct us to use our spiritual gifts? What might have been the problems at Corinth that caused Paul to issue these instructions?
- ? Which spiritual gifts involve speaking? Why do you suppose women are instructed to limit their expression of these gifts (14:34-35)?
- ★ Paul has already addressed the circumstances under which a woman may pray or prophecy in the assembly (see [notes on 1Cor 11:5](#)). They should not be perceived as being irreverent in their worship. Now Paul might seem to be contradicting himself by instructing women to be silent (14:34), but he is actually giving an admonishment that we are familiar with today. The Greek word translated “speak” (*laleo*) is used 296 times in the New Testament, meaning “talk, question, argue, or profess,” but it has nothing to do with prophecy or prayer or similar public speaking.¹⁸³ Paul is prohibiting the same kind of distracting talk that we “shush” in churches, theaters, concerts, and lecture halls today!

(15:1-28)

The Basic Elements of the Gospel (15:1-57)

- ? Why does Paul repeat the basic teachings of the gospel here? Compare 1Cor 3:1-3.
- ♥ How can you use the teachings in 1Cor 15 to help you explain the gospel to other people?

(15:1-28)

- ? What are the basic elements that Paul considers essential to the gospel (i.e., what are the points he makes in chapter 15)?

(15:35-57)

- ? How does Paul describe the resurrection of the dead? How does this explanation compare with his earlier description in 1Thes 4:13-18?

(16:1-2)

The Collection for the Saints (16:1-4)

- ? What are Paul's instructions for giving money?

(16:5-25)

Greetings (16:5-24)

- ? What do we know about the involvement that these people have had with the church in Corinth?
 - ➔ Timothy
 - ➔ Apollos
 - ➔ Stephanas
 - ➔ Fortunatus and Achaicus
 - ➔ Aquila and Priscilla

Spiritual Discipleship (2 Corinthians 1-13)**INTRODUCTION**

The immediate occasion that prompted the writing of 2 Corinthians centered in certain crises that had arisen in the church after the dispatch of the first letter. It appears that Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to correct certain abuses and to encourage the believers there to complete their contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Paul departed from Ephesus and came to Troas with the expectation of finding Titus. Troubled that he did not find Titus in Troas, he departed hurriedly to Macedonia. There Titus, freshly returned from Corinth with encouraging news, met Paul. But things were not what they should have been in the Corinthian church. The encouraging news was all but dissipated by the fact that ominous thunderheads were lying along the horizon of the church life at Corinth. It was necessary for Paul to act quickly and sternly. He had to do three things: (1) present the Gospel more clearly to the Christians; (2) put pressure on them for the completion of their promised contribution; (3) pulverize all opposition by an unparalleled defense of his apostolic ministry and authority. These points form the framework around which all the thoughts in this second letter cluster.¹⁸⁴

2Cor 1-7***Moved by Christ***

Sharing Comfort in Trials (1:1-2:17)

Ministry of the Spirit (3:1-18)


Confidence in Christ (4:1-5:10)

Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-6:13)

Ministry of Release (6:14-7:1)

Confidence in the Corinthians (7:2-16)

2Cor 8-9***Enriched by Christ***

- 6** What is the “service to the saints” (2Cor 8:3) that Paul is collecting money for? See 1Cor 16:1-4; Rom 15:25-26.
- (8:1-5) **7** How would you describe the Macedonians' attitude toward giving?
- (8:9)  How has Christ made *you* rich?
- (8:10-12) **?** What do you suppose the Corinthians needed to do to “complete” their gift to the saints in Judea?
- (8:18-19) **★** It has been generally supposed that this anonymous brother was Luke. Some have supposed however that it was Mark, others that it was Silas or Barnabas. All we know is that it was someone who was praised by the churches for making known the truths of the gospel.¹⁸⁵ Maybe it was Timothy, who was with Paul when he wrote this letter (2Cor 1:1) and was as familiar as Silas to the Corinthians (2Cor 1:19; also 1Cor 4:17; 16:10). But Luke may be the one, since he was also familiar to the churches through his travels with Paul (our assumption is that the churches did not yet have Luke's Gospel because he hadn't written it yet). Anyway, Paul mentions him twice (see 2Cor 12:18) without ever specifying his name.

(8:22) ★ Who is this second unnamed helper – the same person referred to in 8:18-19 or someone different? Apparently he was not a Macedonian (2Cor 9:4), and either this man or the the one in 8:18-19 had previously accompanied Titus from Ephesus (2 Cor 12:18). Some think that description matches Trophimus (Acts 20:4).¹⁸⁶

(9:1-5) ? Why is Paul sending his helpers ahead of him to Corinth?

(9:6-15) 8 What are the principles of giving that Paul teaches?

(9:8-11) 9 What are some ways in which God increases our ability to give?

★ Here is a principle that has been called “heaven's law of supply and demand.”¹⁸⁷ God's grace “is always pouring itself out with no limitation on heaven's side at all.” It is this inexhaustible provision that we are to express in love toward people so that we will “abound in every good work” (9:8). God readily replenishes His grace in our lives, but the amount that is delivered into the world is limited by how much we allow to flow through us. *You* are the valve that controls the delivery of God's grace to the world! God's supply is only limited by *our demand*.

(9:12-14) ? How do our gifts affect other people?

2Cor 10-13

Proven by Christ

(10:12-18) ? What are some ways in which you like to be commended?

(10:18) ? What does it mean to be commended by the Lord?

(11:1-15) ? What are some examples of ways that Satan (and his servants) masquerade as an “angel of light” or “servants of righteousness”?

(11:19-20) ? Why is it that people will often follow someone who will abuse or manipulate them, but will reject a message of truth?

(11:22-12:6) ? What are some of Paul's credentials as an apostle?
Why do you suppose he prefers to not boast about them?

➔ This passage offers our only glimpse into the personal revelation(s) that Paul received.

(12:7-10) ? Why was Paul given a “thorn” in the flesh?

(12:9-10) ? If Paul were allowed to attend one of our contemporary self-improvement seminars and was asked to name his key “strengths,” how do you think he would answer? What keeps us from answering in the same way?

(13:2-4) ? Why do you suppose the Corinthians wanted Paul to “prove” that he was Christ's spokesman (13:3)? Compare 2Cor 10:10.

Spiritual Obedience (Romans 1-16)**INTRODUCTION**

Paul wrote the Letter to the Romans sometime in the year A.D. 58, and he was in Corinth. He was just about to bring to its completion a scheme that was very dear to his heart. The Church at Jerusalem was the mother Church of them all, but it was poor, and Paul had organized a collection throughout the younger churches for it (1Cor.16:1ff; 2Cor.9:1ff). That collection was two things. It was an opportunity for his younger converts to put Christian charity into Christian action, and it was a most practical way of impressing on all Christians the unity of the Christian Church, of teaching them that they were not members of isolated and independent congregations, but of one great Church, each part of which had a responsibility to all the rest. When Paul wrote Romans he was just about to set out with that gift for the Jerusalem Church (Rom.15:25).¹⁸⁸

Rom 1-11***Righteousness***

The Good News (1:1-17)

The Bad News (1-3)

The Victory of God (3-8)

The Failure of Israel (9-11)

Rom 12-16***Service***

Expressing Grace (12-13)

Building Up the Body (14-15)

Personal Fellowship (15-16)



Summary

- ◆ Spiritual maturity is not just the result of having spiritual gifts; it is the fruit of letting the Holy Spirit work in us.
 - ➔ The result is *love* as well as the effective use of our gifts
 - ➔ God's Spirit *completes* us and leads us to “perfection”
 - ➔ We become generous like our heavenly Father (who gives the gifts)



Lesson 9

Defense in Jerusalem (Acts 21-23)

REVIEW

Paul wrote to the Corinthian and Roman churches about the path to spiritual maturity. More than just a matter of having special gifts, it is the fruit of letting the Holy Spirit work in us. Now that Paul is back in Jerusalem he will face some of his most fearful tests. Will he respond in a manner consistent with what he has taught? Let's watch what happens when God's love and generosity are put on trial.

Acts 21:26-39

Riots in Jerusalem

- (21:26) ★ This section begins with a contrast between the gracious forbearance of the Christians and the unyielding prejudice of the unbelieving Jews. Both James and Paul worked within their culture to help new believers grow from where they started, without burdening either the Jewish or Gentile believers with extra rules. In order to prevent controversy among the Jewish Christians, Paul agreed to participate with some men in concluding their vow – possibly a Nazarite vow, since it involved shaving their heads (see [notes](#) on Acts 18:18). Ironically, it was during this act of purification that Paul was accused (by nonbelieving Jews) of defiling the temple!¹⁸⁹
- “A truly emancipated spirit such as Paul's is not in bondage to its own emancipation.”¹⁹⁰
– F. F. Bruce
- ? How are the actions of this Jewish mob similar to the actions of Paul (Saul) before his conversion?
- ? Why were the Jews so obsessed with the temple and its “purity”?
- (21:30) ★ The doors between the inner court and the court of the Gentiles were shut by the Levites. They did not wish to defile the holy place with blood.¹⁹¹ In retrospect, the slamming of the temple doors appears to also symbolize the Jewish rejection of the gospel.¹⁹²
- ? In what ways are our own religious obsessions like theirs?
- ? In what ways are faithful believers today treated like Paul by the religious establishment?
- ? Why did the Roman army care whether the Jews were rioting?
- ★ The Roman soldiers were stationed at the Fortress of Antonia, which Herod the Great had built at the northwest corner of the temple area. The garrison usually consisted of a thousand men, with a *chiliarchos* (“commander,” NIV) named Claudius Lysias (23:26) in charge of them.
- ? What sort of character does the commander display? How does it compare with the character of the mob?

? Have you ever, like Paul, been saved by “worldly” people from the clutches of religious legalism?

(21:38) ★ The commander mistook Paul for an Egyptian who had previously caused a commotion. That “Egyptian” was probably a Jew who resided in Egypt. Josephus has given an account of this Egyptian which strikingly accords with the statement here recorded by Luke. See Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8, section 6, and *Jewish Wars*, book 2, chapter 13, section 5. The account which he gives is, that this Egyptian, whose name he does not mention, came from Egypt to Jerusalem, and said that he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go with him to the Mount of Olives. He said further that he would show them from thence how the walls of Jerusalem would fall down: and he promised them that he would procure for them an entrance through those walls when they were fallen down. Josephus adds (*Jewish Wars*) that he got together 30,000 men that were deluded by him; “these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place. But Felix, who was apprised of his movements, marched against him with the Roman soldiers, and defeated him, and killed 400 of them, and took 200 alive. But the Egyptian escaped himself out of the fight, but did not appear anymore.”

The Greek term translated “murderers” or “terrorists” in v.38 refers to “men of Sicarii” (*toon sikarioon*). This is originally a Latin word, and is derived from *sica*, a short sword or crooked knife, which could easily be concealed under the garment. Hence, it came to denote “assassins,” and to be applied to bandits or robbers. It does not mean that they had actually committed murder, but that they were desperadoes and bandits, and were drawn together for violent purposes.¹⁹³

Acts 21:40-22:22 **Trial #1: Paul's Address to the People**

(21:40-22:5) 1 What made the crowd get completely quiet? Why does the “language” you use make a difference when you speak out in defense of your faith?

♥ When you speak out in defense of your faith, do you use the “language” of your audience – or do you use your own religious “language”?

? What were Paul's credentials as a Jew? Why was it important to describe his background?

(22:6-11) ★ Review Acts 9:3-9. Notice that only Paul understood what Jesus said to him. The other people saw the light (22:9) and heard the sound (9:7), but did not understand (22:9) – which means to “hear with comprehension.”

? How did Paul respond to Jesus?

♥ Have you ever had an experience in which you “saw the light” and the Lord changed your direction?

? What was there about Paul that made him an instrument that God could use?

- (22:12-16) ★ Review Acts 9:10-19, which provides more detail about Ananias.
- ? How would you describe Ananias?
- ? What sort of character would it take to be God's agent in healing a *terrorist*?
- 2 What had Paul experienced that made him special?
- ➔ He saw Jesus (see 7:52 for another instance of the term “the Righteous One”)
 - ➔ He heard a message from Jesus
- ? How are our sins “washed away” when we are immersed in water (i.e., “baptized”)? Why is that important?
- ? What does it mean to “call on” the name of Jesus (or God)? Who else do we often “call on”?
- ♥ When you decided that you needed your sins “washed away,” were *you* baptized and did *you* call on Jesus?
- (22:17-18) ? Is Paul visited by Jesus the same way here as in 22:6-10? Why?
- ? If Jesus appointed Paul for a special mission (9:15), why is he not allowed to begin it immediately?
- (22:19-20) ? What were Paul's feelings about how people would accept his conversion?
- ➔ He probably thought they'd be skeptical and that he would be rejected.
 - ➔ On the other hand, Paul may be saying that he was so notorious that everyone will be amazed.
- (22:21-22) 3 What was it that aroused the crowd to anger so quickly?
- ? Why do you suppose the Jews disliked the idea of God sending someone to the Gentiles? Did God ever offer help to the Gentiles before? See Isa 49:6.
- (22:23) ★ The mob was probably intending to stone Paul, and that is why they took off their outer garments (compare Acts 7:58). Paul was guarded by Roman soldiers so that they could not injure him; and their only way of expressing their wrath was by menaces and threats, and by these tokens of furious indignation. Thus, Shimei expressed his indignation against David by cursing him, throwing stones at him, and casting dust (2Sam 16:13).¹⁹⁴ Today, we might speak of people “pulling out their hair” or “jumping up and down,” and the purpose is the same – to express rage and malice.
- ? How would it affect your family and friends if you told them that you were being sent by God to a totally different culture?
- ? What are some ways in which Christians also try to prevent God's witnesses from going to those who are “undesirable”?

*Acts 22:23-29****The Commander Interrogates Paul***

★ The way that the commander decided to resolve this uproar was to “examine” Paul. The means for doing this was to tie him to a frame and strike him with painful lashes until Paul explained why he was inciting a riot. But this sort of treatment was reserved for foreigners and was not allowed for Roman citizens. So when the commander found out that Paul was actually a Roman citizen (by birth no less) he was afraid of being punished himself. Ironically, Paul had just declared where he was born when he spoke to the crowd, but since he spoke in Hebrew the Romans didn't understand. He had also told the commander where he was *from* (19:39), but apparently the commander didn't gather that Paul was *born* there. It is almost humorous (in a tragic sense) that the pagan Romans are more concerned about harming a fellow Roman than the Jews are about harming a fellow Jew!

★ Roman citizenship was obtained by *right* (for those of high status or office) or by *reward* (for those who had served the Empire well). It was passed on from father to son (which was the case with Paul); but it could also be bought, not with a fee but with a bribe to some corrupt official (which was the case with Claudius Lysias). Such corruption was common during the reign of Emperor Claudius, and the commander may have chosen to show honor to his benefactor by adding the emperor's name to his own.

*Acts 22:30-23:11****Trial #2: Paul's Address to the Sanhedrin***

★ Sanhedrin (Greek *synedrion*), meant “a sitting together,” or a “council.” This word is often rendered “council” and denotes the supreme judicial and administrative council of the Jews, probably originating among the Jews when they were under the domination of the Syrian kings in the time of the Maccabees. The Sanhedrin is said to have consisted of seventy-one members, the high priest being president.¹⁹⁵ They were of three classes:

1. The chief priests, or heads of the twenty-four priestly courses
2. The scribes
3. The elders

We know the names of some who had been members of the Sanhedrin: Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43), Gamaliel (Acts 5:34), Nicodemus (John 3:1; 7:50), the high priests Annas and Caiaphas (Luke 3:2) and Ananias (Acts 23:2).¹⁹⁶

(23:1) ♥ Could you claim what Paul did? Why or why not?

(23:2) ? Why do you think Ananias (the high priest) ordered that Paul be struck on the mouth?

(23:3) 4 What did Paul mean when he called Ananias a “whitewashed wall”?

- ★ It is strange to see Paul lose his temper, but perhaps it was because the highest Jewish court was acting unjustly (which was itself a violation of the Law – Lev 19:15). Notice that Paul wasn't aware of who the Jewish high priest was, but considered himself still bound by Old Testament law.
- ➔ Maybe this was an informal (or impromptu) meeting of the Sanhedrin, and Ananias was neither robed nor presiding.
 - ➔ The many voices of the mob may have made it difficult for Paul to identify who ordered him to be struck.
 - ➔ Some suggest that Paul's eyesight was bad and he didn't recognize Ananias. (compare Gal 4:13-16; 6:11)
 - ➔ Perhaps Paul was so focused on Jesus as his High Priest that he no longer kept up with the human hierarchy.
 - ➔ Another interpretation is that Paul was speaking in sarcasm, as if to say, "I did not realize that a man such as you could be high priest." 197

Nevertheless Paul understood human authority better than most of us (Exod 22:28), and was *respectful* even when he saw such people as unjust. This is a much different attitude than people have today toward those in authority.

- (23:6) ? What seems to have been Paul's strategy at this point? Why do you suppose he chose this approach?
- ? Why couldn't the council that was giving Paul a hearing stay focused on *Paul*? Are there religious debates that cause *us* to be distracted from finding truth?
- ? What do you suppose the Gentile commander probably thought about this discussion within the Jewish council?
- ♥ What do you suppose non-believers think about *our* dissensions and debates?
- (23:11) ? If you were Paul, how would your courage be holding up at this point? What are some ways that the Lord encourages you?
- ♥ Does your walk with Christ get easier or harder? Why?

Acts 23:12-35

The Commander Rescues Paul

- (23:14-15) ? In what way had those Jewish conspirators bound themselves to murder Paul? Why do you think they did it?
- (23:14-15) ? Why did the chief priests and elders go along with the plot? Do you suppose they considered themselves as accomplices to murder? If not, then how might they justify it?
- (23:16) 5 Who did God use as His instruments to save Paul?
- ➔ Paul's young nephew
 - ➔ Roman officers
- ? Who exhibited the most integrity in these events?

★ Today we are often repulsed by any notion suggesting that “the end justifies the means.” But this “Machiavellian” philosophy didn't originate with Machiavelli – it was denounced by St. Jerome in the fourth century,¹⁹⁸ and it was the cause of hypocrisy among unbelieving Jews in the first century. The Jewish leaders wanted Paul out of the way and found a convenient means to do it. Never mind that it violated their own law and should have condemned every one of them – it served their real purposes. Today people justify torture and murder because they believe they are right and the enemy is evil. *Once a person or a group or a nation or a race is sufficiently demonized, there is no limit to the atrocities that may be done in God's name.* But Paul's philosophy was different – his commitment to Jesus was more important than where his life might lead. Paul told the disciples in Caesarea, “I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (21:13, NAS).

(23:23-24) ? The conspirators had 40 on their side – how many did God muster to protect Paul?

- ➔ 200 soldiers
- ➔ 70 horsemen
- ➔ 200 spearmen (or archers)

(23:25-30) ★ Here we have the letter that was sent with Paul to Felix, the governor. In it we find the commander's name, Claudius Lysias, a good Roman name that he probably acquired when he purchased his citizenship (22:28), since he wasn't born within the boundaries of the Roman empire. We also discover the commander's “spin” on the events that had occurred since the commotion began. Notice that he appears in this letter to have been totally in control from beginning to end. Also, he does not mention the riots or the scourging that was intended for Paul – both of which could have gotten the commander in trouble. Yet although he covers his foibles a bit, this letter is excellently written in many ways.


? What sort of judgments does the commander make about the people and the events?

- ➔ Doesn't say anyone is to blame
- ➔ Assesses accurately what the accusations were really about
- ➔ Protected Roman interests and upheld Roman law

? What are some ways that the commander makes it *easy* in this letter for Felix to understand the situation?

- ➔ Focuses on key points
- ➔ Doesn't try to tell the whole story
- ➔ Explains what will happen next so that Felix is prepared

(23:31-35) ? Why do you suppose that Felix asked Paul where he was from?

 The governor of Judea resided in Caesarea, about 60 miles from Jerusalem, and his name was **Antonius Felix**. He was a freedman of Antonia, the mother of the Emperor Claudius. He was high in the favor of Claudius, and was made by him governor of Judea. Josephus calls him Claudius Felix. Tacitus (History, v. 9) says that he governed with all the authority of a king, and the baseness and insolence of a slave.¹⁹⁹


★ The “Praetorium” (v.35) was a palace built by Herod the Great in Caesarea. The Latin word "praetorium" meant the camp of the general, then the palace of the governor (see also Matt 27:27), and then the camp of praetorian soldiers or rather the praetorian guard (Phil 1:13).²⁰⁰ Since Judea was now a Roman province, the palace of its former kings had become the governor's official residence. It thus appears that Paul was leniently dealt with, and not cast into the common prison.²⁰¹


Defense in Caesarea (Acts 24-26)


Acts 24:1-27

Trial #3: Paul's Address to Governor Felix

- ? What was their accusation against Paul?
- ➔ Pest
 - ➔ Stirs up dissension
 - ➔ Tried to desecrate the temple
- ? How does the lawyer's account of the events compare with the Roman commander's account in 23:27-30?
- (24:14-15) ? What did Paul admit doing?
- ? How does Paul describe his belief and commitment in v.14-16?
- ♥ Are you ever called upon to describe the hope that you have in God (1Pet 3:15)? What words would you use to describe your faith?
- (24:17) ★ This is the first mention that Luke makes of the delivery of the gift from the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church. It was apparently overshadowed upon Paul's arrival by the controversy surrounding him.
- (24:19) ? Why do you suppose the Jews from Asia, who originally stirred up the commotion, didn't come to this hearing?
- ➔ Their absence was a serious breach of Roman law, which acted very strongly upon accusers who abandon their charges.²⁰²
 - ➔ The ones who were present, then, were the ones who had to state the charges against Paul, and only the Sadducees thought he was guilty (and upon doctrinal issues alone).
- (24:22-23) ? Describe some of Felix's *good* characteristics. What are some *negative* traits that you see here?
- (24:25) ? Why do you suppose Felix became frightened when Paul spoke about righteousness, self-control, and judgment? Do people today react the same way?

 Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I (see Acts 12:1). She had been married to the King of Emesa, a small state in Syria, but Felix had persuaded her to leave her first husband to marry him.²⁰³ Perhaps their adulterous relationship is what prompted Paul to speak to them about “righteousness and self-control (24:25).

(24:27)  At the end of two years, Governor Felix was recalled to Rome by the emperor Nero under accusation by the Jews of bad administration. Nero sent Porcius Festus to succeed him as procurator of Judea.²⁰⁴ Very little is known about Festus, except that he died a few years after this.²⁰⁵

 Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for *two years*. It may have been during this time that **Luke** wrote his Gospel (AD 58-60), but it is only a conjecture based upon the most likely period of writing.

Acts 25:1-22

Trial #4: Paul's Address to Governor Festus

? Since the Jewish leaders couldn't prove any of their accusations, why didn't Festus just release Paul?


? Why did Paul appeal to Caesar?

★ Every Roman citizen had a right to have his case heard, and if it was not being handled justly, he could appeal to the emperor himself. Of course, Roman emperors were notoriously capricious, so it wasn't always in the best interests of the accused to appeal.

Paul could probably see two potential outcomes of the proceedings in Caesarea:

1. Since there was no legal reason to try him in Jerusalem, Paul could probably see that this was a ruse intended for his demise.
2. If he refused to go, he would either be held in contempt or simply be released, because there was no real case against him. In either case, he would not make it to Rome, where the Lord said he was to go.

So perhaps the Spirit showed Paul that the way to Rome (and, in fact, to the very seat of Roman authority) was to appeal his case to Caesar. Given the weakness of the case against him, Paul appears to be seizing an opportunity rather than escaping an ambush.

(25:13)  Herod Agrippa II was the son of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12) and the great grandson of Herod the Great. Bernice was his sister, and they were rumored to have an incestuous relationship. Because he had been only 17 years old when his father died, he was considered too young to assume the kingdom of Judea, which therefore reverted to rule by procurator. Instead, he was given a tiny and insignificant northern kingdom within what is now Lebanon, and this was later augmented by territory in Galilee. He was nevertheless influential among the Jews because the Emperor Claudius had committed to him both the care of the temple and the appointment of the high priest. He and Bernice came to Caesarea to pay their respects to the new procurator, Porcius Festus.²⁰⁶

- (25:14-21) **6** What was Festus' assessment of the case against Paul? What was his dilemma about sending Paul to have the case decided by the emperor?
- ➔ The current emperor was Nero, known well for his capriciousness
 - ➔ Nero had already recalled Felix and appointed Festus in his place (see [note](#) on 24:27). Festus may have been worried about his own future, because he had no evidence to substantiate the charges against Paul.

Acts 25:23-26:32**Trial #5: Paul's Address to King Agrippa II**

- ? What are some ways that Paul showed respect and tact in addressing the king?
- ? Was Paul's "hope" any different from that of the Pharisees? Then why was there a conflict?
- ★ Several times in Paul's defense, he spoke of his *hope of resurrection* which he shared with his ancestors (23:6; 24:15; 24:21; 26:6-8; 28:20). Many of the Greek philosophers, such as Plato, believed that an immortal soul inhabited a body and that at death the soul left its bodily prison and soared upward to the divine spirit. The psalmist expected that God would ransom his soul from Sheol (Ps 49:15). It was Israel's firm belief in the goodness of God that led the Jewish people to believe that the righteous dead would yet see God (Job 19:26). This expectation was the foundation upon which the Jewish ideas concerning the resurrection were built.²⁰⁷
- (26:8-9) ? Why would a hope in resurrection cause a Jew like Paul to persecute Christians? Why do you suppose the Sadducees (who did not believe in the resurrection) were not persecuted in this manner?
- ? Are Christian also guilty of persecuting specific groups unjustly and irrationally?
- (26:14) ★ When Jesus addressed Paul on the Damascus road, the first words that He said included a metaphor that was common in both Greek and Latin literature at that time. By using the image of "kicking against the goads," Jesus was comparing Paul to a lively and recalcitrant young bullock, and Himself to a farmer using goads to break him in. The implication is that Jesus was pursuing Paul (Saul), prodding and pricking him, which was "hard" (i.e., both painful and futile) for him to resist. Even in the pagan literature, this expression often referred to useless opposition to deity.²⁰⁸
- (26:16-18) ? What purpose and mission did Jesus give Paul in this visitation?
- ? How is our responsibility similar to Paul's? How do our deeds exhibit our repentance (v.20)?
- ? What similarities and differences do you find in the three main accounts of Paul's conversion – Acts 9:1-19; 22:5-16; 26:12-18?

- (26:22-23) **7** Can you find examples of the prophets and Moses predicting the coming of the Messiah?
- ➔ As **King**: Amos 9:11; Hos 3:5; Isa 7:10-17; 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Mic 5:2; Jer 23:5; 30:9; Ezek 34:23; 37:24; Zec 9:9; Ps 110:1-2.
 - ➔ As **Prophet**: Deut 18:15-20 (foretold by *Moses*).
 - ➔ As **Priest**:: Jer 33:18; Zec 6:11-13; Ps 110:4.
 - ➔ As **Servant**: Isa 42:1-7; 43:10; 52:13-53:12
- (26:23) **?** Why is Jesus' resurrection central to Paul's message?
- (26:23) **?** Why do you suppose the Gentiles are now included in such a significant way?
- ➔ God intended for Israel to be a light to the nations, but it instead became self-absorbed.
- (26:24) **8** Why did Festus think Paul was crazy?
- ➔ He spoke about the resurrection of the dead
 - ➔ He proposed a common light for *both* Jews and Gentiles
- (26:28) **9** What effect did Paul's message have on King Agrippa?
- ♥ How would *you* answer Paul's question: "Do you believe the Prophets?"
- ?** Why didn't Agrippa and Festus set Paul free?
- ★ It is tempting to think, "what a shame that Paul could have been set free." But it was God's will for Paul to witness in Rome, and although he wasn't free, Paul would have the protection of Roman soldiers for the journey.



Summary

- ◆ Five trials, no verdict! Paul finally put an end to the farce by appealing to Caesar. He did not want to be in the hands of the Jews, and he knew that he had to go to Rome. So now he is on his way!
- ◆ How do *you* respond to Paul's arguments?
 - ➔ Is your hope placed firmly in the resurrection?
 - ➔ Do you believe in the Prophets?



Lesson 10

Journey to Rome (Acts 27-28)

REVIEW

Paul is finally on his way to Rome! Luke apparently wanted to first make it clear that Paul was not guilty of any of the accusations made against him, because the longest section of his book is devoted to Paul's defense (ch. 21-26). When Paul appealed to Caesar, he was taken out of the hands of the Jews and placed in the custody of the Roman authorities. It would appear that the dangers are past, but the story's not over yet.

Acts 27:1-8

Sailing Through Difficulties: Supported by Friends



Look on a map at the places encountered on this journey. The ship that they were on was from Adramyttium, a town in northwestern Asia Minor, not far from Troas.



Do you remember what responsibilities a *Centurion* had? See [notes](#) on 10:1-16.



Luke provided the stories of four Centurions in his two books. The last one was a member of the Augustan Cohort, which was also stationed near Caesaria. His name was Julius, and he was assigned to escort Paul to Rome. Here is the list of Centurions described in Luke and Acts:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Centurion whose slave was dying | ... realized God's position | Luke 7:2-10 |
| 2. | Centurion at the cross | ... realized God's work | Luke 23:44-47 |
| 3. | Cornelius | ... realized God's acceptance | Acts 10 |
| 4. | Julius | ... realized God's direction | Acts 27 |



Do you remember who Aristarchus was?

- ➔ He was from Thessalonica (27:2).
- ➔ He and Gaius were dragged by the Ephesian mob into the theater (19:29).
- ➔ He accompanied Paul on most of his 3rd missionary journey, and is mentioned in the group that accompanied Paul from Corinth to Macedonia (20:4).




How were Aristarchus and Luke (the author of *Acts*) able to accompany Paul? (there may be a clue in Col 4:10)



The winds were “against” them (i.e., from the west) as they sailed west from Palestine, so they took shelter by sailing on the “lee” (i.e., the north side) of Cyprus. Then they moved cautiously along the coast of Asia Minor, passed by Rhodes and arrived at Cnidus, apparently desiring to sail through the Aegean Sea to Greece and then onward to Italy. However, the wind wouldn't cooperate, so they sailed south to the lee side of Crete. The problem from here is that the passage from Crete to Italy is open sea.




The ancient site of **Myra**, one of the coastal cities of **Lycia**, is situated only 2-3 miles away from the present day town of Demre. The most spectacular collection of Lycian rock tombs are found in Myra.

 The most important building in the nearby town of Demre is the **Church of St. Nicholas**. The first church building on this site was built in the third century AD, and Nicholas served as archbishop there during the fourth century until he was martyred during the reign of Diocletian.


St. Nicholas is the person who eventually became known as **Santa Claus** in the English-speaking world. He was born in **Patara**, which is about 120 miles west of Myra, and spent most of his life in **Myra**.

The legend about St. Nicholas began with a story of a poor man who did not have enough money to pay the necessary dowries for his three daughters to get married. St. Nicholas secretly left three purses of gold in the man's house, and this generous effort transformed over time into a custom among Christians of giving gifts. Initially it was observed on Dec 6, but the day was later moved to Dec 25.


 An earthquake destroyed the Church of St. Nicholas in the sixth century, but it was rebuilt by the Roman Emperor Justinian. Turkish archaeologists reconstructed the church in 1964, and there are still original floor mosaics and frescoes on the walls.


Acts 27:9-26

Sailing Through Disaster: Anchored in God

 The “Fast” referred to by Luke was the great day of atonement of the Jews (Lev 16:29-31), occurring about the end of September or early October. The ancients considered navigation on the Mediterranean unsafe from early October until the middle of March. We do not know precisely when the party left Caesarea (possibly in August), but they would have had ample time to arrive in Rome before October if conditions had been more favorable. The slow progress due to the contrary winds and then the long delay in Fair Havens caused them to be later than expected.²⁰⁹ Apparently Fair Havens did not have a suitable harbor for wintering a ship, so they were forced to move on to a better location.

(27:11) **2** If you were the Centurion in charge of the prisoners, whose advice would you believe – the captain of the ship or an itinerant preacher who is one of the prisoners? What would change your mind?

 Julius had to make decisions based upon whatever advice he could get.

(27:14-20)  A short distance from Crete, they encountered a terrible wind sweeping down from the mountains of Crete (i.e., from the northeast) and pushing their ship out to sea. When Paul describes the wind, he uses the Greek word (*tuphonikos*) from which we get our English word “typhoon.” The storm was so strong that the sailors lashed ropes around the body of the ship to hold it together (v.17) – they must have stopped briefly at the small island of Cauda to do this. The biggest concern seemed to be the potential for this storm, which was driving the ship in a southwesterly direction, to force them to run aground somewhere on the coast of North Africa. The **Syrtis** (v.17) was the name for two quicksands between Carthage and Cyrenaica; the most dangerous one (“Syrtis Major”) was notorious for its sandbanks (Greek *surtis*).²¹⁰

- (27:22-25) ? How did Paul know that they would be safe?
- ➔ An angel told him they would be saved
 - ➔ The angel also reminded Paul of his mission and of God's graciousness
 - ➔ Paul had faith in God that it was true

Acts 27:27-38***Sailing Through Despair: Encouraged by Community***

- 3** Why do you suppose that God required *everyone* to stay in the ship in order for *any* to be saved?
- 4** When do you find it difficult to work together with people?
- 5** How would it affect your attitude and behavior if God told you that in order for *anyone* to succeed, *everyone* must “stay in the ship”?
- ? What are some examples of church strategies that encourage *everyone* to receive blessing and fulfillment?
- ♥ What are some examples of “ropes” that you should “cut away” in order to motivate better engagement and involvement?

Acts 27:39-44***Sailing Through Destruction: Led by Wisdom***

- ? What are some ways that Paul has influenced the people on this ship?
- ? How can you tell that the Centurion, who previously rejected Paul's advice, now respects Paul?
- ★ The soldiers were responsible for the prisoners. If any escaped, the soldiers would be held accountable and punished severely. That's why they wanted to kill the prisoners – to prevent them from escaping.
- ★ As a result of the Centurion's willingness to accept Paul's guidance, *all 276 people were saved*.
- ♥ How many people do you suppose would be helped if *you* recognized God's direction and followed it (like Julius did)?
- ★ By the way, this was at least the *fourth time* that Paul had been shipwrecked (see 2Cor 11:25, which was written before the events of Acts 27).

Acts 28:1-10***Healed by Grace***

- 6** Why did the natives think that Paul had done something bad? How do people express similar notions today?
- 7** What caused the natives to change their conclusion about Paul?
- ★ Many religious people today exhibit the same attitude that Paul encountered on this island. The natives thought that the gods manipulated people for their own pleasure, rewarding good and punishing evil with visible events. But our God is not a *manipulator*, someone who makes things happen just to achieve a result, but rather an *enabler* (in the positive sense) – one who strengthens people to rise above all circumstances and grow through difficult situations.

- ? Why do you think Paul healed people on the island?
- ♥ What abilities or gifts do you have for helping people?
How do you decide when to use them?
- ♥ Do you welcome and entertain strangers as well as these natives did?
What can you start doing now that will prepare you for the next time a stranger visits?

Acts 28:11-16**Strengthened by Love**

- ★ The figurehead of the ship from Alexandria was unusual, and perhaps that is why Luke took note of it. This figurehead contained the likenesses of *two* individuals rather than one: Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of the mythical god Zeus.
- 🌐 Notice the route of their voyage on a map, including the towns from which the disciples came to meet Paul: Rhegium, Puteoli, Forum of Appius (*Appii Forum*, which had a bad reputation as a haunt for thieves and swindlers), and Three Taverns (*Tres Tabernae*). These towns were along the Appian Way, built in 312 BC by Appius Claudius.²¹¹
- ? If you were one of the soldiers escorting Paul to Rome, what would be your thoughts about the trip? What would you think of the reception Paul received?
- ♥ Would non-Christians be impressed by the way that we welcome fellow Christians?

Acts 28:17-31**Bound by Hope**

- ? Why did Paul immediately call together the Jewish leaders in Rome?
- (28:18-19) 8 What does Paul say his reason was for appealing to Caesar?
- (28:21) ? Why do you suppose that neither the Jews in Jerusalem (who tried Paul) nor the Jews from Asia Minor (who had antagonized Paul) sent word about Paul to Jews in Rome?
- (28:22) ? What did the Roman Jews know about the Christians?
- (28:23) 9 What did Paul teach people while he was in prison? See also 28:30-31.
 - ➔ The kingdom (reign) of God
 - ➔ Jesus
 Are these the things that *we* teach people?

★ Notice that there is no mention of what *they* needed to *do*. Devout Jews already focused their lives on the necessary rituals and obligations. What they needed was to hear about the Redeemer. *Whether Jew or Gentile, people without Christ are like the sailors and soldiers on that ship: always trying to do what's best for themselves – whether it be hoisting the boats or killing the prisoners. But God Himself has given us safety by sacrificing Jesus.* That's why Paul's message is all about what God has done through Christ. It's not about us or what we do – it's about recognizing the source of grace and mercy.

That's why Paul quotes Isa 6:9-10. God's ready to heal us, if we'll just come to Him like the people of Malta flocked to Paul (28:9).

? Why do you suppose some people can have so much trouble comprehending the good news?

? Can you give some examples of groups in the world today who are eager to listen to the good news?

? How do you suppose we can help the “hard of hearing” (i.e., those who don't want to listen) to become eager and receptive to the gospel?

(28:30) ? What happened to the persecution by the Jews?

(28:31) ? What does it mean to “proclaim the kingdom of God”?

? How would you describe who Jesus is?



Some events that occurred while Paul was in Rome:

- AD 60 Paul arrived in Rome and was held under house arrest
- AD 60 Paul wrote Ephesians & Colossians from Rome
- AD 61 Paul wrote Philemon from Rome
- AD 62 Paul wrote Philippians from Rome; Luke wrote Acts
- AD 63 Paul released from house arrest



Some events that are thought to have occurred after Paul was released:

- AD 64 Paul visited Macedonia; wrote 1 Timothy
- AD 64 Rome burned, probably caused by Nero, but blamed on Christians
- AD 64? Luke died (at age 84) after living in Achaia for 1-2 years ²¹²
- AD 65 Paul visited Asia Minor; wrote Titus
- AD 67 Paul's final imprisonment (in Rome); wrote 2 Timothy
- AD 68 Paul was martyred (probably beheaded because he was a Roman citizen)
- AD 68? Peter was martyred (inverted crucifixion)



“Church of Christ! The record of these acts of the Holy Ghost have never reached completeness. This is the one book which has no proper close, because it waits for new chapters to be added so fast and so far as the people of God shall reinstate the blessed Spirit in his holy seat of control.” ²¹³



Summary

- ◆ “It is not an accident that Luke's story begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome.”²¹⁴ The Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem with the prophecy that the disciples would be “witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The gospel has overcome all boundaries and obstacles to reach all peoples, and Luke's account affirms that it reached even into the royal palace of the emperor. Although it might appear to end abruptly, there could be no greater conclusion than to joyfully declare that the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ are being preached “boldly and without hindrance.”



Extended Outline of Acts

1	Waiting in Jerusalem	<u>Acts 1</u>	6	1st Missionary Journey & Council	<u>Acts 13-15</u>
	<i>Jesus Revealed</i>	1:1-8		<i>The Missionaries Sent Out</i>	13:1-3
	<i>Jesus Ascended</i>	1:9-11		<i>The Missionaries Opposed</i>	13:4-12
	<i>The Disciples in Prayer</i>	1:12-14		<i>The Good News Offered to Jews</i>	13:13-43
	<i>The Disciples in Action</i>	1:15-26		<i>The Good News Accepted by Gentiles</i>	13:44-52
2	Empowered in Jerusalem	<u>Acts 2-3</u>		<i>The Jews Reject God</i>	14:1-7
	<i>Spirit Manifested</i>	2:1-13		<i>The Gentiles Welcome the "Gods"</i>	14:8-17
	<i>Peter's Message:</i>			<i>Strengthening the Disciples</i>	14:19-28
	<i>Spirit Poured Out</i>	2:14-21		<i>Requirements for Gentiles</i>	15:1-5
	<i>Jesus Raised Up</i>	2:22-36		<i>Salvation Is a Gift, Not a Yoke</i>	15:6-11
	<i>Accepting God's Promise</i>	2:37-47		<i>Salvation Is a Release, Not a Burden</i>	15:12-21
	<i>Sharing God's Gifts</i>	3:1-10		<i>Special Delivery</i>	15:22-35
	<i>Restoring God's People</i>	3:11-26	6+	Letters to Jews & Gentiles	
3	Witnessing in Jerusalem	<u>Acts 4-7</u>		Faith that Motivates	<u>James</u>
	<i>Witnesses to the People</i>	4:1-4		<i>Why Trials?</i>	1:1-18
	<i>Witnesses to the Leaders</i>	4:5-22		<i>Trials Show How Faith Responds</i>	1:19-2:26
	<i>Witnesses to God</i>	4:23-31		<i>Trials Show What Faith Produces</i>	3:1-5:20
	<i>Grace Among Believers</i>	4:32-37		Grace that Liberates	<u>Galatians</u>
	<i>Deception Among Believers</i>	5:1-11		<i>The Source of Grace</i>	1:1-2:21
	<i>Unconstrained Wonders</i>	5:12-16		<i>The Promise of Grace</i>	3:1-4:10
	<i>Unconstrained Preaching</i>	5:12-42		<i>The Examples of Grace</i>	4:12-31
	<i>Servants Chosen</i>	6:1-7		<i>The Acceptance of Grace</i>	5:1-12
	<i>Stephen's Witness</i>	6:8-7:60		<i>The Fruit of Grace</i>	5:13-6:18
4	Going to Judea & Samaria	<u>Acts 8-9</u>	7	2nd Missionary Journey	<u>Acts 15-18</u>
	<i>Overcoming Persecution</i>	8:1-3		<i>Losing a Companion</i>	15:36-41
	<i>Overcoming Culture</i>	8:4-24		<i>Gaining a Companion</i>	16:1-5
	<i>Overcoming Race</i>	8:25-40		<i>Philippi: Eager to Serve</i>	16:6-40
	<i>Overcoming Hatred: the Crisis</i>	9:1-9		<i>Thessalonica: Eager to Oppose</i>	17:1-9
	<i>Overcoming Hatred: the Healing</i>	9:10-22		<i>Berea: Eager to Accept</i>	17:10-15
	<i>Overcoming Hatred: the Welcome</i>	9:23-31		<i>Athens: Eager to Question</i>	17:16-34
	<i>Overcoming Sickness & Death</i>	9:32-43		<i>Corinth: Eager to Work</i>	18:1-17
5	Going to the "Nations"	<u>Acts 10-12</u>		<i>The Return Trip</i>	18:18-22
	<i>A Pair of Visions</i>	10:1-16	7+	Community of Witnesses	
	<i>An Awkward Meeting</i>	10:17-33		Faithful Progress	<u>1 Thes.</u>
	<i>A Surprising Reconciliation</i>	10:34-48		<i>The Gospel Magnified</i>	1:1-10
	<i>A Hesitant Acceptance</i>	11:1-18		<i>The Gospel Delivered</i>	2:1-12
	<i>An Affirmed Mission</i>	11:19-30		<i>The Gospel Accepted</i>	2:13-20
	<i>An Affirmed Petition</i>	12:1-19		<i>The Gospel Reported</i>	3:1-13
	<i>An Extraordinary Fall</i>	12:20-23		<i>Keep Growing – Faith</i>	4:1-12
	<i>An Extraordinary Increase</i>	12:24-25		<i>Keep Watching – Hope</i>	4:13-5:11
				<i>Keep Building – Love</i>	5:12-28
				Hopeful Watching	<u>2 Thes.</u>
				<i>Christ Revealed</i>	1:1-12
				<i>Evil Revealed</i>	2:1-17
				<i>Obedience Revealed</i>	3:1-18

Extended Outline of Acts (cont'd)

8	3rd Missionary Journey	<u>Acts 19-21</u>		9	Defense in Jerusalem & Caesarea	<u>Acts 21-26</u>
	<i>Recognizing the Spirit of Jesus</i>	18:23-19:10			<i>Riots in Jerusalem</i>	21:26-39
	<i>Recognizing the Spirit of Demons</i>	19:11-12			<i>Trial #1: Address to the People</i>	21:40-22:29
	<i>Recognizing the Spirit of the World</i>	19:21-41			<i>Trial #2: Address to the Sanhedrin</i>	22:30-23:35
	<i>Traveling with Paul</i>	20:1-6			<i>Trial #3: Address to Governor Felix</i>	24:1-27
	<i>Worshiping with Paul</i>	20:7-12			<i>Trial #4: Address to Governor Festus</i>	25:1-22
	<i>Advice to Shepherds</i>	20:13-38			<i>Trial #5: Address to King Agrippa II</i>	25:23-26:32
	<i>Warnings to Paul</i>	21:1-14		10	Journey to Rome	<u>Acts 27-28</u>
	<i>Advice to Paul</i>	21:15-25			<i>Sailing through Difficulties:</i>	
8+	Spirituality				<i>Supported by Friends</i>	27:1-8
	Spiritual Discipline	<u>1 Cor.</u>			<i>Sailing through Disaster:</i>	
	<i>1st Reply: On Divisions</i>	1-4			<i>Anchored in God</i>	27:9-26
	<i>2nd Reply: On Discipline</i>	5-6			<i>Sailing through Despair:</i>	
	<i>3rd Reply: On Doctrines</i>	7-16			<i>Encouraged by Community</i>	27:27-38
	Spiritual Disciples	<u>2 Cor.</u>			<i>Sailing through Destruction:</i>	
	<i>Moved by Christ</i>	1-7			<i>Led by Wisdom</i>	27:39-44
	<i>Enriched by Christ</i>	8-9			<i>Healed by Grace</i>	28:1-10
	<i>Proven by Christ</i>	10-13			<i>Strengthened by Love</i>	28:11-16
	Spiritual Obedience	<u>Romans</u>			<i>Bound by Hope</i>	28:17-31
	<i>Righteousness – Good News</i>	1:1-17				
	<i>Righteousness – Bad News</i>	1-3				
	<i>Righteousness – Victory of God</i>	3-8				
	<i>Righteousness – Failure of Israel</i>	9-11				
	<i>Service – Expressing Grace</i>	12-13				
	<i>Service – Building Up the Body</i>	14-15				
	<i>Service – Personal Fellowship</i>	15-16				



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