



True Jesus Church

Acts



B I B L E S T U D Y G U I D E

Acts

TRUE JESUS CHURCH

Department of Literary Ministry

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ISBN: 1-930264-12-7

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Suggestions for Bible Study

Read Carefully

Observation is the most basic step in Bible study. Misinterpretation is often the result of careless reading. Only when we know what the passage says can we interpret what it means. Before each lesson, read the passage closely. Read it a few times until you become familiar with it. Observe words, phrases, paragraph structure, relationships, emphases, as well as anything that seems unusual. In doing so, you will discover things that you could never have if you read it casually.

Use A Pencil

Keep your pen or pencil busy by recording your observations and thoughts as you go through the passage. Mark key words and phrases. Take note of the relationship between words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Jotting your observations down on paper helps you focus your mind on the Bible text and leaves a much deeper impression on your mind. Your notes will also become valuable reference material the next time you come back to the passage.

Study with Prayer

"No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1Cor 2:11). The guidance of the Holy Spirit is key to understanding and being inspired by God's word. Pray everyday and ask God to reveal to you the truth in His words. Whenever you come across a difficult passage, rely on the Holy Spirit by putting it in your prayer. Through your life of prayer, God will open your inner eyes to know His will and give you the strength to put it into practice.

Let the Word Speak to You

Bible study is not an intellectual exercise. Its aim is to change the reader in his thoughts, behavior, and lifestyle to conform to God's will. The final goal of every Bible study is to apply God's word in our lives. God reveals His will to the humble. So always approach the Bible with an attitude to be taught and corrected. When you are willing to let God's word be a mirror to reflect your shortcomings and are determined to carry out His command, your Bible study will have achieved its intended purpose.

Using This Guide

Hands On Approach

This guide is not meant to be your coffee-table reading. Use it as a tool to make your study or discussion more effective. Make use of the spaces in the lessons to record your thoughts and observations.

Outline

One of the exercises under the section “observation” is to record an outline of the passage. Spend time to work on this important exercise because it helps you get the big picture of the entire passage as well as see the relationship between the parts. It also trains you to read the passage carefully and thoughtfully. Try to write the outline without copying the headings from your Bible. Each entry in the outline should accurately reflect the main idea of the paragraph.

Key Words

Key words are words that give meaning to the text or are related to the main idea. Key words are often repeated to mark emphasis. Key words tell you about who, what, when, where, why, or how. Since there are no right or wrong key words, your list may be different from the one provided at the end of the book.

Length of Lesson

Although the lessons are also designed for group Bible study, sometimes a lesson may be too long for a study session. If this happens, the Bible study leader who began the lesson should inform the next leader of where the passage was left off and the discussion results from the first study.

Thoughts on Questions

The end of this book contains suggested answers that serve as pointers when you need help. Since many of the questions do not have standard answers, use the answers provided only as reference. With these thoughts on questions as a starting point, you should be able to come up with more complete answers on your own.

Preparing for Group Bible Studies

Before leading a group Bible study, you should go through the lesson in advance to get a good understanding of the material. Then select questions based on the amount of time you have for discussion and the group’s size, makeup, level of biblical knowledge, etc. Try to also

design additional application questions that you think would suit the particular needs of the group.

The Inductive Method

The inductive approach is an effective way to study the Bible. It follows 3 basic steps: observation, interpretation, and application.

-  **Observation**—*What did God say? How did He say it?* This type of questions helps you look at the Bible passage carefully and equips you for a sound interpretation.
-  **Interpretation**—*What does it mean?* When answering this type of questions, let the Bible interpret itself whenever possible. Look at the immediate context (the surrounding verses) as well as the broader context (the surrounding chapters and the whole Bible) to derive at the intended meaning. Also ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your heart to know the spiritual things that God wants to convey to you.
-  **Application**—*How can I put this into practice?* Application questions encourage you to think about what God is teaching you personally through your study. What are His commands? What shortcomings in you is He pointing out? What message of encouragement does He have for you today? It is in examining your relationship with God and acting out God’s word that the words of the Bible can truly come to life.

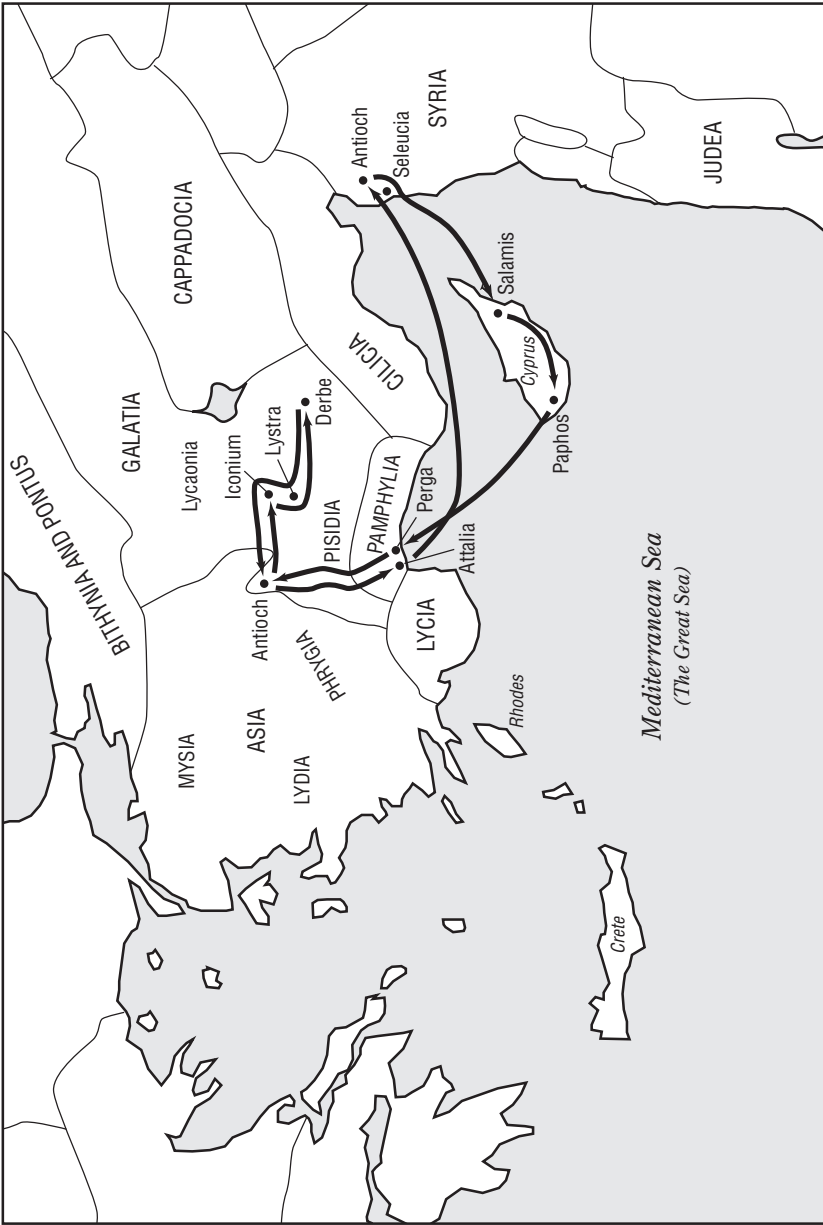
Because the order of the questions in this guide generally follows the order of the Bible text, we did not group the questions according to the 3 steps mentioned above. Instead, we have used symbols to identify the type of question. By helping you become acquainted with these 3 basic types of questions, we hope that you will acquire the ability to develop meaningful questions for future personal studies as well as group discussions.

Footnotes

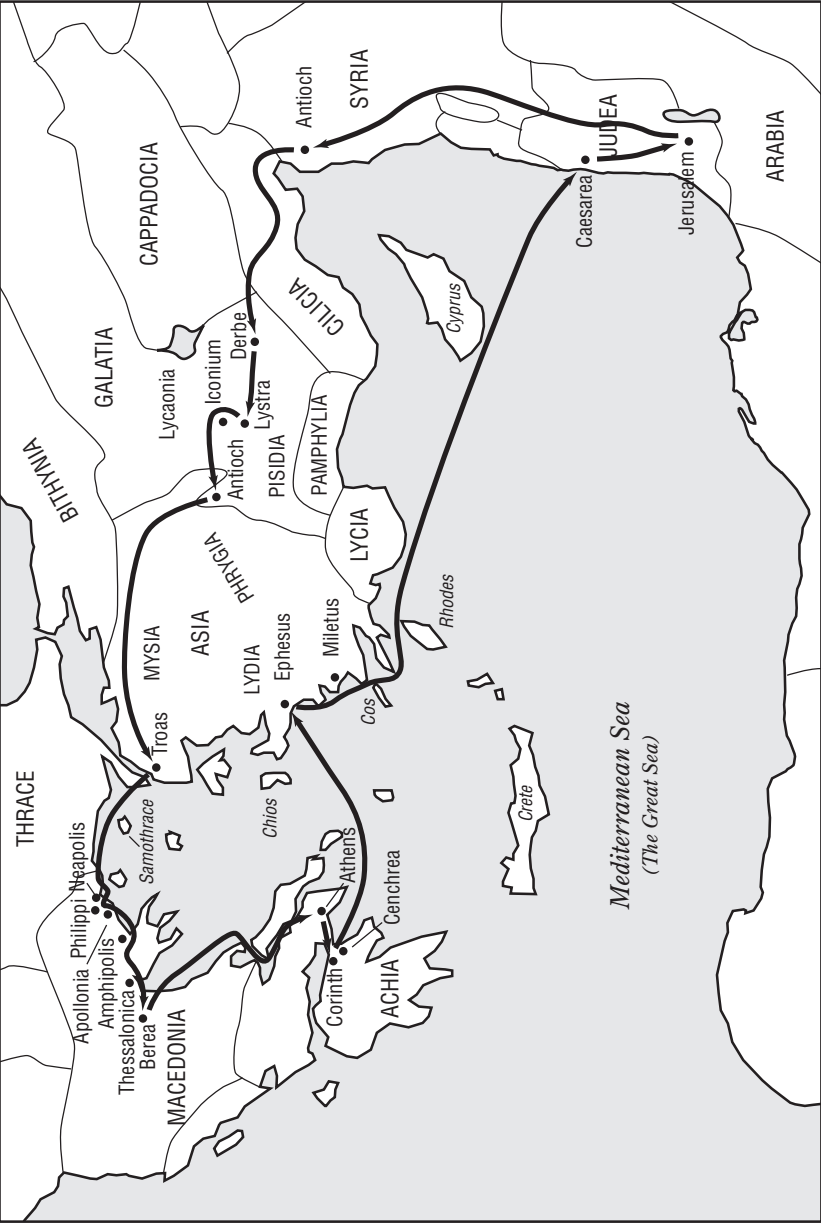
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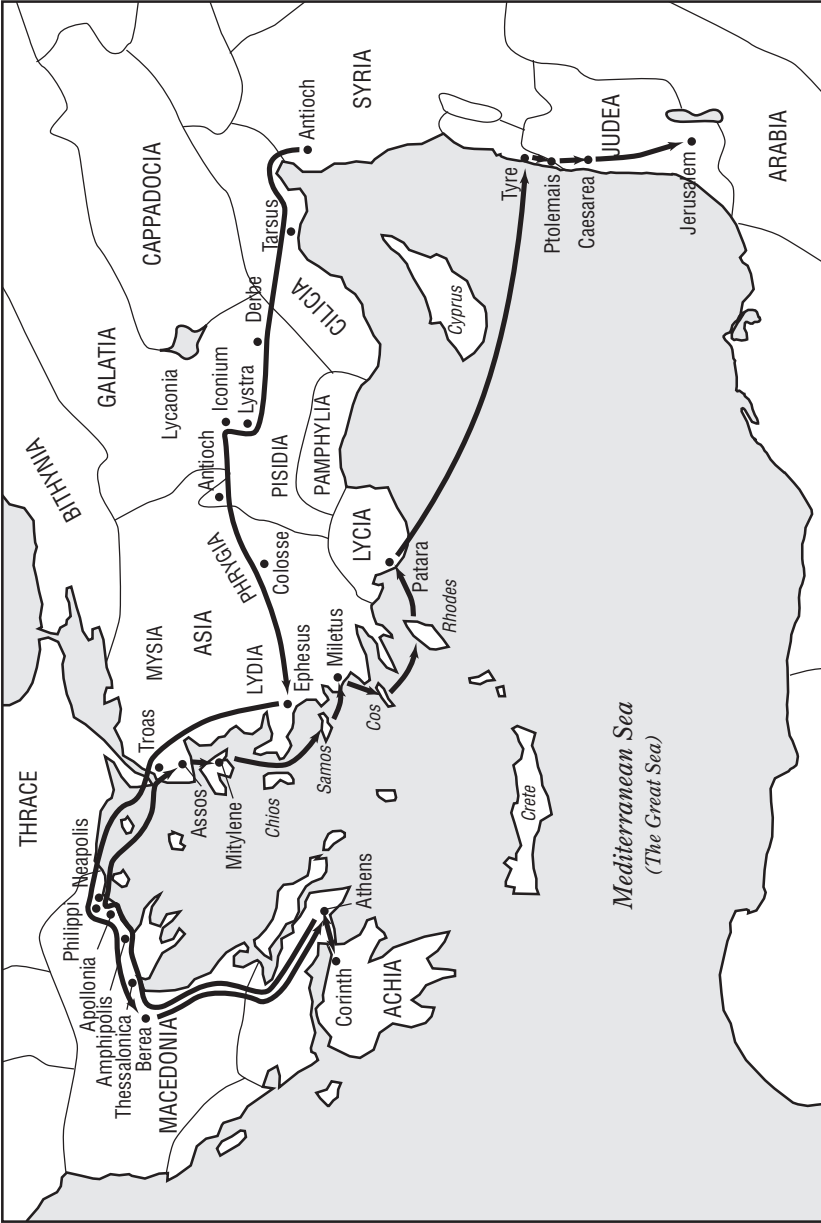
Map A Geography of Acts



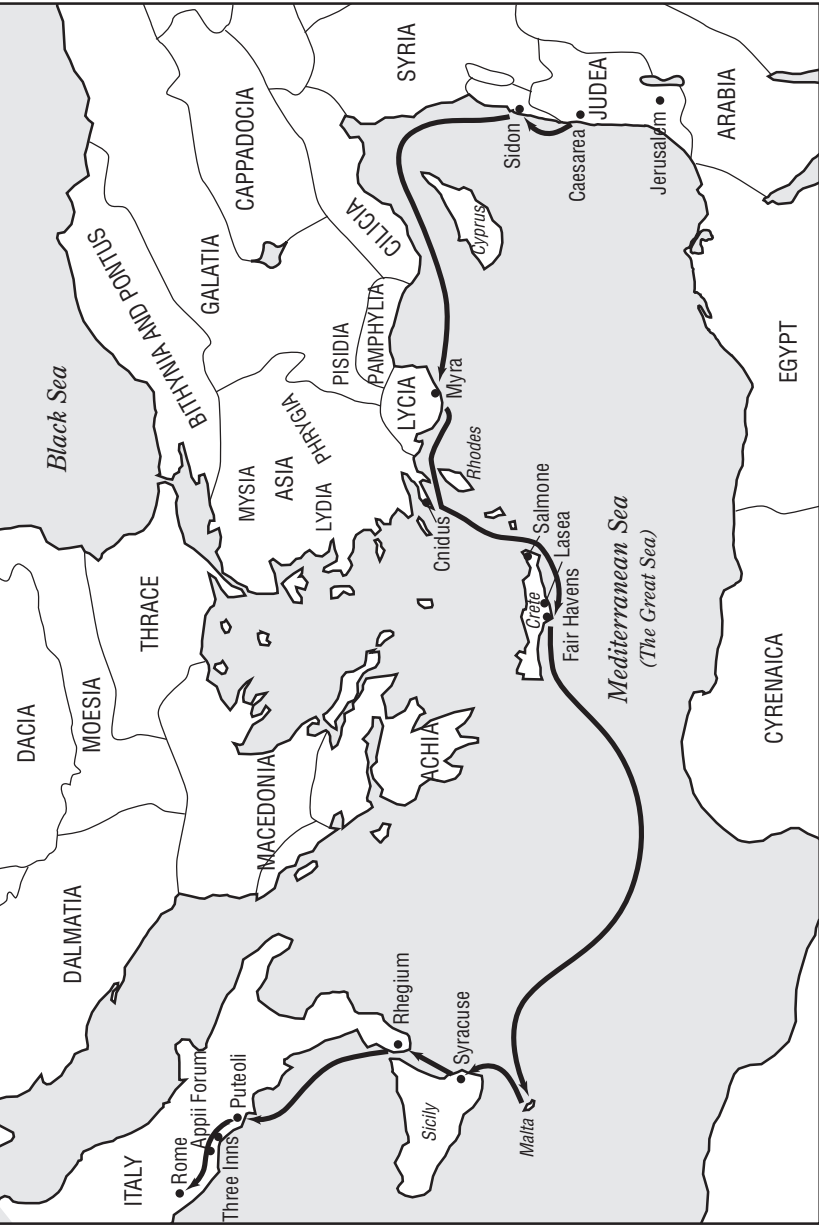
Map B Paul's First Missionary Journey (A.D. 46-48)



Map C Paul's Second Missionary Journey (A.D. 49-52)



Map D Paul's Third Missionary Journey (A.D. 53-57)



Map E Paul's Journey to Rome (A.D. 59-60)

1

“You Shall Be Witnesses to Me”

Author

The prologue to Acts reveals that this work is the second part of the two-volume work addressed to the same person, the first part of which is the Gospel according to Luke. There is a distinct unity in style and language between these two books. All the evidence points to Luke the Gentile physician, a close companion of Paul, as the writer.

Recipient

In Acts 1:1, the writer addresses the account to Theophilus. The title “most excellent” in the Gospel according to Luke indicates that Theophilus was a man of high social standing. He was probably a Gentile convert who had been taught the gospel (Luke 1:4). Aside from this inference, not much is known about the recipient.

Date

Acts was completed after the end of Paul’s two-year imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 61-63) because Luke ended his account with Paul awaiting trial in Rome. The fact that Acts makes no mention of Nero’s persecution of Christians (beginning A.D. 65) and the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) suggests that Acts was completed before these events. Therefore, A.D. 64 is a reasonable date for the composition of Acts.

Place

There is no conclusive evidence on where Luke wrote his account.

Purpose/Occasion

The author stresses in his opening statement in the Gospel according to Luke that his purpose is to compose an orderly account for Theophilus so that he may know the certainty of the things in which he was instructed (Luke 1:1-4). The Gospel records all that Jesus began to do and teach until His ascension (Acts 1:1-2). Acts, a sequel to the Gospel, focuses on what the Lord Jesus *continued* to do after His ascension. It details the apostles’ ministry through the power of the

risen Lord—how they received the promised Holy Spirit and carried out Jesus' command by preaching the gospel in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and finally to the rest of the world.

Unique Characteristics

1. Acts is the only book in the New Testament recording the history of the church. Without Acts, the link between the gospels and epistles would be lost.
2. Acts is a pivotal book of transitions: from Judaism to Christianity, from the law to the gospel, from the Jews to the Gentiles, from a small group of believers to the universal church.
3. Acts records many sermons and speeches, including those of Peter, Stephen, Paul, Gamaliel, the city clerk of Ephesus, and Tertullus.

Central Verse

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

Survey

The book of Acts begins with the resurrected Jesus Christ instructing His apostles to wait for the promised Holy Spirit, who would empower them to preach the gospel. The Lord then told them that they would be His witnesses starting from Jerusalem and progressing to all Judea and Samaria and finally to the ends of the world. After this, Jesus ascended to heaven. As prophesied by Jesus, the apostles did receive the promised Holy Spirit a few days later, and they were immediately filled with power and began testifying for the Lord. The work of spreading the gospel developed exactly according to what Jesus had said:

Witnessing in Jerusalem (1:1-8:4)

After the believers received the Holy Spirit, Peter stood up with the other apostles and preached a powerful sermon to all the Jews and devout men who were present and converted 3,000 that day. As a result the church in Jerusalem was established (2:1-47). What followed is a record of how the infant church developed, including all the trials and tribulations she encountered (3:1-5:42). All the believers in this initial phase of preaching were Jews.

Stephen, one of the seven deacons chosen to sort out the problem of food distribution to the Hellenistic Jewish widows, did great wonders and signs among the people. He was falsely accused and brought to trial. His speech incurred the wrath of the Jews and he was stoned to death (6:1-7:60). The death of Stephen sparked a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, forcing the believers to be scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (8:1-3). But their dispersion led the expansion of the gospel to its second phase.

Witnessing in Judea and Samaria (8:5-12:25)

From chapter 8 onwards, Philip went to Samaria and successfully proclaimed the new message to a people despised by the Jews. Peter and John went there and helped the believers receive the Holy Spirit (8:5-25). This fulfilled the second part of Jesus' prophecy. The Lord also sent Philip to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch as well as all the cities in Samaria (8:26-40).

While the church was undergoing severe tribulation, the Lord Jesus transformed Saul, a violent leading persecutor of the church, into a believer and prepared him for the church's missionary endeavors ahead. Saul, also named Paul, became an apostle and the Lord's instrument in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles (9:1-31).

Meanwhile, the church continued to thrive throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. Luke recounts Peter's preaching and how Peter healed Aeneas in Lydda and Dorcas in Joppa (9:32-43). While in Joppa, Peter was directed by God through a vision to preach to Cornelius, a Gentile centurion at Caesarea. The believers realized that it was the will of God to accept the Gentiles because Cornelius and his family had received the Holy Spirit just as they had (10:1-18). This breakthrough pushed the church into even wider circles as the message was also preached to Greeks in Antioch.

During his pastoral visit, Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Paul and brought him to Antioch. When the church in Antioch learned from the Holy Spirit that there would be a great famine, she assigned Barnabas and Paul to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea (11:19-30).

Back in Judea, persecutions continued. To please the Jewish leaders, Herod joined in the persecution of the Jerusalem church, killing James (John's brother) and imprisoning Peter. But the Lord answered the church's prayer for Peter and sent an angel to release him. Herod, on the other hand, was struck by an angel of the Lord and died. The word of God grew and multiplied (12:1-25).

Witnessing to the ends of the earth (13-28)

Beginning with chapter 13, Antioch in Syria became Luke's focus instead of Jerusalem. All three of Paul's missionary journeys originated from that city.

The first missionary journey concentrates on the Galatian cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (13:1–14:28). Because some men from Judea had come down to teach the Gentile believers the necessity of circumcision, Paul and Barnabas engaged in a sharp controversy with them. So a council met in Jerusalem to resolve this serious issue. The leaders in Jerusalem concurred with the decision of the Holy Spirit and agreed that Gentiles needed not be circumcised. The church in Jerusalem then sent the decision to all the churches, bringing great encouragement to the believers (15:1-31).

In the second missionary journey, Paul parted from Barnabas and revisited the Galatian churches before going into Macedonia and Greece for the first time. He spent much time in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth before returning to Jerusalem and Antioch (15:36–18:22).

In his third missionary journey, Paul went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the disciples there (18:23). He then went to Ephesus and spent almost three years there before revisiting Macedonian and Greece (19:1–14). During this time, Paul felt compelled to go to Jerusalem. Although he was warned by Agabus and others of impending imprisonment, he did not waver in his decision.

Shortly after Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he was falsely accused of defiling the temple (19:15–22:29). The Sanhedrin brought serious charges against him and Paul defended himself three times before governor Felix, Festus and King Agrippa before he appealed to Caesar (22:30–26:32).

As a prisoner, Paul went on a long voyage to Rome, where he was put under house arrest until his trial (27:1–28:31). Acts closes with the encouraging scene of Paul receiving guests to his house prison, preaching the kingdom of God with all confidence and without hindrance.

Themes

The power and the work of the Holy Spirit

From the onset of Acts the Lord Jesus told His apostles that they would receive power to preach the gospel when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8-9). Indeed, after receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples were transformed totally. Whereas they were weak, timid, and had a poor understanding of God's words and will, now, with the power of the Holy Spirit, they had extraordinary courage to preach to the masses. The Holy Spirit also enabled them to preach effectively by giving them eloquence and by inspiring the listeners, as can be seen by Peter's conversion of the 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41). Not only that, they also received power to perform great miracles of healing and exorcism as well as other signs and wonders. They had a clear goal and vision that they did not have before, and the Holy Spirit guided them every step of the way through direct revelation or visions. Throughout the whole narrative, the power and work of the Holy Spirit were evident.

The Growth of the Church

The church grew from a small group of 120 believers in Jerusalem to a widespread and mighty church, extending her boundaries to the whole of Palestine and, eventually, to Gentile territories. Acts goes into details of what the church in the apostolic times did to create this remarkable growth. For instance, the growth of the church in Jerusalem was attributed to the disciples' focus on the teachings of the apostles, fellowship, prayers and practice of love (Acts 2:40-47). The church in Antioch grew because they had the services of a good worker, Barnabas, who was full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:23-24). By studying the passages that describe church growth, we are able to learn many invaluable lessons.

Witnessing

If there is one theme that could sum up the whole of Acts, it would be witnessing. Acts started off by describing the origin of the commission for evangelism, its overall plan (Acts 1:1-8), and the initial group of people chosen by God to undertake this task. It then narrates how they received the power to witness for the Lord and their efforts from Jerusalem to Gentile lands.

Acts also goes into the message of their witnessing—repentance and belief in Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour and who had

resurrected from the dead; baptism into Christ for the remission of sins and receiving the promised Holy Spirit.

The strategies the apostles employed in their witnessing were also evident. For example, Paul always approached the Jews in the synagogue first, usually on the Sabbath Day. Then he would reach out to the Gentiles (Acts 13:5,14,42 ; 14:1,2; 17:1-3).

Key Words/Phrases

Holy Spirit, witness, church, gospel, the Lord added to their number, the name of Jesus, boldness, signs and wonders, continue with one accord, every day, joy.

Modern Relevance

The Acts of the Apostles is one of the most practical books in the Bible. It describes all the factors involved in church growth and progress of the gospel. If we can apply all the principles outlined in Acts, then church growth will be assured and the gospel will be propagated as speedily as in the time of the apostles.

The teachings and practices of the early church form the basis for the present-day church. The spirit of service of the apostles also serves as an excellent example for divine workers today. Their love, their submission to the Holy Spirit, their humility and endurance are all worthy of our emulation.

Furthermore, the schemes of the devil to disrupt and stop the work of God are also seen clearly. If we are aware of the work of the evil spirit then, we can see through his tactics and take preventative measures. We will be able to guard ourselves from falling into his traps.

More importantly, we must learn from the apostles and be filled and led by the Holy Spirit. It is not by might nor by power but by the Spirit of God that we can accomplish anything.

Finally, the command of our Lord Jesus continues to apply to all believers today. We are all witnesses of the Lord who have been entrusted with a commission. We must continue the work of the apostles and complete the final phase of sending the gospel message to the ends of the earth.

1:1-26				
2:1-47				
3:1-26				
4:1-37				
5:1-11				
5:12-42				
6:1-15				
7:1-60				
8:1-40				
9:1-31				
9:32-43				
10:1-11:18				
11:19-30				
12:1-25				
13:1-52		1st Journey		
14:1-28				
15:1-35				
15:36-16:40		2nd Journey		
17:1-34				
18:1-22				
18:23-19:41		3rd Journey		
20:1-38				
21:1-17				
21:18-40				
22:1-30				
23:1-35				
24:1-27				
25:1-27				
26:1-32				
27:1-44				
28:1-31				

Chart A Survey of Acts

Jesus' Command and Promise to His Witnesses

The Basics

Setting

In the book of Acts, Luke continues where he left off in his gospel. In this first chapter, he narrates the work of the Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection. The Lord appeared to the disciples and taught them. He promised them the Holy Spirit and gave them the great commission to preach the gospel to the end of the earth. Then, before their eyes, the Lord ascended to heaven, and the angels proclaimed that He will come again. Luke's account of these events sets the stage for the establishment of the church and shows that it is through the Lord's continual abidance that the church would fulfill her mission.

Key Verse

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

Did You Know...?

1. **Apostles** (1:2): the word "apostle" literally means "one sent forth." Originally, this term was used to designate the twelve disciples whom Jesus had sent forth to preach the gospel and to be with Him during His ministry. Later, the word was used to also refer to Christian messengers and teachers (See 2Cor 8:23; Php 2:25). "In the New Testament [it was] originally the official name of those twelve of the disciples whom Jesus chose to send forth first to preach the gospel and to be with him during the course of His ministry on earth. The word also appears to have been used in a non-official sense to designate a much wider circle of Christian messengers and teachers (See 2Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25)."¹⁰

Observation

Outline

- _____ (1:1-2)
- _____ (1:3-8)
- _____ (3)
- _____ (4-5)
- _____ (8)
- _____ (1:9-11)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

1. Where else in the Bible does it record the appearances of the resurrected Jesus and His ascension?

2. According to the four gospels and Acts, what are the final instructions and words of Jesus before His ascension? 

3. In what ways did the Lord Jesus prepare the apostles to be His witnesses during the forty-day post-resurrection period? Base your answer on the current passage. 

-
- 4a. Record the promises in this passage. 
-
- 4b. Why are these promises important to Christians?  
-

Segment Analysis

1:1-2

1. Who was the Acts of the Apostles addressed to? 
-
2. What is Luke referring to when he mentions the former account? 
-
3. What is the content of the former account? 
-
4. Why were the disciples called “apostles” (2)? 
-

1:3-8

5. What did Jesus teach His disciples during this period? 
-

6. What did Jesus command His disciples to do? 
-
- 7a. Compare the disciples’ question (6) and the Lord’s answer (7-8). What was the disciples’ concern? What did the Lord Jesus tell them to focus on instead?  
-
- 7b. What teachings can we gather from this dialog? 
-

1:9-11

8. From where did Jesus ascend to heaven? 
-
9. The apostles personally saw the Lord’s ascension into heaven. How does the Lord’s ascension motivate us, as it must have motivated the disciples, to witness for Christ?  
-
10. What did the angels tell the disciples? 
-
11. In terms of fulfilling the Great Commission, why is it important to constantly remind ourselves of Jesus’ coming?  
-

Preparing for the Ministry

The Basics

Setting

According to the Lord's instructions, the disciples returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promised Holy Spirit. In the meantime, they also chose Matthias to take the place of Judas. With all things in place and being of one accord in prayer, the disciples were now ready to receive the power from above.

Key Verse

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication..." (1:14).

Did You Know...?

1. **A Sabbath's day journey** (1:12): According to rabbinical teaching, a person should travel no more than 2,000 cubits, which is about one kilometer or two-thirds of a mile, on a Sabbath day (This reasoning was derived from interpretations of passages such as Ex 16:29 and Num 35:5).
2. **Upper room** (1:13): Upper rooms in Palestinian homes were usually the choicest rooms because they were more secluded from the crowded streets below. They often served as places of assembly, study, and prayer.^{11/260}
3. **"Akel Dama"** (1:19) means "Field of Blood." It was a potter's field used to bury strangers (Mt 27:5-8).
4. **They cast their lots** (1:26): The casting of lots was a ritual used in ancient times to make important decisions. This method was used by the high priest to select the scapegoat used on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:8-10). Joshua also cast lots to allocate the land of Canaan to the various tribes (Num 26:55-56, Josh 14:2). This practice has been linked with the Urim and Thummin on the breastpiece of the high priest that were used to decide important matters (Ex 28:30). This practice was not completely random like

flipping a coin because the decision was actually from the Lord (Prov 16:33). It was used on this occasion, coupled with prayer, to select a replacement for Judas. But, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, this practice was done away with. We now have the Spirit of God dwelling in us to personally guide us in decision-making.

Observation

Outline

_____ (1:12-14)
 _____ (1:15-26)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

1:12-14

- 1a. What did the disciples do after Jesus' ascension? 

- 1b. What important lessons can today's church learn from their example? 

2. Who did this group of disciples include? 

3. Recall an experience in which you waited for God's promise. What challenges did you face, and what lessons did you learn from that experience? 

1:15-26

4. How many disciples gathered in Jerusalem? 
5. What happened to Judas Iscariot after he had betrayed the Lord? 
- 6a. What was required of an apostle? 
- 6a. Applying this requirement to us today, what do we need to do to be an effective witness for Christ? 
7. Who were the nominees, and who was finally chosen? 
8. How is the account of the choosing of Matthias related to the passage of the last lesson? 

9. Study the decision-making process that the disciples used. Applying this process to us, what components are essential in making decisions, especially those concerning the ministry? 

The Holy Spirit Has Come (1)

The Basics

Setting

An unprecedented miracle happened as the disciples gathered with one accord in one place. For the first time in history, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon believers, fulfilling Joel's prophecies and Jesus' promise. The Pentecostal experience would become the benchmark for the apostles and for the church today to determine if an individual has received the Holy Spirit.

Key Verse

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

Did You Know...?

1. **The Day of Pentecost** (2:1) was also known as "the Feast of Weeks," "First Fruits of the Wheat Harvest," (Ex 23:16; 34:22) and "the Day of the First Fruits" (Num 28:26). It was 50 days after the Passover. It was a celebration in which the Israelites offer their first fruits to God as a thanksgiving and expect God to bless the rest of the harvest period (Lev 23:15-19; Num 28:26-29).
2. **Parthians** (2:9): People of north-west Persia (Iran) who lived in the general region southeast of the Caspian sea.
3. **Medes** (2:9): People from Media, from Madai, Japeth's son (Gen 10:2)
4. **Elamites** (2:9): People from Elymais, the region on the east bank of the Tigris.
5. **Mesopotamia** (2:9), meaning "the country between two rivers," is bounded northeast by the Tigris, and southwest by the Euphrates.
6. **Capadocia** (2:9) is the most eastern province of Asia Minor.

7. **Pontus** (2:9) was a large district in northern Asia Minor, extending along the coast of the Pontus Euxinus Sea. It roughly corresponds to the modern Trebizond.¹⁰
8. **Asia** (2:9) refers neither to Asia Minor nor the continent but the region west of Asia Minor, with Ephesus as the capital, where the seven churches were located in Revelations.
9. **Phrygia** (2:10) is the western part of central Asia Minor.
10. **Pamphylia** (2:10) is the southern province of Asia Minor
11. **Libya** (2:10) was also called the country of the Ludim (Gen 10:13). It is a large tract in Northern Africa along the Mediterranean and to the west of Egypt. Cyrene was one of its five cities.⁷
12. **Cyrene** (2:10) is the chief city of Cyrenaica in North Africa
13. **Arabs** (2:11) dwelt in the desert lands south and east of Palestine, all called generally Arabia.
14. **Cretans** (2:11) are the inhabitants of Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean.
15. **The third hour of the day** (2:15): 9 a.m.

Observation

Outline

- _____ (2:1-4)
- _____ (2:5-13)
- _____ (2:14-21)

Key Words/Phrases

One accord, tongues, Holy Spirit, confused, amazed, perplexed, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

General Analysis

1. Why is the Pentecostal experience crucial to the development of Acts? 

2. What special purpose do you think God had for choosing to pour out the Holy Spirit during the feast of the Jews? 🔑

Segment Analysis

2:1-4

1. “They were all with one accord in one place” (1). Why do you think Luke records this? 🔑

2a. What sudden phenomenon began the whole series of events? 👁

2b. What possible significance is there to this phenomenon? 🔑

3. What sat on each of the disciples when they received the Holy Spirit? 👁

4. What was the evidence that they had received the Holy Spirit? 👁

2:5-13

5. What happened when the people in Jerusalem heard the sound of the Holy Spirit? 👁

6. What were the reaction of the devout Jews, and why? 👁 🔑

7. How did the rest of the multitude respond to the event? 👁

8. Were the disciples speaking 15 earthly languages, or were they speaking in an unintelligible tongue? How do you know? 🔑

2:14-36

9. How did Peter convince the multitude that they were not drunk? 👁

10. How did Peter explain the phenomenon that the multitude had witnessed? 👁

11. How would you explain to a first-time visitor to the church about speaking in tongues? 🔑

12. According to Joel, when will the Holy Spirit be poured out? 

13. How did the coming of the Holy Spirit fulfill the prophecy of verse 21? 

5

The Holy Spirit Has Come (2)

The Basics

Setting

The multitude in Jerusalem had gathered at the great sound that accompanied the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. They were all amazed and perplexed by this unprecedented miracle. Peter stood up with the other apostles and explained to them about God’s promised Holy Spirit. In this lesson, we will study the remaining portion of Peter’s message and the conversion that resulted. We will also take a glimpse of the believers’ lives in the early church.

Key Verse

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

Observation

Outline

_____ (2:22-36)

_____ (2:37-41)

_____ (2:42-47)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

2:22-36

- 1a. What was the main point of Peter’s message? 

- 1b. How did Peter support his point? 

- 2. How did Peter show that David was not speaking about himself, but about the Christ, in Psalm 16:8-11? 

- 3. When witnessing to someone, what key facts about Jesus should you share? 

- 4. How do we know, based on Peter’s message, that receiving the Holy Spirit is not a silent experience but involves some obvious external sign?  

- 5. How would you use the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit to witness to someone about Jesus Christ? 

2:37-41

- 6. How did the multitude respond to Peter’s message? 

- 7a. What did Peter command them to do? 

- 7b. What promise is given to those who obey this command? 

- 8. How can baptism, which is an external sign, be effective for the remission of sins? 

- 9. In Matt 28:19, the Lord Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But here, Peter commanded the people to baptize in the name of Jesus Christ. How do you explain the difference? 

- 10. What did Peter mean by the words, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” How can we apply this to our Christian living? 

11. In this passage, we can see two main parameters of church growth. What are they?  

- 12a. Record the factors that contributed to the rapid growth of the early church in Jerusalem and explain how each factor contributes to church growth.  

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

- 12b. What aspects do you think are lacking in yourself and in your congregation? What steps can you and your congregation take to improve in those areas? 🍄

Healing of the Lame Man

The Basics

Setting

In the last chapter, we learned how the pouring out of the Holy Spirit resulted in the establishment of the church. We also saw how the early church was full of vitality and grew daily. The passage of this lesson records a miracle that will spark off a second growth phase of the church. This powerful miracle provided Peter with a golden opportunity to witness for the Lord to the people in Jerusalem. As a result of the miracle and Peter's subsequent preaching, more than five thousand joined the thriving church.

Key Verse

“Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’” (3:6).

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

Did You Know...?

1. **The ninth hour** (3:1) was 3 p.m. The Jews prayed three times a day: 1) early in the morning, in connection with the morning sacrifice; 2) at the ninth hour, in connection with the evening sacrifice; and 3) at sunset.
2. **The gated...called Beautiful** (3:2) was the favorite entrance to the temple's court. It led from the court of the Gentiles to the court of women. Josephus calls it the gate of Nicanor and describes it as wonderfully rich and beautiful (Jos. Ant. 15:11). The unfortunate were often placed at the gates to receive alms from the multitudes who entered to worship.⁶
3. **Porch which is called Solomon's** (3:11) "was a very magnificent structure on the east side of the temple. The account

Josephus gives of it is this; ‘there was a porch without the temple, overlooking a deep valley, supported by walls of four hundred cubits, made of four square stone, very white; the length of each stone was twenty cubits, and the breadth six; the work of king Solomon, who first founded the whole temple’ (Antiqu. 1. 20. c. 8. sect. 7). This was not the porch built by Solomon, but was an imitation of it. It was built on the same spot and it bore his name”⁵

Observation

Outline

- _____ (3:1-10)
- _____ (3:11-26)
- _____ (11-18)
- _____ (19-26)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

3:1-8

1. What were Peter and John doing when they met the lame man? Why is this significant?  

- 2a. What did the lame expect to receive from Peter and John? What did Peter give him instead? 

- 2b. What does this contrast teach us about helping people?

3. Peter fixed his eyes on the lame man. What does this gesture indicate? 

4. Compare “silver and gold” and “what I have.” As a witness for the Lord, which do you depend on more?  

5. Has God ever healed in some way, whether spiritual or physical, just as He healed this lame man? Share your personal testimony. 

- 6a. What was the response of the lame man after he was healed? 

- 6b. What can we learn from the man’s response? 

- 3:11-18
7. What effect did the miracle have on the multitude? 

- 8a. What did the people attribute the miracle to? 

- 8b. Who did Peter attribute the miracle to? 

- 8c. What can we learn from Peter? 

- 9. According to Peter, what did the miracle demonstrate about Jesus? 

- 10a. How did Peter’s words bring the miracle into direct relevance to the multitude?  

- 10b. What does this teach us about an important goal in preaching? 

2:19-26

- 11. What is Peter’s call to action? 

- 12. What are the promises that accompany repentance and conversion? 

- 13. Verse 19 speaks of the blotting out of sins through repentance and conversion. Does this verse exclude the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins, since it makes no mention of baptism? 

- 14. How does repentance and conversion result in “times of refreshing”? What are the “times of refreshing”?  

- 15. Explain the meaning of verses 20 and 21. 

- 16. Why does Peter speak of the OT prophets and Abraham?  

- 17. What blessing has God sent Jesus to bring to us?  

Rise of Opposition

The Basics

Setting

The miraculous healing that just took place at the temple drew a great multitude to the apostles, who grasped the opportunity to preach Jesus Christ. Immediately, opposition arose. The religious rulers arrested the apostles, brought them into their council, and forbade them to preach the name of Jesus. Nevertheless, the apostles and the church withstood the test of faith, found courage in the Lord, and became even more dauntless in preaching the word.

Key Verse

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (4:12).

“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (4:20).

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (4:31).

Did You Know...?

1. **Captain of the temple** (4:1): “A member of one of the leading priestly families; next in rank to the high priest (see 5:24,26; Lk 22:4,52).”^{12/1653} “[He] was not a military officer, but superintendent of the guard of priests and Levites who kept watch in the temple by night.”⁷
2. **Sadducees** (4:1): A Jewish sect that comprised of priestly descendants, who also controlled the temple. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead or a personal Messiah. They held that the Messianic age had already come and must be preserved. The high priest, who was a Sadducee, presided over the Sanhedrin (see 5:17; 23:6-8; Mt 22:23-33).^{12/1653}

3. **Evening** (4:3): When the evening sacrifices ended at about 4:00 PM, the temple gates would be closed. Any judgments involving life and death must be take place during daylight hours.^{12/1653}
4. **Rulers, elders, and scribes** (4:5): These three groups formed the Sanhedrin. “Rulers” was frequently a synonym for “the high priests.”^{11/302}
5. **Annas** (4:6) “was high priest A.D. 7-14. In A.D. 25 Caiaphas, who had married the daughter of Annas (John 18:13), was raised to that office, and probably Annas was now made president of the Sanhedrin, or deputy or coadjutor of the high priest, and thus was also called high priest along with Caiaphas (Luke 3:2). By the Mosaic law the high-priesthood was held for life (Numbers 3:10); and although Annas had been deposed by the Roman procurator, the Jews may still have regarded him as legally the high priest. Our Lord was first brought before Annas, and after a brief questioning of him (John 18:19-23) was sent to Caiaphas... Annas was president of the Sanhedrin before which Peter and John were brought (Acts 4:6).”⁷
6. **Caiaphas** (4:6) was Annas’ son-in-law, who was high priest for eighteen years (A.D. 18-36).
7. **John** (4:6): This may be Jonathan son of Annas, who was appointed high priest in A.D. 36 to replace Caiaphas.
8. **Herod** (4:27): Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (cf. Lk 23:7-12).
9. **Chief Cornerstone** (4:11): This was the most significant stone in the building because it determined the building’s design and orientation.^{12/1890} The corner foundation stone was acquired, moved, and laid at great cost and care. “Hillyer mentions one stone in a quarry that was sixty-nine feet by twelve feet by thirteen feet...”^{11 Vol12/230}
10. **Council/Sanhedrin** (4:15): “The Sanhedrin (*synedrion*, “council”) was the senate and supreme court of the nation, which had jurisdiction in all noncapital cases—though it also advised the Roman governors in capital cases—and in one case, viz., that of Gentiles trespassing beyond the posted barriers into the inner courts of the temple, could on its own sentence even a Roman citizen to death (cf. 21:28-29; Jos. War VI, 124-28 [ii.4]). The Sanhedrin consisted of the high priest, who by virtue of his office was president, and seventy others, made up of members of the

high priestly families, a few influential persons of various formal ideological allegiances or backgrounds within Judaism, and professional experts in the law drawn from both Sadducean and Pharisaic ranks. It was dominated by the Sadducees and probably came together mostly at their request. It met in a hall adjoining the southwest part of the temple area, probably at the eastern end of a bridge spanning the Tyropean Valley and next to an open-air meeting place called the Xystos (cf. Jos. War II, 344 [xvi.3]; V, 144 [iv. 2]; VI, 354 [vi.2]).”^{11/302}

Observation

Outline

- _____ (4:1-4)
- _____ (4:5-12)
- _____ (4:13-22)
- _____ (4:23-31)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

4:1-4

- 1a. How did the religious leaders react to Peter’s and John’s preaching?
- _____
- _____
- 1b. Why did they react this way?
- _____
- _____
- _____

4:5-12

- 2a. What did the council question Peter and John about?
- _____
- _____
- 2b. What was the main point of Peter’s reply?
- _____
- _____
- 2c. What was the point of quoting Psalm 118:22?
- _____
- _____
- 3a. Why are the words of verse 12 a stumbling block for many people today?
- _____
- _____
- 3b. Why must we continue to preach the same message despite people’s objections? Do you truly believe in the truth of this message?
- _____
- _____
- 4. How did the Holy Spirit help Peter at this moment? What does this tell you about the work of the Holy Spirit?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 4:13-22
- 5. Why did the council marvel at Peter and John? What made it evident that “they had been with Jesus”?
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 6a. Why was the council not able to find any way to punish Peter and John? 
-
-
- 6b. What did the council decide to do in the end? 
-
-
7. How did these leaders' actions show their callousness? Why do you think they were so hard-hearted?  
-
-
-
- 8a. How did the apostles respond to the council's threats? 
-
-
- 8b. How does their response teach us about an important principle in our conduct? 
-
-
-
- 9a. What had Peter and John seen and heard that they could not but speak about? 
-
-
-
- 9b. Do you feel compelled to speak about what you have seen and heard? What makes a person compelled to witness?  
-
-
-

4:23-31

10. How did the church respond to the opposition of the religious leaders, who had just outlawed preaching in Jesus' name? 
-
-
11. What do we observe about the church here that can serve as good examples for the church today?  
-
-
-
12. The believers recalled of the prophecy in the Psalms about the opposition against the Christ. What was their understanding about and attitude towards the forces of opposition? What can we learn from them?   
-
-
-
-
13. Based on the believers' prayer, what two things can we ask for in our prayer when the work of preaching is being hindered? How will they help in advancing the gospel?  
-
-
-
-
14. What was the effect of the prayer? 
-
-
-

God's Grace and Judgment in the Church

The Basics

Setting

The church in Jerusalem had successfully overcome the first wave of oppositions. In this passage, Luke gives us a report on the grace and power of the Lord on the church as well as the love and unity of the believers. But Satan found his way into the heart of a few unfaithful and attempted to corrupt the church through their deceit. However, God intervened swiftly and decisively to remove the evil from within the church. As a result, the fear of the Lord came upon everyone in the church and all who heard about the divine judgement. The Lord continued to manifest His great power, and the believers continued to grow in number.

Key Verse

"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common" (4:32).

"...Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." (5:4).

Did You Know...?

1. **Levite** (4:36): The Lord had instructed the Israelites that the Levites should have no inheritance (Deut 18:1). There are some possible reasons why Barnabas owned a field: 1) The regulations for the Levites may have applied only within the land Palestine, and perhaps the land that Barnabas owned was in Cyprus. 2) He may have been married, and the land sold may have been from his wife's property. 3) The prohibition against Levite ownership of land was probably no longer observed. ^{12/1654}
2. **Cyprus** (4:36) is an island in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea.

3. **"Kept back"** (5:2): This verb, *nosphizo*, is the same as the verb used in the Septuagint (early Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) for Achan's act of stealing.

Observation

Outline

_____ (4:32-37)
 _____ (5:1-11)
 _____ (5:12-16)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

1. What are the similarities between this passage and Acts 2:40-47?


2. Why do you think Luke repeatedly reports about the lives of the believers in the church? 

Segment Analysis

4:32-37

- 1a. How did the lives of the believers show that they were indeed “of one heart and one soul”? 

- 1b. Based on the recording in this paragraph, what do you think are the important prerequisites for unity among believers?  


- 2. How should the church today practice the sharing of possessions to take care of the needy? 

5:1-16

- 3a. Was it wrong for Ananias and Sapphira to keep some of the money from the sale of their property? What sin were Ananias and Sapphira punished for?  

- 3b. What could have prompted Ananias and Sapphira to do what they did? 

- 4a. Why do you think the punishment was so severe and swift for the sins this couple had committed? Was the punishment justifiable? 

- 4b. What do you think would have been the consequence if the sin of Ananias and Sapphira had gone unpunished? 

- 5. What impact did this event bring? 

- 6. What does it mean to “lie to God” or to “test the Spirit of the Lord”? 

- 7. What lessons did you learn from this event about
- 7a. Offerings and charitable deeds?  

- 7b. Lying to God and Testing the Spirit of the Lord  

- 7c. Satan’s work?  

7d. Church growth?  

8. The signs and wonders through the apostles elicited two kinds of responses from among those outside the church, according to verses 13 and 14. Why do you think the reactions are so different?  

9

The Apostles’ Arrest and Trial

The Basics

Setting

While God continued to work mightily to expand the church, the forces of evil also worked fiercely to oppose God’s work. Seeing that the apostles still preached the name of Jesus Christ despite the council’s earlier threat and how they had drawn a great multitude by the signs and wonders that had been done, the high priest and the Sadducees came and arrested the apostles for the second time. But with God’s help, the apostles stood dauntless against the council’s futile efforts to intimidate them.

Key Verse

“But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men’” (5:29).

Did You Know...?

- 1. **Gamaliel** (5:34) “was the most distinguished Jewish rabbi of this time. His fame is preserved in the Talmud. He was a grandson of Hillel, a still more famous teacher. Paul was his pupil (Acts 22:3).”⁶
- 2. **Theudas** (5:36) was probably one of the rebel leaders who caused disorder in Palestine after the death of King Herod in A.D. 4.
- 3. **Judas of Galilee** (5:37): According to Josephus (Antiq. XVIII c. 1. sect. 1), Judas led a rebellion against the Roman government in A.D. 6 when Judah became a province of Rome. At that time, the governor of Syria, Quirinius, conducted a census (Lk 2:2) for the purpose of assessing tax, and Judas, claiming that this would lead to the enslavement of the Jews, started the rebellion. The rebels were quickly subdued by the Romans and their followers scattered.

Observation

Outline

- (5:17-18)
- (5:19-21)
- (5:22-33)
- (5:34-40)
- (5:41-42)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

1. Record what we can learn about God’s will from this passage.

Segment Analysis

5:17-21

- 1a. What was the reaction of the high priest and the Sadducees to the works of the apostles?
- 1b. Why did they react this way?

2. How did the Lord deliver the apostles from prison?
3. What was the angel’s instruction to the apostles?
4. If you were thrown into prison for sharing your faith, how would you feel? Would you continue to share your faith after your release?
5. How strongly do you believe that the gospel message we preach is the “word of life” (20)? How does this belief motivate you to preach the gospel?

5:22-33

6. What was it that angered the high priest the most?
- 7a. What were the main points of the apostles’ response to the council’s question?
- 7b. What did “obeying God” mean for the apostles?

8a. To whom does God give His Holy Spirit (32)? Why?  

8b. How does this fact apply to us today when we pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit? 

9. What was the result of the apostles' words? What does this tell us about the men in the council?  

10a. Have you ever succumbed to men's demands and gone against God's command? Give an example. 

10b. Why is it often difficult to obey God rather than men? What consequences do you need to be ready for if you decide to obey God rather than men? 

5:34-40

11a. What was Gamaliel's advice to the council? 

11b. How is this advice applicable today? 

12. What was the outcome of the trial? 

5:41-42

13. How did the apostles respond to the threat and beating? Why?  

14. What does verse 42 say about the frequency and duration of the apostle's preaching? 

15. What can we learn from the apostles?  

16. What difficulties have you encountered in preaching about Jesus Christ? How do you deal with these difficulties? 

The Choosing of the Seven

The Basics

Setting

The church continued to thrive and grow despite the threat and persecution of the Jewish authorities. God worked mightily with the apostles. But as the congregation of believers grew in size, it became increasingly challenging for the apostles to take care of all the matters in the church. As a result, a complaint arose from among the believers concerning the matter of daily distribution. At this point, the apostles took immediate action to address this issue. By delegating the task of distribution to the seven men chosen by the congregation, the apostles were able to resolve the problem at hand and continue to focus on their mission. This important decision opened the way to further rapid expansion of the church.

Key Verse

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

Did You Know...?

1. **Hebrews** (6:1) were Aramaic speaking Jews native to Palestine.
2. **Hellenists** (6:1) were Greek speaking Jews usually born outside Palestine.
3. According to the Talmud, Hellenists were frequently categorized by the native-born of Jerusalem as second-class Israelites.^{11/329}

Observation

Outline

- _____ (6:1)
 _____ (6:2-4)
 _____ (6:5-7)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

6:1

- 1a. What problem was the growing church in Jerusalem encountering? 

- 1b. Why did this problem arise? 

2. How had the daily distribution been handled prior to this complaint? 

3. What lesson can the church today learn from the problem that confronted the apostolic church? 

3. What potential problems do you think might have resulted if this issue had remained unresolved? 

4. What are some things the church today needs to be aware of when a congregation consists of groups of different cultures and languages? 🗣️

6:2-4

5. How did the apostles solve the problem? 👁️

6. What was the congregation’s response to the apostles’ proposal? 👁️

7a. What were the criteria of the seven men to be chosen? 👁️

7b. Why were these spiritual qualifications necessary, even though their work seemed to be unrelated to meeting the members’ spiritual needs? Explain how these qualifications would help in their service. 🔑

8. What can we learn from the apostles in in terms of?

8a. Their reaction to the complaint 👁️ 🔑 🗣️

8b. The delegation of work 👁️ 🔑 🗣️

9. Is your local church as a whole focused on prayer and the ministry of the word? Are there certain problems that are diverting the attention of the church from its primary tasks? What can the church do to address this problem? 🗣️

6:5-7

10. The names of the seven deacons were Greek. This suggests that they were Hellenists. What does this tell us about the congregation who selected them? 🔑

11a. What happened after the men were chosen? 👁️

11b. What does the careful selection and solemn appointment process teach us about choosing workers in the church? 🔑 🗣️

12a. What happened to the church after the seven men had been appointed? 👁️

12b. What does this teach us? 🔑 🗣️

Stephen's Speech and Martyrdom (1)

The Basics

Setting

Waves of persecution hit the church one after another. Stephen, one of the seven men chosen to serve in the church, did great wonders and signs among the people. But some from the Synagogue of the Freedmen opposed his message. Unable to withstand Stephen's powerful words, they stirred up the people and the elders and scribes to arrest Stephen. Then they brought forth false witnesses to accuse Stephen of blasphemy.

In one of the longest recorded speeches in the Bible, Stephen delivered a powerful message before the council and his accusers. He drew from God's redemptive history to defend the message of Jesus Christ and to demonstrate that God's promise and His divine acts went beyond the land, the law, and the temple. He also reminded them of Israel's persistent rejection of God's servants and charged them with the sins of rebellion and murdering Jesus Christ.

Key Verse

"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke" (6:10).

Did You Know...?

1. **The Synagogue of Freedman** (6:9) was a group that probably consisted of Jews who had come from other parts of the Roman Empire after being released from some form of slavery and had formed their own synagogue in Jerusalem. They came from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia.

Observation

Outline

- _____ (6:8-15)
- _____ (7:1-53)
- _____ (7:1-8a)
- _____ (7:8b-16)
- _____ (7:17-36)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

6:8-15

1. Record what this passage says about Stephen and his ministry.

- 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 2a. What did those from the Synagogue of the Freedmen do? 

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 2b. What were the false charges made against Stephen? 

- _____
- _____

7:1-8a

- 3. Where did God appear to Abraham? 
- 4a. When Abraham arrived in Canaan, what did he not have? 
- 4b. What was the only thing that he received at that point? 
- 5. Where did God tell Abraham his descendants would dwell for four hundred years? 
- 6. The Jews took pride in the holy land and the holy place. How did Stephen use the history of Abraham to correct the misconceptions of the people about the holy land? 

7:8b-16

- 7a. How was Joseph, the deliverer of Israel, treated by his own? 
- 7b. How did history repeat itself? 

- 8a. Where was Joseph sold into? Where was God? 

- 8b. How does this point correct the mistaken view about the holy land and the holy place? 

7:17-36

- 9. Moses was one of the most venerated figures among the Jews (cf. 6:11). But how was Moses, the deliverer of Israel, received by his own people? 
- 10a. Where did the Angel of the Lord appear to Moses? 
- 10b. What did the Lord call the place where He appeared to Moses? 
- 10c. Is there any significance to this? 
- 11a. What did the one rejected by his own people turn out to be (35)? 
- 11b. What point do you think Stephen was making? 

Stephen's Speech and Martyrdom (2)

The Basics

Setting

Stephen, who had been arrested and brought to the council on the false charges of blasphemy, delivered a powerful message to all who were present. Drawing from the history of the Israelites, Stephen exposed the people's hypocrisy of venerating the holy place and the law while persistently rejecting God's servants. He ended his speech with the indictment that they had betrayed and murdered the Just One as a result of their stubborn rebellion against God.

Stephen's speech infuriated the crowd, who cast him out of the city and stoned him to death. Luke records the final moments of Stephen's life. Stephen had his eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ and he prayed for his persecutors even as they were stoning him. Stephen lived as a witness for Christ and died as a witness for Christ. From his ministry and martyrdom, we see a true example of a Spirit-filled Christian life.

Key Verse

"You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you" (7:51).

Did You Know...?

1. **The tabernacle of Moloch** (7:43) referred to a small portable tent used to cover the idol Moloch. Moloch was the god of the Ammonites with the head of a bull and a pair of out-stretched arms. Children were placed onto these arms, and were burnt to death by fire underneath. Although Moses forbade such practices, it continued for several centuries (Lev 18:21; 20:2; 1Kgs 11:7; 2Chr 28:3).
2. **The star of Remphan** (7:43) is another name for Saturn. This star was worshiped by the Arabs, Phoenicians and Egyptians. Children were also offered as sacrifices in the same manner as they were to Moloch.

Observation

Outline

- _____ (7:37-53)
- _____ (7:37-43)
- _____ (7:44-50)
- _____ (7:51-53)
- _____ (7:54-8:1a)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

7:37-43

1. Whom did Moses prophesy about to the children of Israel? Why was this message significant? Did the Jews heed the words of Moses?  
2. The Jews stressed the observance of the laws of Moses (cf. 6:14). But what did Stephen point out about the Israelites' response to the living oracles God gave through Moses?  

7:44-50

- 3a. The Israelites had the tabernacle in the wilderness. But what does God say about what tabernacle the people actually took up? 
- _____
- 3b. What does this say about the true place of God and his tabernacle in the Israelites' hearts? 
- _____
- _____
4. The Jews held the temple as the symbol of God's presence among the people. But what did Stephen say about the temple? 
- _____
- _____
5. The Jews regarded the temple as sacred (cf. 6:13-14), but they tried to destroy the true "temple." What was this temple (Jn 2:19-22)? 
- _____
6. The Jews who opposed Jesus Christ venerated the holy place and the law, but they had actually rejected God's ways. In what ways do we sometimes hold fast to a superficial religion while going against God's will? 
- _____
- _____

7:51-53

- 7a. What charges did Stephen make against his accusers and the council? 
- _____
- _____

- 7b. What does the expression "uncircumcised in heart and ears" mean? 
- _____
8. The Jews who opposed Stephen were also well-versed in their history, but they failed to learn from history. Why is that a person who knows the Bible well may sometimes completely miss the message that God wants to convey to him through the Bible? What is needed besides knowledge in order for us to really see and hear God's will? 
- _____
- _____

7:54-8:1a

9. Why were the people so furious at Stephen's words? 
- _____
- 10a. Why was Stephen so calm in the midst of the crowd's violent reactions?  
- _____
- 10b. Have you been accused falsely? How did you conduct yourself at such times? 
- _____
- _____

- 10c. What can we learn from Stephen when we face great persecutions and adversities? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
11. Upon his death, what did Stephen pray to the Lord for? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 12a. What were Stephen's actions as he prayed for those who stoned him? 
- _____
- _____
- 12b. What does this tell you about Stephen? What lessons can we learn from this?  
- _____
- _____
- _____
13. What does the Bible call Stephen's death? Why?  
- _____
- _____
- _____

13

Acts 8:1b-25

Witnessing in Judea and Samaria

The Basics

Setting

The death of Stephen turned out to be a crucial event in the history of the early church because it led the church to the next phase in the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy (cf. Acts 1:8). After Stephen's death, a great and widespread persecution rose up against the church in Jerusalem. But by divine arrangement, the persecution served to scatter the disciples throughout Judea and Samaria and opened the door of the gospel to areas beyond Jerusalem. Chapter 8 records the ministry of Philip, who was one of the seven men chosen to serve in chapter 6. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he effectively advanced the gospel into new territories.

Key Verse

"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (8:4).

Did You Know...?

1. **The city of Samaria** (8:5) This was not necessarily the capital city named Samaria, since there is no definite article in the Greek rendering. It is literally 'a city of Samaria.' The district of Samaria lies between Judea and Galilee. Philip probably went to the city of Samaria or Sychar, which were two principal cities in the district of Samaria at that time.⁶

Observation

Outline

- _____ (8:1-3)
- _____ (8:4-8)

_____ (8:9-13)
_____ (8:14-25)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

8:1b-3

1. Why do you think the death of Stephen led to the rise of the great persecution? 

2. What feelings do you get as you read verse 1-3? How would you feel if you were to witness and experience this situation today? 

3. What motivated Saul to commit such violent acts? How does this serve as a warning for us today?  

8:4-8

4. What impact did the persecution have on the preaching of the gospel? 

5a. Based on verse 4, what do you think was the believers' attitude toward the great persecution? 

5b. What can we learn from these believers? 

6. Philip went down to Samaria to preach Christ. Is there a "Samaria" today that you can reach out to? 

7. What role did miracles play in Philip's preaching and in the Samaritans' conversion? 

8. What blessing did the Samaritans experience upon their conversion? Why?  

8:9-13

9. What status did Simon formerly enjoy in Samaria? 

10a. Contrast the multitude's response to Simon's sorcery and their response to the miracles Philip did. 

10b. What does this tell us about the differences between the work of the evil spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit?  

11. What was it about Philip's ministry that impressed Simon the most? 

8:14-25

12a. Why do you think God did not pour out the Holy Spirit on the believers in Samaria until the church sent Peter and John to them to pray for them? 

12b. What lesson can the church and her workers today learn from this? 

13a. How did Luke, the author, or anyone present at the time, know that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon none of them? Later on, how

did Simon (or anyone else) know that the Holy Spirit was given?

13b. Do believers receive the Holy Spirit upon their acceptance of Jesus Christ? Upon their baptism? What does this passage teach us about the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit?   

14a. Why was it such a serious offense to try to purchase the gift of God with money? 

14b. What does this tell us about the difference between what God offers and what this world offers.  

15. Peter rebuked Simon, saying that his heart was not right in the sight of God. What was Simon's ulterior motive? 

16. What can we learn from verse 22 about what God counts as sin?   

17. How could a person who had just believed and been baptized be “poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity”? What lesson does this give to new believers? 🗝️ 🗝️

18. Where did Peter and John preach the gospel on their way back to Jerusalem? Why is this significant? 👁️ 🗝️

14

The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

The Basics

Setting

Philip the evangelist had gone down to the city of Samaria and won many souls for Christ. Now, God had another assignment for him. Having been instructed by the Holy Spirit, he left Samaria to go to a desert road to preach to an Ethiopian Eunuch, who would come to believe in the Lord Jesus and would be baptized. After that, the Spirit took him away, and he preached along the costal towns from Azotus to Caesarea. Philip's preaching was chosen by Luke to exemplify the evangelistic work undertaken by the Christians in Judea and Samaria.

Key Verse

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him” (8:35).

Did You Know...?

1. **Gaza** (8:26) was the southernmost city of Palestine, in the territory of the ancient Philistines.²
2. **Ethiopia/Candace** (8:27): “The ancient kingdom of Ethiopia lay between Aswan and Khartoum and corresponds to modern Nubia (not Abyssinia). It was ruled by a queen mother who had the dynastic title Candace and ruled on behalf of her son the king, since the king was regarded as the child of the sun and therefore too holy to become involved in the secular functions of the state”^{11/363}
3. **Azotus** (8:40) was the old Philistine city of Ashdod, near the sea-coast, between Gaza and Joppa.⁶
4. **Caesarea** (8:40) was a seaport constructed by king Herod which later became the capital of Palestine. This was also where Philip finally settled (Acts 21:8) and where Peter preached to Cornelius the gentile centurion (Acts 10).

Observation

Outline

- _____ (8:26-28)
- _____ (8:29-30)
- _____ (8:31-35)
- _____ (8:36-39)
- _____ (8:40)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____

General Analysis

- 1. How did the preaching of Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch mark another breakthrough in the advance of the gospel? 

- 2. In what ways was this special mission from God to Philip very different from the ministry in Samaria? 

- 3. Go through the following verses and record what we can learn from the Ethiopian eunuch.   
3a. Verse 27

- 3b. Verse 28

- 3c. Verses 31 and 34

- 3d. Verses 36-37

- 3e. Verse 39

- 4. What lessons can we learn from Philip the evangelist?  

- 5a. Looking at this passage, what are some of the works of the Holy Spirit in a person's conversion?  

- 5b. Recall your own experience of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your preaching. 🧠
-
-
-

Segment Analysis

8:26-28

1. What position did the Ethiopian eunuch hold in his country? 👁
-
-
-
2. God sent Philip to go to the desert to preach to just one man. What does this teach us about God? 🔑
-
-
-

8:29-35

3. How would you preach Jesus from the prophecy in Isaiah 53:7-8?
-
-
-

8:36-39

4. We can infer from this story some elements of a correct and Biblical baptism. What are they? 👁 🔑
-
-
-
-

- 5a. Consider the eunuch’s response after his conversion and baptism (39). Why did he have such a response?
-
-
-
- 5b. How can we maintain such an attitude in our walk of faith? 🧠
-
-
-

Final Thoughts

6. Think about the steps in Philip’s preaching to the Ethiopian eunuch: respond to the call (26), approach (29), recognize the situation (30), start a conversation (30), take hold of the opportunity (31-34), preach (35), follow through (37), reap (38), continue on (39-40). Think of a modern scenario based on the above steps. What areas do you still need to work on in your preaching? 👁 🧠
-
-
-
-
-

The Conversion of Saul

The Basics

Setting

Saul was so vigorous in persecuting the church that he traveled great distances and searched every house to seek out Christians. But on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians there, a miracle occurred—a miracle so great that it turned his life around. The Lord Jesus appeared to him, blinded him, and revealed to him that He was the one Saul had been persecuting. After receiving instructions from Ananias, Paul was baptized and received the Holy Spirit. Immediately afterwards, he began to preach Jesus. The chief enemy of the church had become a champion of the gospel. The conversion of Saul laid the groundwork for the spreading of the gospel to the end of the earth.

Key Verse

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel’” (9:15).

Did You Know...?

1. **Damascus** (9:2) was the capital of Syria, situated about 160 miles north-east of Jerusalem. The journey from Jerusalem to Damascus took at least six days on foot. Many scattered Christians went there because it was a place where their beliefs were tolerated. Because of the large number of Christians in this city, Saul chose to go to Damascus to launch his attacks against Christians.
2. **Goats** (9:5): The goad was a pointed instrument with a long handle. It was used to urge on the oxen when plowing. Shamgar used one as a weapon and killed 600 Philistines (Judg 3:31).^{14/417-418}. As a familiar instrument in daily life (1Sam 13:21), the ox goad had been used as an analogy for the teachings of the wise that stimulated thought (Ecc 12:11).^{1/350}

3. **The street called Straight** (9:11) was a 100-foot wide street that connected the East Gate to the West Gate.
4. **Tarsus** (9:11) was the capital of Cilicia. Together with Athens and Alexandria they formed the three main cultural centers in the Roman Empire at that time. Saul was born here (Acts 21:39; 22:3), and so he was called “Saul of Tarsus”

Observation

Outline

- _____ (9:1-9)
- _____ (9:10-16)
- _____ (9:17-19)
- _____ (9:20-25)
- _____ (9:26-30)
- _____ (9:31)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

9:1-9

1. Where was Saul going, and why? 
 - _____
 - _____
2. Consider the long distance that Saul traveled. What does this tell you about Saul? 
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

3. Why do you think the Christian faith was called “the Way” (vs. 2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22)? 

4. How did the Lord Jesus reveal Himself to Saul? 

5. What did the Lord ask Saul? 

- 6a. What were the two questions Saul asked the Lord Jesus? 

- 6b. How did Saul’s questions show his utter confusion at this point? 

- 6c. What can we learn from the Lord’s response to Saul’s first question?  

- 6d. When the Lord had answered Saul’s first question, how did Saul react? Why do you think he reacted this way?  

7. As followers of Christ, why should we also ask the two questions that Saul asked and seek answers to them? 

8. Why do you think the Lord did not simply tell Saul what He wanted him to do? Why did He tell him to go into the city and wait to be told what to do? 

9. Compare the Saul in verses 1-2 and the Saul in verses 8-9. What impact do you think this experience must have on Saul? 

10. What was Saul doing during the three days of waiting and fasting? What can we learn from Saul?  

9:10-16

11. What was Ananias’ initial response to the Lord’s instructions?  

12. What did the Lord tell Ananias about His purpose for choosing Saul and the future of Saul? 

9:17-19

13. What lessons can we learn from Ananias? 

14a. What happened to Saul when Ananias laid hands on him? 

14b. What did Saul do after his healing? 

9:20-25

15a. What did Saul do immediately after his conversion? What can we learn from this? 

15b. What was the message of Saul's preaching? 

16. What was the reaction of the Jews who heard Saul's preaching? 

17. Compare the Saul in verse 25 with the Saul in verse 1. What lesson do you think Saul had to learn as a convert to the Christian faith? 

9:26-30

18. How did the disciples in Jerusalem receive Saul at first? 

19. What can we learn from Barnabas? 

20. What did Saul do in Jerusalem? 

21. If you, like Saul, try to associate with other believers, and you receive the cold shoulder from them, what would you do? What can you learn from Saul? 

22a. What did the Hellenists try to do? 

22b. What did the disciples do after finding out the Hellenists intentions? 

9:31

23. What effect did Saul's conversion have on all the churches? 

24. What does it mean for the church to "walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (31)?  

16

Acts 9:32-10:23a

Peter's Ministry to the Gentiles (1)

The Basics

Setting

Saul, after his conversion, preached the name of Jesus Christ in Damascus and Jerusalem. Because of the plots of the Hellenists to kill Saul, the brethren in Jerusalem sent him to Tarsus. Luke now shifts his focus to Peter, who traveled throughout the country to visit the believers. While in Joppa, Peter received a revelation from the Lord, who miraculously opened the door for the gospel and sent Peter to preach to the Gentiles.

Key Verse

“And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common’” (10:15).

Did You Know...?

1. **Lydda** (9:32) was called Lod in the Old Testament (1Chr 8:12). It lay about 9 miles east of Joppa, on the road from Joppa to Jerusalem. After it had been burned by the Romans, it was rebuilt and was known by the name of Diospolis. Its modern name is Ludd.⁷
2. **Sharon** (9:35) is a stretch of coastal plain lying between the cities of Joppa and Caesarea. Lilies and roses bloomed in this fertile land (Songs 2:1; Is 35:2).
3. **Tabitha/Dorcas** (9:36) means gazelle.
4. **Joppa** (9:36) was “a town in the portion of Dan (Joshua 19:46; A.V., ‘Japho’), on a sandy promontory between Caesarea and Gaza, and at a distance of 30 miles north-west from Jerusalem. It is one of the oldest towns in Asia. It was and still is the chief seaport of Judea. It was never wrested from the Phoenicians. It became a Jewish town only in the second century B.C. It was from this port that Jonah ‘took ship to flee from the presence of the Lord’ (Jonah 1:3). To this place also the wood cut in Lebanon

by Hiram’s men for Solomon was brought in floats (2Chronicles 2:16); and here the material for the building of the second temple was also landed (Ezra 3:7).”⁷

5. **Tanner** (9:43): The Jews regarded this trade as half unclean and disreputable because it required contact with dead animals and blood. Therefore, tanning was usually carried on at some distance from towns. This was why Simon’s house was “by the seaside” (Acts 10:6). The fact that Peter stayed with Simon shows that Peter had to some extent broken away from Jewish prejudice.²
6. **Caesarea** (10:1): “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 (B.C. 10), 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.”⁷
7. **Centurion** (10:1) a non-commissioned officer in the Roman army, commanding 100 men.
8. **Italian Regiment** (10:1): A regiment was a cohort that consisted of about 600 men. While many of the conquered races served in the Roman armies, this regiment was made up of Italians. At his residence, the Roman procurator would place a body of troops on which he could rely.⁶
9. **The ninth hour of the day** (10:3): 3:00 pm.

Observation

Outline

- _____ (9:32-35)
- _____ (9:36-43)
- _____ (10:1-8)
- _____ (10:9-16)
- _____ (10:17-23a)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

9:32-35

1a. What did Peter do in Lydda? 

1b. What impact did this event have? 

9:36-43

2. What were the virtues of Tabitha? 

3. What lessons can we learn from this story about love and charity?  

4. What effect did the miracle of raising Tabitha to life have? What can we learn here?  

5. Peter stayed with Simon the tanner. Why is this remarkable, and what can we learn from this?  

10:1-8

6. Who was Cornelius? 

7a. What kind of a person was Cornelius? 

7b. Observe Cornelius' influence on those around him. What can we learn from him?  

8. Considering that Cornelius was a centurion of the Roman army occupying Palestine, what was unusual about him? 

9. What prompted God to send an angel to Cornelius? 

10. What did the angel in the vision tell Cornelius to do? 

10:9-16

11a. What did Peter see in the vision? 

11b. What did God tell Peter in the vision? 

11c. Why do you think God showed Peter the vision three times? 

11d. Why do you think God showed Peter the vision instead of just telling Peter to go with Cornelius' men? What was the significance of the vision? 

11e. What lessons can we learn from Peter's vision? 

10:17-23a

12. What did the Holy Spirit instruct Peter to do? 

17

Acts 10:23b-11:18

Peter's Ministry to the Gentiles (2)

The Basics

Setting

Cornelius had been told by the angel to send for Peter. Peter, on the other hand, had also seen a vision from God and had been instructed by the Holy Spirit to go with the men sent by Cornelius. Through a series of divine arrangement and instructions, the church made a historical breakthrough. Peter, submitting to God's will, took an unprecedented step forward and preached the gospel of salvation to the first group of Gentiles. God, confirming His will, poured out the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles even before Peter finished his sermon. As difficult as it was for the Jewish brethren to accept the embracing of Gentile believers, God's miraculous works thrust the church ahead into the next phase of the Lord's commission—witnessing to the ends of the earth.

Key Verse

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

Observation

Outline

- _____ (10:23b-33)
- _____ (10:34-43)
- _____ (10:44-48)
- _____ (11:1-18)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

10:23b-33

- 1. What can we learn from Peter in this paragraph?  

- 2. What can we learn from Cornelius in this paragraph?  

10:34-43

- 3. What did Peter preach about Jesus? 

- 4. How can we apply 10:34-35 to today? 

10:44-48

- 5a. How did Peter and the Jewish brethren know that Cornelius and the other listeners had received the Holy Spirit? 

- 5b. What was the reaction of the brethren who went with Peter? Why?  

- 5c. What does this event teach us about the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit?  

- 6. What did Peter command Cornelius and his family and friends to do? Why?  

- 7. Why do you think that the Holy Spirit came upon these listeners before they were baptized? 

11:1-18

- 8. What opposition did Peter face when he returned to Jerusalem? 

9. From Peter's defense, record all the facts that proved beyond any doubt that God wanted to also save the Gentiles. 👁

10. For Peter, why was the fact that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit significant? 👁 🔑

11. What was the response of those who contended with Peter? 👁

12. Under what situations should traditions be challenged and removed? 🗑

The Church in Antioch

The Basics

Setting

The miraculous conversion of Cornelius opened the door of the gospel to the Gentiles. God had made it very clear to the church that He accepted the Gentiles just as He did the Jews for salvation. Now, the church had entered a new phase of evangelizing the world. Luke shifts his attention from the church in Jerusalem to the newly established church in Antioch. This church would soon serve as the base from which Paul launched his missionary journeys.

Key Verse

“And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (11:21).

Did You Know...?

1. **Antioch** (11:26) was the capital city in the Roman province of Syria with a large population of gentiles (3rd largest city in the Roman Empire with a population of more than 1/4 a million people). It was widely known for its tolerant attitude towards different religions and cultures which was probably why so many Christians who were scattered by persecution settled there. This environment made it conducive for preaching. Apart from that it was located on several of the most important trade routes of that time making travelling to other parts of the Roman Empire easier and more efficient.
2. There were two cities by the name of Antioch. The one mentioned here was Antioch in Syria, as opposed to Antioch in Pisidia, where Paul visited during his first missionary trip (13:14).
3. **Christians** (11:26) means “Christ followers” or “those of the household of Christ.” ^{11/402} This name was given by the Greeks or Romans to the followers of Jesus, probably with contempt. But the name had become universally accepted to identify the followers of Christ.⁷

Observation

Outline

- _____ (11:19-21)
- _____ (11:22-24)
- _____ (11:25-26)
- _____ (11:27-30)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____
- _____

General Analysis

- 1. Locate Antioch on Map A. How was the fact that the gospel had now come to Antioch strategically important in the development and future direction of the church’s evangelistic work? 

- 2. Consider the background of Antioch, why was it an ideal base for foreign missions? 

Segment Analysis

11:19-21

- 1a. How far did the believers scattered by persecution travel to preach the gospel? 

- 1b. To whom did these believers preach? 

- _____
- _____

- 1c. What was the effect of the preaching? 

- _____
- _____

- 2. What does the Lord’s abidance with these believers teach us? 

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 3. How is your church doing as far as reaching out to people of different ethnic groups? What can you do to take part in this effort? 

- _____
- _____
- _____

11:22-24

- 4. What did the church in Jerusalem do when they heard news that the gospel had reached Antioch? Why? 

- _____
- _____
- _____

- 5. What can the church today learn from the action of the church in Jerusalem? 

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

6. What was Barnabas like? 
- ---
7. What was the effect of Barnabas' work? 
- ---
- 8a. What important lesson can we learn from Barnabas about church growth?  
- ---

- 8b. In what ways can you also be a Barnabas in your church today? 
- ---

11:25-26

9. When the church in Antioch grew large, what did Barnabas do? 
- ---
10. What can workers of God learn here from Barnabas?  
- ---

11. What kind of ministry did Barnabas and Saul focus on in Antioch? Why?  
- ---

- 12a. Why do you think the disciples in Antioch were called Christians? 
- ---
- 12b. How should you live up to the name of being a Christian?
- ---

11:27-30

13. Based on this paragraph, what good examples do we see in the believers in Antioch?   
- ---

19

Acts 12:1-24
Herod's Persecution and Death

The Basics

Setting

Through the believers who came to Antioch, the Lord had planted His church in this city. The work of the Lord thrived there, and many were added to the church. At about this time, another wave of persecutions came over the church in Jerusalem. This time, instead of the religious leaders, it was Herod the king who laid hands on the apostles. He executed James and arrested Peter, intending to put him to death. The passage of this lesson tells of the Lord's miraculous deliverance of Peter, the punishment on Herod, and the outcome for the church.

Key Verse

"But the word of God grew and multiplied" (12:24).

Did You Know...?

- 1. **Herod the king** (12:1) was the grandson of Agrippa I, who tried to kill the infant Jesus and nephew of the Herod who killed John the baptist. He was ruler of Judea from A.D. 41-44. "Knowing how profoundly the masses hated his family, Herod Agrippa I took every opportunity during his administration in Palestine to win their affection. When in Rome, he was a cosmopolitan Roman. But when in Jerusalem, he acted the part of an observant Jew."^{11/407}
- 2. **James the brother of John** (12:2): "This was James, the son of Zebedee, whom our Lord told, that he should be baptized with the baptism he was baptized with, (Matthew 20:22) meaning the baptism of martyrdom; and he was the first martyr among the apostles: the death he was put to was one of the four capital punishments among the Jews, and was reckoned by them the most disgraceful of them all, and was inflicted upon deceivers of the people; and such an one James was thought to be (Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 7. sect. 1, 3. & 11. 4)."⁵

- 3. **Four squads** (12:4): "Sixteen soldiers divided into four watches, so that four would be on watch all the time, two in the prison and two at the door."⁶
- 4. **James** (12:17): "The son of Alphaeus, or Cleopas, 'the brother' or near kinsman or cousin of our Lord (Galatians 1:18,19), called James 'the Less,' or 'the Little,' probably because he was of low stature. He is mentioned along with the other apostles (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). He had a separate interview with our Lord after his resurrection (1Corinthians 15:7), and is mentioned as one of the apostles of the circumcision (Acts 1:13). He appears to have occupied the position of head of the Church at Jerusalem, where he presided at the council held to consider the case of the Gentiles (Acts 12:17 ;15:13-29 :21:18-24). This James was the author of the epistle which bears his name."⁷
- 5. **Eaten by worms** (12:23): According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, Herod welcomed the crowd's flattery that he was immortal, and "At once, he felt a stab of pain in his heart. He was also gripped in his stomach by an ache that he felt everywhere at once and that was intense from the start... Exhausted after five straight days by the pain in abdomen, he departed this life in the fifty-fourth year of his life and the seventh of his reign." (Antiq. XIX 343-50 [viii.2]). Herod probably died from a serious infection by intestinal roundworms.^{11/413}

Observation

Outline

- _____ (12:1-4)
- _____ (12:5-19)
- _____ (12:20-23)
- _____ (12:24)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____

General Analysis

- 1. What can we learn from this chapter about Herod’s character?

Segment Analysis

12:1-4

- 1. How did Herod persecute the church? 

- 2. Why do you think the Jews were pleased that Herod persecuted the church? 

- 3. Why do you think Herod wanted to please the Jews? 

12:5-19

- 4. What good example can we learn from the believers in the Jerusalem church?  

- 5. How did Peter face his imminent execution? What can we learn from Peter?  

- 6. Record all the miraculous happenings through which God delivered Peter from prison.  

- 7a. Where did Peter go after he was rescued from prison? 

- 7b. What can we learn from Mary, the mother of John? 

12:20-23

- 8. Why did Herod die suddenly?  

- 9. What does it mean to give glory to God? In what ways should we do so in our lives? 

- 10a. How did Herod die? 

- 10b. Do you think the way Herod died serves to illustrate a point? 


12:24

- 11a. What was the effect of Herod’s death on the church? 
-
-
- 11b. What lesson can we learn from this?  
-
-

Final Thoughts

12. Contrast the death of James and the death of Herod.  
-
-
-
13. With the events of this chapter in mind, how should we as well as the church today deal with oppositions and persecutions? 
-
-
-
-

20

Acts 12:25-13:12

Paul’s First Missionary Journey (1)

The Basics

Setting

The church in Jerusalem has come out of persecutions stronger than ever. The gospel has been spread throughout Judea and Samaria, even as far as Antioch. God has brought in the first gentile converts into the fold. Jews and Gentiles in the Antioch church are able to fellowship as one body. The time has come for the church to enter the third phase of the Great Commission—witnessing for Christ to the end of the earth. Being instructed by the Holy Spirit, the church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Paul unto the first organized missionary journey beyond Judea. As you read the passage, refer to Map B and locate the various places that Barnabas and Paul visited.

Key Verse

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (13:2).

Did You Know...?

- Seleucia** (13:4) was the sea-port of Antioch, near the mouth of the Orontes. It was about 16 miles west of Antioch.
- Salamis** (13:5) was a city on the south-east coast of Cyprus not far from the modern Famagousta.
- Paphos** (13:6): “the capital of the island of Cyprus, and therefore the residence of the Roman governor... It is new Paphos which is here meant. It lay on the west coast of the island, about 8 miles north of old Paphos. Its modern name is Baffa.”⁷
- Paul** (13:9): Being a Jew of the Diaspora who had much exposure to the Gentile world, Saul also bore the Greek name, Paul, which meant “little.” This had become his cognomen and was used in Gentile contexts.^{11/420} Starting with 13:9, Luke refers to him only by this Greek name.

Observation

Outline

- _____ (12:25)
- _____ (13:1-3)
- _____ (13:4-12)
- _____ (4-5)
- _____ (6-12)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

12:25

- 1. What was the ministry that Barnabas and Saul had come to fulfill in Jerusalem?
- _____
- _____

13:1-3

- 2. Who commissioned the missionary effort?
- _____
- 3a. What were the prophets and teachers in the church of Antioch doing when the Holy Spirit spoke to them?
- _____
- 3b. What did they do before sending Barnabas and Saul on their way?
- _____
- _____

- 4. What lessons can we learn from this group of workers in Antioch and from the way the first missionary journey was launched?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 5. What role does fasting and prayer play in the ministry and decision-making of your local church?
- _____
- _____
- _____

13:4-12

- 6. Who was Barnabas' and Saul's assistant?
- _____
- 7a. What does the opposition of Elymas the sorcerer tell us about the nature of the devil's work?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 7b. Recall from your experience or someone else's experience where the devil had tried to oppose the work of the gospel. How was the devil's work overcome?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 8. What gave Paul the courage and authority to stop the work of Elymas? What lesson can we learn from this?
- _____
- _____
- _____

9a. What punishment came upon Elymas? 

9b. What was its impact on the proconsul? 

21

Acts 13:13-52

Paul's First Missionary Journey (2)

The Basics

Setting

Having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Paul, accompanied by Mark, first sailed to Cypress and preached on that island. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, even the proconsul of Paphos believed in the Lord, in spite of Elymas' schemes. From Paphos, the apostles sailed to Perga, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. Then the apostles came to Antioch in Pisidia, where, on two Sabbaths, the apostles powerfully proclaimed the name of Christ to both the Jews and the Gentiles. But an intense opposition arose from the Jews, which led to the expulsion of the apostles from that region. The passage of this lesson is an account of the ministry in Pisidian Antioch.

Key Verse

"For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'" (13:47).

Did You Know...?

1. **Perga** (13:13): "the capital of Pamphylia, on the coast of Asia Minor... It stood on the banks of the river Cestrus, some 7 miles from its mouth, and was a place of some commercial importance. It is now a ruin, called Eski Kalessi."⁷
2. **Antioch in Pisidia** (13:14) has been identified with the modern Yalobatch, which is to the east of Ephesus.⁷
3. **Shook off the dust from their feet** (13:51): This was a gesture of scorn and disassociation.^{11/430} What the apostles did here was in accord with what the Lord Jesus had instructed (see Mt 10:11-15).

Observation

Outline

_____ (13:13-43)
_____ (13:44-52)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

13:13-43

1. What did John Mark do in Perga? 
- _____
- _____
2. Where did Paul and Barnabas preach at Pisidian Antioch? Why?  
- _____
- _____
- _____
3. Which day did the apostles as well as Luke the author consider to be the Sabbath day?  
- _____
4. Record all the things God had done for the Israelites, as described in 17-23. 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 5a. What was God’s promise to Israel? 
- _____
- _____
- 5b. How did He fulfill His promise? 
- _____
- _____
6. What can we receive through believing in Jesus Christ?  
- _____
7. Why does Paul quote the passage from Habakkuk (41)? 
- _____
- _____
- _____

13:44-52

8. How was the second Sabbath gathering in Pisidian Antioch different from the first? 
- _____
- _____
- 9a. Why did the Jews oppose Paul and Barnabas?  
- _____
- 9b. What did they do to oppose the gospel? 
- _____
- _____

- 10a. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to their opposition?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 10b. What can we learn from this? 🐾
- _____
- _____
- _____
11. Based on verses 46 and 48, what can we know about God’s granting of eternal life and man’s response to the gospel? 👁🐾
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
12. What did the Jews resort to when they saw that Paul and Barnabas continued to preach the word of the Lord throughout the whole region? 👁
- _____
- _____
- _____
13. What was the condition of the disciples at Pisidian Antioch when Paul and Barnabas were expelled from that region? 👁
- _____
- _____
- _____

22

Acts 14:1-28

Paul’s First Missionary Journey (3)

The Basics

Setting

The preaching of Paul and Barnabas drew large multitudes in Antioch. But when the Jews saw that the apostles freely reached out to the Gentiles, they became jealous and expelled them from their region. Then the apostles left Antioch and came to Lycaonia and preached in its cities as well as its surrounding regions. As in Antioch, the gospel message led many to the Lord but also resulted in much persecution. After preaching in various cities, enduring the oppositions, and strengthening the faith of the new converts, Paul and Barnabas completed the work they had been sent out to do and returned to the church in Antioch.

Key Verse

“Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (14:3).

“Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’” (14:22).

- Did You Know...?**
- Iconium** (14:1): “the modern Konieh, was the capital of Lycaonia, in Asia Minor. It was a large and rich city, 120 miles north from the Mediterranean Sea, at the foot of the Taurus mountains, and on the great line of communication between Ephesus and the western coast of the peninsula on one side, and Tarsus, Antioch and the Euphrates on the other.”¹⁰
 - Lystra** (14:6) was “a town of Lycaonia, in Asia Minor, in a wild district and among a rude population.”⁷
 - Derbe** (14:6): “a small town on the eastern part of the upland plain of Lycaonia, about 20 miles from Lystra.”⁷

3. **Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes** (14:12): Zeus was the god of gods in Greek mythology (also called Jupiter) and Hermes (or mercury) was the god of eloquence and the messenger of the gods. Perhaps it was Barnabas’ stately stature that earned him the name of Zeus, whereas Paul, the more active and outspoken of the two, was called Hermes.

Observation

Outline

- _____ (14:1-6)
- _____ (14:6-20)
 - _____ (7)
 - _____ (8-10)
 - _____ (11-18)
 - _____ (19-20)
- _____ (14:20-21)
- _____ (14:21-24)
- _____ (14:25)
- _____ (14:26-28)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

14:1-6

1. What were the responses to the gospel in Iconium? 
- _____
- _____

2. The Lord granted signs and wonders to be done by the apostles’ hands (3). What is the importance of signs and wonders in our preaching?  

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. What forced Paul and Barnabas to leave Iconium? 

- _____
- _____

14:7-20

4. What miracle did Paul perform in Lystra? 

- _____
5. What was the precondition that led to this man’s healing? 
- _____

- 6a. Compare the two completely opposite reactions from the multitudes (11-13 and 19). 

- _____
- _____
- _____

- 6b. What were the devil’s tactics behind these? 

- _____
- _____
- _____

- 6c. How does the devil also often use these two tactics against us? 

- _____
- _____
- _____

- 7. How did the apostles react when the multitudes wanted to make them gods? 

- 8. What was the main point of Paul’s message in 15-17?  

- 9. Contrast the multitudes with the man who was healed with respect to their response to the gospel.  

14:21-28

- 10a. What did Paul and Barnabas do when they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch? 

- 10b. What can ministers and the church today learn from this? 

- 11. What are the responsibilities of elders in the church?  

- 12a. What important truth did Paul and Barnabas exhort the believers with? 

- 12b. How can this truth help you in your faith? 

- 13. Verses 23 and 26 both speak of “commending to.”
- 13a. What does it mean to commend believers to the Lord? 

- 13b. What does it mean for the church to commend the workers of God to God’s grace? 

- 13c. What lessons can we glean from these examples? 

- 14. According to verse 27, what was God’s purpose in sending Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey? 

The Jerusalem Council

The Basics

Setting

The church in Antioch was the first church where Gentile and Jewish believers fellowshiped together freely. This was a major breakthrough in the expansion of the church. However, certain men from Judea came to Antioch and insisted that the Gentile believers can be saved only if they were circumcised. Paul and Barnabas had a great debate with them, and when they could not resolve the conflict, they presented the matter to the council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the council was able to come to full agreement on what was required of Gentile believers and reached a decision that was of monumental importance for the future development of the church.

Key Verse

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell” (15:28-29).

Observation

Outline

- _____ (15:1-5)
- _____ (15:6-21)
- _____ (6)
- _____ (7-11)
- _____ (12)
- _____ (13-21)

_____ (15:22-29)

_____ (15:30-35)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

15:1-5

1. What was the issue that confronted the church at this time? 

2. Why did Paul and Barnabas refuse to give in to those who taught the necessity of circumcision? 

3. Why was the way by which the church in Antioch handled the dispute commendable? What can we learn from them?  

4. On the way to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas passed through Phoenicia and Samaria. How did the brethren in these regions respond to the news of the conversion of Gentiles? 

15:6-21

- 5a. What event did Peter cite when he rose up to speak?  

5b. What was Peter’s argument?  

5c. In view of the overwhelming pressure from the advocates of circumcision in the Jerusalem church (cf. Gal 2:11-13), what was remarkable about Peter’s stance? 

6. What did Paul and Barnabas report to the council about? 

7. What was the basis for James’ conclusion?  

8a. What was the decision of the council? 

8b. What can the church today learn from this very significant decision? 

9. From how the council reached its final decision, what can we learn about how to determine the will of the Holy Spirit? 

10a. Why do you think the council specifically singled out the four things to abstain from? 

10b. According to the Scriptures, why must we abstain from them?  

11. Why did James add the comment in verse 21? What is the point? 

15:22-29

12. How did the council make the resolution known to the churches in Gentile regions? 

13. According to the letter, who made the final decision at the Jerusalem council? Why was this point important?  

14. Why did the church in Jerusalem send Judas and Silas to go with Paul and Barnabas?  

15:30-35

15. What was the effect of informing the church in Antioch of the resolution made in Jerusalem? 

16. How did Judas’ and Silas’ mission to Antioch turn out to be very effective?  

24

Acts 15:36-16:15

Paul’s Second
Missionary Journey (1)

The Basics

Setting

The Jerusalem Council, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reached a decision of great significance for the missionary work of the church—Gentile converts were not required to be circumcised or obey the laws of Moses for salvation. The church in Jerusalem then wrote a letter to all the churches, and sent Paul and Barnabas, along with Judas and Silas, to return to Antioch with the Council’s decision. This resolution clearly paved the way for further, unrestrained missionary work among the Gentiles.

Having ministered in Antioch for some time, Paul intended to return to Asia Minor to visit the churches that had been established in the first missionary journey. But because of a sharp disagreement with Barnabas over Mark, Paul and Barnabas went separate ways. Paul took Silas and began his second missionary journey (A.D. 49-52), which eventually led to the first evangelistic efforts in Macedonia and Greece.

Key Verse

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” (16:9-10).

Did You Know...?

- 1. **Timothy** (16:1): “Timothy” is a Greek name that means “one who fears God.” As the son of a Greek, Timothy was uncircumcised and regarded as a Greek rather than a Jew. However, he had been taught the Scriptures from childhood (2Tim 3:15) by his pious mother and grandmother (2Tim 1:5).”⁶

- 2. **Macedonia** (Greece) (16:9) “in New Testament times, was a Roman province lying north of Greece. It was governed by a propraetor with the title of proconsul.”⁷
- 3. **“We”** (16:10): Luke, the narrator, joined Paul’s company at this point. This is why the use of “they” in the narrative, as seen in the preceding verses, has now become “we.”
- 4. **Philippi** (16:12): “the capital of the province of Macedonia. It stood near the head of the Sea, about 8 miles north-west of Kavalla. It is now a ruined village, called Philibedjik. Philip of Macedonia fortified the old Thracian town of Crenides, and called it after his own name Philippi (B.C. 359-336). In the time of the Emperor Augustus this city became a Roman colony, i.e., a military settlement of Roman soldiers, there planted for the purpose of controlling the district recently conquered. It was a ‘miniature Rome,’ under the municipal law of Rome, and governed by military officers, called duumviri, who were appointed directly from Rome.”⁷
- 5. **Riverside** (16:13): “In Jewish law, a congregation was made up of ten men. Wherever there were ten male heads of households who could be in regular attendance, a synagogue was to be formed... Failing this, a place of prayer (*proseuche*) under the open sky and near a river or the sea was to be arranged for.”^{11/460}
- 6. **Seller of purple** (16:14): seller of cloth dyed with purple
- 7. **Thyatira** (16:14): “a city of Asia Minor, on the borders of Lydia and Mysia. Its modern name is Ak-hissar... Here was one of the seven churches (Revelation 1:11; 2:18-28)... It was and still is famous for its dyeing. Among the ruins, inscriptions have been found relating to the guild of dyers in that city in ancient times.”⁷

Observation

Outline

_____ (15:36)
_____ (15:37-39)
_____ (15:40-16:5)

_____ (16:6-10)
_____ (16:11-15)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

15:36-41

- 1. What prompted Paul to embark on his second missionary journey? 

- 2. Why did Paul and Barnabas split up? 

- 3. Compare Paul’s views about Mark here with his later comment in 2Tim 4:11. What lesson do you think Paul learned from this incident?  

16:1-5

- 4. Who joined Paul at Lystra? 

5. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? Was he not contradicting with the resolution of the Jerusalem council? 

6a. Paul and his fellow workers delivered the decrees from the Jerusalem council to all the churches. What effect did this have on the churches? 

6b. Why do you think the delivery of the decrees had such an effect? 

6c. What can the church today learn from this? 

16:6-10

7. What does Paul's experience, as recorded in this paragraph, teach us in our ministry?  

16:11-15

8. In Philippi, where did Paul go to preach on the Sabbath day? What does this tell you about the city of Philippi?  

9a. How did the Lord lead Lydia to conversion? 

9b. What does this tell us about an important factor in a person's conversion? 

10. What good examples can we see in Lydia?  

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (2)

The Basics

Setting

Through the Lord's direct revelation, Paul and his coworkers came to Philippi in Macedonia to spread the gospel. The first converts in this city was Lydia and her household. In this lesson, we will continue to study Paul's ministry in Philippi.

Key Verse

"But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed" (16:25-26).

Did You Know...?

1. **About to kill himself** (16:27): "In Roman law a guard who allowed his prisoner to escape was liable to the same penalty the prisoner would have suffered." ^{11/464}
2. **Romans** (16:37-38): "According to the Valerian and Porcian laws, which were passed at various times between 509 B.C. (the time of the founding of the Roman Republic) and 195 B.C., a Roman citizen could travel anywhere within Roman territory under the protection of Rome. He was not subject to local legislation unless he consented (which was usually the case in business and personal relations), and he could appeal to be tried by Rome, not by local authorities, when in difficulty. As a citizen he owed allegiance directly to Rome, and Rome would protect him. Even Roman governors in the provinces were forbidden, as A.H.M. Jones points out, 'to kill, scourge, torture, condemn or put in bonds a Roman citizen who appealed to the people, or to prevent a defendant from presenting himself in Rome within a certain time' (Studies in Roman Government and Law [New York: Praeger, 1960], p. 54)." ^{11/466}

Observation

Outline

- _____ (16:16-18)
- _____ (16:19-24)
- _____ (16:25-34)
- _____ (16:35-40)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

16:16-24

1. What was the evil spirit's work through the slave girl? What was he trying to accomplish?  

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. What led to Paul and Silas' imprisonment? 

- _____
- _____
- _____

16:25-40

- 3a. What did Paul and Silas do in prison at midnight? 

- _____

- 3b. If you were falsely charged, whipped, and thrown into prison like Paul and Silas, how would you feel? What would it take to do what Paul and Silas did? 

- _____
- _____

4. What miraculous events happened next? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
5. What good purpose did God have in allowing Paul and Silas to be imprisoned?  
- _____
- _____
6. How do you explain the prison keeper's reactions as recorded in 29-30?  
- _____
- _____
7. How does this story confirm the necessity of baptism? 
- _____
- _____
8. Contrast the prison keeper in verse 27 and verse 34. What does this teach us about the effects of salvation?  
- _____
- _____
9. Why do you think Paul refused to be released secretly? 
- _____
- _____

26

Acts 17:1-18:22

Paul's Second
Missionary Journey (3)

The Basics

Setting

The first city Paul and his companions evangelized in Macedonia was Philippi. There, the Lord led Lydia and her family to the faith. By God's miraculous arrangement, the gospel also came to the prison keeper and his household. This was how the church in Philippi was established. Upon their release from prison, Paul and Silas met with the brethren, encouraged them, and continued on to other cities in Macedonia and Achaia.

Key Verse

"Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city'" (18:9-10).

Did You Know...?

- Amphipolis** (17:1) was a city in Macedonia, 33 Roman miles northeast of Philippi and about 3 miles from the sea. Its site is now occupied by a village called Neokhorio.¹⁰
- Apollonia** (17:1): 36 miles from Thessalonica, Apollonia was a city of Macedonia that lay between Amphipolis and Thessalonica.⁷
- They came to Thessalonica** (17:1): From Philippi to Thessalonica was a hundred-mile long journey.
- Thessalonica** (17:1): "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."⁷
- Security** (17:9): "Jason was forced to guarantee a peaceful quiet community, or he would face the confiscation of his properties and perhaps even death"^{12/1679}

- 6. **Berea** (17:10): “a city of Macedonia... It is now called Verria or Kara-Verria, and is situated on the eastern slope of the Olympian mountain range.”¹⁰
- 7. **Athens** (17:15): “the capital of Attica, the most celebrated city of the ancient world, the seat of Greek literature and art during the golden period of Grecian history. Its inhabitants were fond of novelty (Acts 17:21), and were remarkable for their zeal in the worship of the gods. It was a sarcastic saying of the Roman satirist that it was ‘easier to find a god at Athens than a man.’”⁷
- 8. **Epicureans** (17:18): “followers of Epicurus (who died at Athens B.C. 270), or adherents of the Epicurean philosophy... This philosophy was a system of atheism, and taught men to seek as their highest aim a pleasant and smooth life.”⁷
- 9. **Stoics** (17:18): founded by Zono (340-265 B.C.), “a celebrated school of severe and lofty pantheists, whose principle was that the universe was under the law of an iron necessity, the spirit of which was what is called the Deity: and that a passionless conformity of the human will to this law, unmoved by all external circumstances and changes, is the perfection of virtue.”²
- 10. **Areopagus** (17:19): “The Greek term for Mars’ hill... The hill was a place of assembly. There the supreme court of Athens met. There the courts that sat concerning religious matters convened. The associations had something to do, probably, with Paul being taken here to speak, though the meeting was informal and not official. The hill is about fifty feet high, and was then surrounded by the most glorious works of art in Athens.”⁶
- 11. **Corinth** (18:1): “a Grecian city, on the isthmus which joins the Peloponnesus to the mainland of Greece. It is about 48 miles west of Athens. The ancient city was destroyed by the Romans (B.C. 146), and that mentioned in the New Testament was quite a new city, having been rebuilt about a century afterwards and peopled by a colony of freedmen from Rome. It became under the Romans the seat of government for Southern Greece or Achaia (Acts 18:12-16). It was noted for its wealth, and for the luxurious and immoral and vicious habits of the people. It had a large mixed population of Romans, Greeks, and Jews. When Paul first visited the city (A.D. 51 or 52), Gallio, the brother of Seneca, was proconsul.”⁷

- 12. **Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome** (18:2): This was “the Edict of Claudius, an expulsion order proclaimed during the ninth year of Emperor Claudius's reign (i.e., 25 January A.D. 49 to 24 January 50) and directed against the Jews in Rome to put down the riots arising within the Jewish community there.”^{11/481}
- 13. **He shook his garments** (18:6): “an act symbolizing repudiation of the Jews’ opposition, exemption from further responsibility for them (cf. 13:51)”^{11/483}
- 14. **Gallio** (18:12): “The brother of Seneca, the philosopher, who was the tutor of Nero. Gallio was admired as a man of exceptional fairness and calmness. From an inscription found at Delphi, it is known that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in AD 51-52.”^{12/1681}
- 15. **Hair cut/vow** (18:18): “It was probably a temporary Nazirite vow (see Nu 6:1-21). Different vows were frequently taken to express thanks for deliverance from grave dangers. Shaving the head marked the end of a vow.”^{12/1682}
- 16. **Cenchrea** (18:18): “the eastern harbour of Corinth, from which it was distant about 9 miles east, and the outlet for its trade with the Asiatic shores of the Mediterranean.”⁷

Observation

Outline

- _____ (17:1-9)
- _____ (1-4)
- _____ (5-9)
- _____ (17:10-15)
- _____ (10-12)
- _____ (13-15)
- _____ (17:16-34)
- _____ (16-21)
- _____ (22-34)
- _____ (18:1-17)
- _____ (1-3)

_____ (5-11)
_____ (12-17)

_____ (18:18-21)
_____ (18:22)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

17:1-9

- 1. Where and when did Paul preach in Thessalonica? 

- 2. Are you able to reason with a seeker from the Scriptures? What would it take to do so? 

- 3. What was the message of Paul’s preaching? 

- 4. What were the responses to his preaching? 

- 5. What was the Jews’ accusation against the believers? 

17:10-15

- 6a. Why does the writer of Acts praise the Bereans? 

- 6b. Why is it important for us to have the attitude of the Bereans? How can we imitate them in our response to the message we hear, be it during Bible studies or sermons? 

- 7. Why did Paul have to leave Berea? 

17:16-34

- 8. Describe the life of the Athenians based on this passage. 

- 9a. How did Paul feel when he saw the rampant idolatry of the Athenians? 

- 9b. Do you also feel compelled to preach to the unbelievers around you? What do we need to have in order to feel what Paul felt? 

10. Whom did Paul first preach to? 
- _____
- _____
11. What can we learn from Paul’s sermon in terms of how to share the gospel with people who are unfamiliar with our message? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 12a. What did Paul teach about God and what He has done for man? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 12b. What did Paul say about what man ought to do? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
13. What were the reactions to Paul’s sermon? 
- _____
- _____
- _____

18:1-17

- 14a. Whom did Paul meet and work with in Corinth? 
- _____

- 14b. Which is your primary occupation? “Tent-making,” or witnessing? What can we learn from Paul? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
15. Why did Paul shift his focus from the Jews to the Gentiles? 
- _____
- _____
- 16a. What did God tell Paul in a vision? 
- _____
- _____
- 16b. Why do you think the Lord gave Paul this vision? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
17. What was Gallio’s position regarding the accusations of the Jews against Paul? 
- _____
- _____
- _____

18:18-21

- 18a. Which city did Paul preach in after he left Corinth for Syria? 
- _____
- 18b. Who went with him? 
- _____
19. Why did Paul not stay longer in Ephesus? 
- _____

Paul's Third Missionary Journey (1)

The Basics

Setting

Paul had returned to Jerusalem from his second missionary journey in order to fulfill his vow. From Jerusalem, Paul went down to Antioch, the home base of his overseas missions. After spending some time in Antioch, he began his third missionary expedition (A.D. 53-57). He first traveled throughout Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the believers. Then he went to Ephesus, where he stayed for two years and preached about Jesus Christ.

Key Verse

"Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus'" (19:4).

Did You Know...?

1. **Ephesus** (19:1): "the capital of proconsular Asia, which was the western part of Asia Minor. It was colonized principally from Athens. In the time of the Romans it bore the title of 'the first and greatest metropolis of Asia.' It was distinguished for the Temple of Diana (q.v.), who there had her chief shrine; and for its theatre, which was the largest in the world, capable of containing 50,000 spectators. It was, like all ancient theatres, open to the sky. Here were exhibited the fights of wild beasts and of men with beasts."⁷
2. **Tyrrannus** (19:9) was a Greek rhetorician.

Observation

Outline

- _____ (18:23)
 _____ (18:24-28)
 _____ (19:1-7)

Key Words/Phrases

Segment Analysis

18:23

- 1a. Why did Paul visit the region of Galatia and Phrygia? 

- 1b. How does this serve as a model for today's church? 

18:24-28

2. Pick out the qualities in Apollos that we should imitate and explain why they are important for the workers of God.  



- 3. What work did Apollos carry out in Achaia (cf. 1Cor 3:4-6)? 
- 4. From what Priscilla and Aquila did for Apollos, what can we know about this couple?  

19:1-7

- 5a. What did Paul ask the disciples he met in Ephesus? 
- 5b. Why do you think Paul asked this question? What can we gather from this question?  
- 6. When the disciples answered “no” to the first question, what was Paul’s follow-up question? What can we gather from this?  
- 7. What is the difference between John’s baptism and baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus?  

- 8. What does this event teach us about
- 8a. The necessity of baptism?  
- 8b. Faith and baptism?  
- 8c. Baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit?  
- 9. What was the sign that the disciples had received the Holy Spirit? 
- 10. What can we learn from this event about when a person receives the Holy Spirit? What is the evidence that a person has received the Holy Spirit?  

Paul's Third Missionary Journey (2)

The Basics

Setting

Paul started his third missionary journey by visiting Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the churches in those regions. While this was happening, Apollos conducted a ministry in Ephesus, where he received kind instructions from Aquila and Priscilla. Afterwards, he went to Achaia, helped the believers there, and preached Jesus Christ with great power. At this time, Paul came to Ephesus to begin his evangelistic effort. In the last lesson, we learned how he met some disciples who had not yet received the baptism into Christ as well as the gift of the Holy Spirit. In this lesson, we will study God's mighty works in Ephesus through Paul.

Key Verse

"So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" (19:20).

Did You Know...?

1. **Practiced magic** (19:19): "Ephesus was the home of all sorts of magic and superstition, and the phrase 'Ephesian writings' (*Ephesia grammata*) was common in antiquity for documents containing spells and magical formulae...."^{11/496}
2. **Erastus** (19:22) was one of Paul's companion at Ephesus.
3. **Diana** (19:24): "so called by the Romans; called Artemis by the Greeks, the 'great' goddess worshiped among heathen nations under various modifications. Her most noted temple was that at Ephesus. It was built outside the city walls, and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. 'First and last it was the work of 220 years; built of shining marble; 342 feet long by 164 feet broad; supported by a forest of columns, each 56 feet high; a sacred museum of masterpieces of sculpture and painting. At the centre, hidden by curtains, within a gorgeous shrine, stood the very ancient image of the goddess, on wood or ebony reputed to have fallen from the sky. Behind the shrine was a treasury,

where, as in 'the safest bank in Asia,' nations and kings stored their most precious things."⁷

4. **The officials of Asia** (19:31): Also known as the "Asiarchs," these were "members of the noblest and wealthiest families of the province of Asia and were bound together in a league for promoting the cult of the emperor and Rome."^{11/503-504} They were "annually appointed to preside over the religious festivals and games in the various cities of proconsular Asia."⁷
5. **City clerk** (19:35): "The secretary of the city who published the decisions of the civic assembly. He was the most important local official and the chief executive officer of the assembly, acting as go-between for Ephesus and the Roman authorities."^{12/1685}

Observation

Outline

- _____ (19:8-10)
- _____ (19:11-12)
- _____ (19:14-20)
- _____ (19:21-22)
- _____ (19:23-41)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____

General Analysis

1. Luke summed up Paul's ministry in Ephesus this way: "the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" (19:20). In what ways were the evangelical work in Ephesus very powerful?  

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

19:8-10

11. Where did Paul preach in Ephesus? 
- _____
- _____
12. What was the result of Paul’s preaching? 
- _____
- _____

19:11-12

13. Paul’s preaching was not just in word, but also with God’s power (1Cor 2:4; 4:20; 1Thess 1:5). How did God demonstrate His power through Paul? 
- _____
- _____

19:13-20

14. Even exorcists tried to perform exorcism in the name of Jesus. What does this tell you? 
- _____
- _____
15. What happened to the sons of Sceva when they tried to exorcise in the name of the Lord Jesus? 
- _____
- _____
16. Why was the evil spirit not afraid of them?  
- _____
- _____

17. What can we learn from this story about the name of the Lord Jesus?   
- _____
- _____
- 18a. What impact did this incident have on the people? 
- _____
- _____
- 18b. Why did it have such an impact? 
- _____
- _____
19. Are there some hidden things in your life that might be of great value to you, but now need to completely renounced before God? 
- _____
- _____

19:21-22

20. What did Paul resolve in the Spirit to do? 
- _____
- _____

19:23-41

- 21a. What motivated Demetrius to instigate the commotion? Was he concerned about their goddess Diana?  
- _____
- _____

21b. In what ways do some people today resist or even oppose the gospel because their personal interest is at stake? 🗝️

22. What does Demetrius’ anxiety tell you about the effect of Paul’s ministry? 🗝️

23. Why did all the people rush into the theater? 👁️

24. How can we infer that the situation was very dangerous for Paul? 👁️ 🗝️

25. Why do you think the Jews put Alexander forward before the crowd, and why did the crowd shout him down? 🗝️

26. How did the riot finally end? 👁️

Paul’s Third
Missionary Journey (3)

The Basics

Setting

During Paul’s two-year stay in Ephesus, the work of God prospered in that city and impacted the whole of Asia. But Paul’s ministry was not without opposition. Demetrius, a silversmith anxious over the potential loss of profit, incited his fellow tradesmen to start a city-wide uproar. But, fortunately, it was put to rest by the city clerk. After the uproar, Paul left Ephesus to go to Macedonia and Achaia to see the brethren in those regions, before heading toward Jerusalem as he had purposed to do.

Key Verse

“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (20:24).

Did You Know...?

- 1. **Break bread** (20:7,11): “break bread” (*klasai arton*) refers to partaking of the Holy Communion, whereas “broke bread and ate” (*klasas ton arton kai geusamenos*) refers to an ordinary meal.^{11/509}
- 2. **Assos** (20:13): “a sea-port town of Proconsular Asia, in the district of Mysia, on the north shore of the Gulf of Adramyttium. Paul came hither on foot along the Roman road from Troas (Acts 20:13,14), a distance of 20 miles. It was about 30 miles distant from Troas by sea.”⁷
- 3. **Mitylene** (20:14): “the chief city of the island of Lesbos, on its east coast, in the Aegean Sea.”⁷
- 4. **Chios** (20:15): “an island in the Aegean Sea, about 5 miles distant from the mainland, having a roadstead, in the shelter of which

- Paul and his companions anchored for a night when on his third missionary return journey. It is now called Scio.”⁷
- 5. **Samos** (20:15): “an island in the Aegean Sea... It is about 27 miles long and 20 broad, and lies about 42 miles south-west of Smyrna.”⁷
 - 6. **Trogyllium** (20:15): “is the rocky extremity of the ridge of Mycale, exactly opposite Samos... A little to the east of the extreme point there is an anchorage, which is still called St. Paul’s port.”¹⁰
 - 7. **Miletus** (20:15): “a seaport town and the ancient capital of Ionia, about 36 miles south of Ephesus.”⁷
 - 8. **Cos** (21:1): “an island in the Aegean Sea... It was famous for being the birth place of Apelles the painter, and Hippocrates the physician.”⁵
 - 9. **Rhodes** (21:1): “an island to the south of the western extremity of Asia Minor, between Cos and Patara, about 46 miles long and 18 miles broad.”⁷
 - 10. **Patara** (21:1): “a city on the south-west coast of Lycia”⁷
 - 11. **Phoenicia** (21:2): “a strip of land of an average breadth of about 20 miles along the shores of the Mediterranean, from the river Eleutherus in the north to the promontory of Carmel in the south, about 120 miles in length.”⁷
 - 12. **Tyre** (21:3): “the chief city of Phoenicia, famous for navigation and commerce: it stood about four furlongs distant from the shore, and was joined to the continent by Alexander the Great”⁵
 - 13. **Ptolemais** (21:7) was a maritime city of Galilee.

Observation

Outline

_____ (20:1-6)

_____ (20:7-12)

_____ (20:13-16)

_____ (20:17-38)

_____ (21:1-17)

_____ (1-3)

_____ (4-6)

_____ (7)

_____ (8-14)

_____ (15-17)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

- 1. The passage of this lesson gives us much insight into Paul’s heart and conduct as a servant of the Lord. Go through the verses carefully and pick out as many positive things about Paul that we ought to imitate.   
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. What sentiment permeates the entire passage?  

Segment Analysis

20:1-6

1. Why did Paul go to Macedonia? 

2. What made Paul take a detour when leaving Greece? 

3. What did the churches in Macedonia and Achaia entrust Paul and his companions to do? (see Rom 15:25-28)  

4. Why did the brethren from the various regions accompany Paul?(cf. 1Cor 16:1-4; 2Cor 8:16-23)  

20:7-12

5. What miracle occurred in Troas? 

6. Why do you think Paul spoke to the brethren at Troas until daybreak?

7. How did the believers feel about the resurrection of Eutychus? 

20:13-16

8a. Why did Paul decide not to spend time in Asia? 

8b. What sort of things do you tend to hurry to do? Buy things that are on sale? Rush home for your favorite TV program? Carry out your task? Help someone in need? What can you learn from Paul? 

20:17-38

9. What kind of life did Paul live among the Ephesians? 

10a. In 20:20, Paul mentioned the two kinds of settings for his ministry. What are they? 

10b. What can ministers today learn from Paul in this respect? 

11a. What was Paul’s attitude toward the chains and tribulations that awaited him? 

11b. What are you willing and ready to do at all costs? What can you learn from Paul? 

12. Why did Paul urge the elders to “take heed” (28), “watch,” and “remember (31)?  

13a. Do you have a “flock” to shepherd today? How should you oversee them? 

13b. Why is shepherding the flock such a noble and important task?  

14. Have you ever served with tears (19) and warned others with tears (31)? What does it take to do so? 

15. What does Paul say about the effect of God’s word of grace? Why does it have such an effect?  

16. Have you experienced the truth of “It is more blessed to give than to receive”? Which do you tend to do more? Giving or receiving? 

21:1-17

17. What did the disciples in Tyre tell Paul to do? 

18. What the disciples said to Paul was through the Spirit, but Paul did not change his plans. Was Paul acting contrary to the Spirit? 

19a. Paul did not waver even though the believers in Caesarea and his traveling companions dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem. Was Paul being stubborn in his own ways and cared little about others’ concern for him? 

19b. Did you ever have to make a difficult decision that your loved ones earnestly advised against? What made you go ahead nevertheless? 

A Religious Controversy

The Basics

Setting

Paul had just returned to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey. Upon his arrival, Paul learned that the non-believing Jews had been offended by what he supposedly had been teaching the Jews in the Gentile regions. In spite of the church's efforts to dispel these rumors, a mob was aroused to seize Paul.

Key Verse

"...that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law." (21:24).

Did You Know...?

1. **Circumcise** (21:21): A sacred Jewish tradition that originated with God's promise to Abraham (cf. Gen 17:10-11). The apostolic church had concluded that circumcision was not required for salvation, and therefore it was not necessary to circumcise the Gentile believers (cf. 15:1, 19). However, the church did not forbid circumcision or condemn Jewish believers who performed circumcision.
2. **Vow** (21:23): A promise to God to perform certain things, to bring certain offerings, or to abstain from certain things, in exchange for certain blessings. The making of vows was not a religious duty. However, once a vow was made, it was considered a sacred and binding duty to fulfill it. In this case, the four men had made a vow to perform purification rites, which required them to shave their heads and to keep themselves ceremonially clean for seven days. Afterwards, they would give notice to the priests and enter the temple to make offerings (cf. 21:24; 24:18).⁸
3. **Trophimus** (21:29): He joined in the final leg of Paul's third missionary journey (cf. 20:4) and traveled with him through Macedonia into Asia, and to Jerusalem. He continued to be a

faithful worker, almost dying from an illness while serving Paul (cf. 2Tim 4:20).

4. **Commander/chief captain, centurions, soldiers** (21:31-32): A commander was in charge of a legion, in which there were 60 centurions, each of whom was in charge of theoretically 100 soldiers. The ordinary duties of a centurion were to drill his men, inspect their arms, food and clothing, and to command them in the camp and in the field.⁸
5. **Greek** (21:37): Common speech in the Roman Empire.⁸
6. **The Egyptian** (21:38): According to Josephus, a man from Egypt came to Jerusalem, claiming to be a prophet and persuaded the people to follow him to the Mount of Olives. He prophesied that the walls of Jerusalem would fall at his command and promised that his followers would be able to take over the city. When Felix was informed of these things, he came upon this man and his followers, killing about 400 of them and captured 200 alive. But this false prophet escaped and never returned (Antiq. XX viii. 6)
7. **Hebrew/Aramaic** (21:40): Languages spoken by the Jews in Palestine. Hebrew was spoken in scholarly settings, while Aramaic was spoken as the vernacular.⁸

Observation

Outline

- _____ (21:17-26)
- _____ (21:27-31)
- _____ (21:32-40)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

- 1a. Based on this passage, list the rumors regarding Paul. Who started these rumors? How? What does this teach you about how people spread rumors?   

1b. Have you ever started a rumor? What was the result? 

1c. Has there ever been a rumor about you? How did you deal with it? What can you learn from the actions of Paul and the church in Jerusalem? 

Segment Analysis

21:17-26

1. The Christians in Jerusalem praised God when they heard about Paul’s ministry among the Gentiles (19-20). Share an example of how you rejoiced at hearing about God’s work at another church. 

2. Why were the church elders concerned over Paul’s arrival?  

3. What did the Jews accuse Paul of doing? Were their accusations true? Why or Why not?  

4a. List example of cultural traditions. 

4b. After we believe in Jesus Christ, should we forsake our cultural traditions? Why or why not? 

5. Since we are justified by faith, and not by the law (cf. Gal 2:16), why did Paul agree to take part in the purification rites? 

6. Compare and contrast this incident to the one in Galatians 2:11-14, in which Paul rebuked Peter for being a hypocrite for fearing the Jews from Jerusalem. Had Paul himself been a hypocrite by joining in the purification rites? Why or why not? 

7a. List other biblical characters who submitted to something unreasonable and/or unfair.  

7b. If you disagree with the church over a certain belief or opinion, what should you do? 

21:27-31

8. Who incited the crowd to lay hands on Paul? 
- _____
- _____
9. Look through Acts and list the previous assaults on Paul. For each, why did the people seize Paul to kill him? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
10. Compare and contrast Paul’s arrest to how Stephen had been arrested and killed (Acts 6:10-14; 7:54-60).  
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

21:32-40

11. Why did the commander of the garrison arrest Paul instead of the mob?  
- _____
- _____
12. The Roman soldiers took Paul away before the mob could kill him. Compare the apostles’ “close calls” with those of Jesus (cf. Lk 4:28-30; Jn 8:59). What does this teach you about God’s protection and timing?   
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

13. If you were Paul, what would you have done when you were arrested? How were Paul’s actions wise?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 14a. Why did Paul speak to the crowd in Hebrew/Aramaic (40)? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 14b. Paul used his fluency in both Greek and Aramaic to the advantage of his ministry. How do you use your knowledge to further God’s work? 
- _____
- _____
- _____

Paul Testifies His Conversion

The Basics

Setting

The Jews from Asia stirred up the crowd to lay hands on Paul. The crowd seized Paul, dragged him out of the temple, and even tried to kill him. The commander, not knowing what had caused the commotion, came and took Paul from the crowd for questioning. While he was being led away, Paul asked to speak to the people. Then, before the Jewish mob, Paul seized this opportunity to testify his conversion and to defend his ministry.

Key Verse

“For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard” (22:15).

Did You Know...?

1. **Tarsus of Cilicia** (22:3): Cilicia was a Roman province in modern-day Turkey. Jewish settlers who moved there were granted Roman citizenship, while allowed to retain their culture. Tarsus was a prominent city in Cilicia that became famous for its love of higher learning.⁸
2. **Gamaliel** (22:3): A respected Pharisee and scribe (cf. 5:34).
3. **Ananias** (22:12): A Christian in Damascus. The Lord had appeared to him in a vision to go to Paul (cf. 9:10-17).

Observation

Outline

_____ (22:1-5)
 _____ (22:6-10)
 _____ (22:11-21)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

- 1a. List the passages in the Bible that recount Paul’s conversion. Compare the details in the descriptions. 

- 1b. Why is Paul’s conversion recorded so many times in the Bible? (Think in terms of what it meant to Paul). 

- 1c. Think back to the times when you shared the gospel with someone. What are the testimonies and/or biblical teachings that you repeat every time? How do your favorite messages help you preach the gospel? 

2. Compare and contrast Paul’s beliefs and outlook on life before and after his conversion experience.  

- 3a. What were you like before you believed in Jesus Christ? 

3b. What was your “great light from heaven” (22:6)? How did you meet Jesus Christ?

3c. How is your life as a Christian different from your life before?

4a. On Chart B, list the commands given to Paul by the Lord Jesus and by Ananias, and the reasons that were given for these commands.

4a.

Command	Reason

Chart B Commands to Paul and Their Reasons

4b. What do Jesus’ commands and reasons in Chart B teach you about your Christian duties?

Segment Analysis

22:1-5

1. Paul made a point to mention his esteemed background (3). In what ways can you sometimes use your “pedigree” to persuade a non-believer to believe in Jesus Christ?

2a. When Paul was still persecuting the Christians, he was in effect disregarding his own teacher Gamaliel’s advice for moderation in opposing the gospel of Jesus (cf. 5:35-40; 22:4). What does this tell you about Paul’s character?

2b. How might your passion for something cause you to ignore good advice and do the wrong thing?

22:6-10

3a. What two questions did Paul ask Jesus Christ?

3b. What is Jesus’ response when you ask Him, “Who are you, Lord?” and “What shall I do, Lord?” 

4a. On Chart C, list examples of biblical characters who responded positively to God’s calling, how God first called them, how they responded, and what God promised them (cf. Gen 12:1-7; 1 Sam 3:3-11; Isa 6:8-13; Mk 1:17-18).  

4a.

The One Called	The Calling	The Response	The Promise

Chart C Positive Examples of Responding to God’s Calling

4b. Share a testimony of how you did not hesitate to work for God. What did He command you to do? What did He promise you? How has He rewarded you? 

22:11-21

5. Who is like Ananias to you? In other words, through whom has God spoken His will to you? 

6. What can we learn from verse 16 about the purpose and effect of baptism? 

7. What was the point of Paul’s response to the Lord in verses 19 and 20? 

A Matter of Law

The Basics

Setting

Paul's speech had infuriated the crowd. The commander hoped to examine Paul under scourging, only to find out that Paul was a Roman citizen, who was protected under Roman law from being bound or scourged before being found guilty. On the next day, the commander had Paul stand before the Jewish council to find out the reason for the Jews' accusations. He would soon discover that the accusations against Paul were not deserving of death or chains, but were only matters concerning the Jewish law.

Key Verse

"Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome" (23:11).

Did You Know...?

1. **Scourging** (22:24): Scourging was commonly used to question a prisoner. The prisoner was stripped, tied to a post, and whipped. While whipping a prisoner, a Roman soldier was restricted by nothing but his strength and whim. If whipped severely, the flesh was reduced to a bloody pulp.^{11/571}
2. **"Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman?"** (22:25): Roman law guaranteed the citizens numerous rights and privileges, including immunity from scourging and crucifixion. The commander had broken the law and was subject to punishment when he ordered that Paul be flogged (a fact the commander later conveniently forgot to mention in his letter to Felix [cf. 23:27]).⁸
3. **"With a large sum I obtained this citizenship"** (22:28): Roman citizenship was granted only by birth or by reward; it could not be bought for a fee, but for a bribe. The commander

was probably implying, "How can someone as sorry-looking as you afford the price for citizenship?"⁴

4. **"I was born a citizen"** (22:28): A verbal claim to Roman citizenship was accepted at face value; there were stiff penalties (including death) for making a false claim of citizenship. Paul was a rare individual, to be an educated, intelligent, and devout Jew who was also a Roman citizen by birth.⁴
5. **Sanhedrin** (22:30): The 71-member Jewish high court, which originated from the council of Moses and the 70 elders (cf. Num 11:16-17). It was composed of chief priests, elders, and scribes, and was headed by the high priest. The Sanhedrin was given much authority in religious and civil affairs.^{12/1524}
6. **Ananias** (23:2): Not to be confused with other men of the same name (such as in 5:1-5 and 9:10-17). He was the high priest at the time. A Sadducee, he was wealthy, arrogant, unscrupulous, filling his sacred office for selfish and political ends. Later, he traveled to Caesarea to accuse Paul before Felix (cf. 24:1). Shortly after Felix left the province, Ananias was deposed. He was later assassinated.
7. **"Whitewashed wall"** (23:3): Paul's rebuke is similar to that of Jesus' against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:27.
8. **"I did not know that he was the high priest"** (23:5): This remark has greatly puzzled biblical scholars, because the high priest was easily identified by his position and official seat as president of the Sanhedrin. Some take the words as ironic ("I didn't think that anyone who acted in such a manner could be the high priest!") Others assume that due to Paul's poor eyesight he did not know who had ordered him to be struck. Perhaps Paul was indeed apologizing for his outburst ("For a moment, I did not bear in mind that I was addressing the high priest.")⁴
9. **Sadducees** (23:6): A Jewish political party composed of mostly priests and the upper class who generally cooperated with the Roman authorities. Though smaller and less popular than the Pharisees (cf. Did You Know #10), they occupied influential positions on the Sanhedrin. Because they accepted the authority of only the five books of Moses, they rejected the Pharisees' oral traditions as well as the doctrines of the resurrection, future judgment, and angels and spirits.^{13/162}

10. **Pharisees** (23:6): Literally, “Separated Ones.” They were teachers in the synagogues, religious examples in the eyes of the people, and self-appointed guardians of the law and its proper observance. They considered the interpretations and regulations handed down by tradition to be virtually as authoritative as the Scripture.^{12/1545}

Observation

Outline

- _____ (22:22-23)
- _____ (22:24-29)
- _____ (22:30-23:11)
- _____ (23:12-22)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

- 1. How were Paul’s experience in this passage similar/different to those of Jesus (cf. Mt 26:59-67)?  

- 2. Give examples of God’s law that you obey without a second thought (like the Roman soldiers who obeyed their laws). Give examples of God’s law that you have trouble obeying (like the religious leaders who violated their laws for personal gain). 

Segment Analysis

22:22-23

- 1a. Why did the crowd reject Paul’s words?  

- 1b. Today, how might we have similar attitudes? 

22:24-29

- 2. Why was the Roman commander puzzled at why the crowd was shouting at Paul? 

- 3. What does verse 29 tell you about respect of the law in the Roman Empire?  

- 4. With respect to the law, how were the Roman soldiers better than the members of the Sanhedrin? 

- 5a. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we become citizens of the household of God (cf. Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20). What are the laws of the heavenly kingdom?  
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 5b. What are your rights and privileges as a citizen of heaven?  
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 5c. What are your duties as a citizen of heaven?  
- _____
- _____
- _____

22:30-23:11

- 6a. What does it mean to live in all good conscience? Why is it important to do so “before God?”
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 6b. Do you live in all good conscience before God?
- _____
7. Why did the high priest command that Paul be struck on the mouth? 
- _____
- _____
8. In 23:5, why did Paul quote a law of Moses (cf. Ex 22:28)? 
- _____
- _____
- _____

9. What was Paul trying to achieve when he said, “I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!” (23:6)? What does this teach you about what to do in a difficult situation?  
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 10a. Why do you think the Lord appear to Paul (11)? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 10b. When you preach the gospel and are rejected, how can you still “be of good cheer”? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 10c. How has Jesus Christ affirmed your work? How has He given you a sense of direction in your life? 
- _____
- _____
- _____

23:12-22

11. Describe the Roman commander in your own words.  
- _____
- _____
- _____
12. Has a non-Christian ever been a valuable help to you? What does this teach you about how God works through the kindness of others? 
- _____
- _____
- _____

Paul Before Governors

The Basics

Setting

While Paul was being held for trial, some Jews plotted to kill him. When the commander learned of their scheme through Paul's nephew, he immediately dispatched a cohort of soldiers, horsemen, and spearmen to bring Paul down to the governor Felix at Caesarea by night. He also commanded Paul's accusers to appear before the governor to present their case against Paul.

Key Verse

"... 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'" (24:21)

Did You Know...?

1. **Third hour of the night** (23:23): 9:00 PM
2. **Soldiers...horsemen...spearmen** (23:23): "Heavily armed infantry, cavalry and lightly armed soldiers..." ^{12/1691}
3. **Felix the governor** (23:24): "Antonius Felix. The emperor Claudius had appointed him governor of Judea c. AD 52, a time when Felix's brother was the emperor's favorite minister. The brothers had formerly been slaves, then freedmen, then high officials in government. The historian Tacitus said of Felix, 'He held the power of a tyrant with the disposition of a slave.' He married three queens in succession, one of whom was Drusilla (24:24)." ^{12/1692} "During his governorship, insurrections and anarchy increased throughout Palestine. Try as he would to put down the uprisings and regain control, his brutal methods only alienated the Jewish population more and led to further disturbances." ^{11/539}
4. **Antipatris** (23:31): "a city built by Herod the Great, and called by this name in honour of his father, Antipater. It lay between

Caesarea and Lydda, two miles inland, on the great Roman road from Caesarea to Jerusalem." ⁷

5. **Herod's Praetorium** (23:35): "Erected as a royal residence by Herod the Great but now used as a Roman praetorium—the place for the official business of the emperor and/or to house personnel directly responsible to the emperor. Praetorium were located in Rome (Php 1:13), Ephesus, Jerusalem (Jn 18:28), Caesarea and other parts of the empire." ^{12/1692}
6. **Orator** (24:1): lawyer acquainted with the procedures of the Roman court. ⁶
7. **Great peace** (24:2-3): "The expected eulogy with which to introduce a speech before a judge. In his six years in office Felix had eliminated bands of robbers, thwarted organized assassins and crushed a movement led by an Egyptian (see note on 21:38). But in general his record was not good. He was recalled by Rome two years later because of misrule. His reforms and improvements are hard to identify historically." ^{12/1695}
8. **Creator of dissension** (24:5): "To excite dissension in the empire was treason against Caesar. To be a leader of a religious sect without Roman approval was contrary to law." ^{12/1695} "Sedition was severely punished by the Romans, being what they carefully watched and guarded against, and was what the Jews were supposed to be very prone unto; and Tertullus would suggest, that the several riots, and tumults, and seditions, fomented by the Jews, in the several parts of the Roman empire, here called the world, were occasioned by the apostle: the crime charged upon him is greatly aggravated, as that not only he was guilty of sedition, but that he was the mover of it, and that he stirred up all the Jews to it, and that in every part of the world, or empire, than which nothing was more false." ⁵
9. **Drusilla** (24:24): "third and youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. (Acts 12:1-4,20-23). Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, induced her to leave her husband, Azizus, the king of Emesa, and become his wife." ⁷
10. **Festus succeeded Felix** (24:27): "Felix was recalled to Rome in AD 59/60 to answer for disturbances and irregularities in his rule, such as his handling of riots between Jewish and Syrian inhabitants. Festus is not mentioned in existing historical records before his arrival in Palestine. He died in office after two years,

but his record for that time shows wisdom and honesty superior to both his predecessor, Felix, and his successor, Albinus.”^{12/1696}

- 11. **“I appeal to Caesar”** (25:11): “Nero had become the emperor by this time. It was the right of every Roman citizen to have his case heard before Caesar himself (or his representative) in Rome. This was the highest court of appeal, and winning such a case could have led to more than just Paul’s acquittal. It could have resulted in official recognition of Christianity as distinct from Judaism.”^{12/1694}
- 12. **Council** (25:12): This was an advisory body to the Roman governor that consisted of officials and legal experts.^{12/1694}

Observation

Outline

- _____ (23:23-35)
- _____ (24:1-27)
 - _____ (1-9)
 - _____ (10-21)
 - _____ (22-27)
- _____ (25:1-12)
 - _____ (1-7)
 - _____ (8)
 - _____ (10-12)

Key Words/Phrases

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

General Analysis

- 1. How were Felix and Festus both people-pleasers?  

Segment Analysis

23:23-35

- 1a. Why did the commander want to protect Paul? How were his actions commendable?  

- 1b. Do you see the Lord’s hand at work behind the commander’s elaborate security precautions? 

- 2. According to his letter to the governor, what was the commander’s opinion about the charges against Paul? 

24:1-27

- 3. Compare the way Tertullus and Paul addressed Felix. What do you see?  

4. What does the fact that the high priests and elders’ hiring of an orator tell you about them and their case against Paul? 
- ---
5. What did Tertullus accuse Paul of? 
- ---
6. How did Paul’s defense address the false charges?  
- ---

7. How did Felix decide the case? Did he keep his word? 
- ---
- 8a. What did Paul preach to Felix about? 
- ---
- 8b. What can we learn from Paul’s preaching? 
- ---

- 9a. When Felix heard Paul’s preaching, what was his reaction? Why do you think he reacted this way?  
- ---
- 9b. Why is that sometimes, we tremble at God’s word like Felix but go away without doing anything about it? 
- ---
10. Why did Felix frequently sent for Paul to converse with him? 
- ---
11. Why did Felix keep Paul in prison? What does this show?  
- ---
- 12a. How long was Paul in prison? 
- ---
- 12b. If you were in Paul’s situation, how would you feel? 
- ---

25:1-12

13. What did the high priest and Jewish leaders petition Felix? Why? 
- ---
14. What was Paul accused of? What evidence did the accusers present? 
- ---

15. How did Paul defend himself this time? 

16. Why did Paul appeal to Caesar? 

Final Thoughts

17. How would the incidents recorded in this passage serve to convince Luke’s readers that the Christian faith is legitimate and trustworthy? 

18. Have you ever been falsely accused because of your faith? How did you deal with it? What can you learn from Paul? 

The Basics

Setting

After Paul appealed to Caesar, Festus had a thorny problem at hand. He was at a loss as to how to present the charges against Paul to Caesar, so he enlisted the help of King Agrippa, who agreed to hear Paul’s defense in order to assist Festus in writing his report. Paul made use of this occasion to witness the Christian faith before Agrippa and all who were present. At the end of this court session, both King Agrippa and Festus agreed that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

Key Verse

“...‘For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness, ... to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me’” (Acts 26:16,18)

Did You Know...?

- 1. **King Agrippa** (25:13): “Herod Agrippa II. He was 17 years old at the death of his father in AD 44 (12:23). Being too young to succeed his father, he was replaced by Roman procurators. Eight years later, however, a gradual extension of territorial authority began. Ultimately he ruled over territory north and northeast of the Sea of Galilee, over several Galilean cities and over some cities in Perea. At the Jewish revolt, when Jerusalem fell, he was on the side of the Romans. He died c. AD 100—the last of the Herods.” ^{12/1694}
- 2. **Bernice** (25:13): The oldest daughter of Agrippa I, she was 16 years old at his death. When only 13, she married her uncle, Herod of Chalcis, and had two sons. When Herod died, she lived with her brother, Agrippa II. To silence rumors that she was living in incest with her brother, she married Polemon, king of

Cilicia, but left him soon to return to Agrippa. She became the mistress of the emperor Vespasian’s son Titus but was later ignored by him.”^{12/1694}

- 3. **Expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews** (26:3): “Agrippa as king controlled the temple treasury and the investments of the high priest, and could appoint the high priest. He was consulted by the Romans on religious matters. This is one of the reasons Festus wanted him to assess Paul.”^{12/1695}
- 4. **Kick against the goads** (26:14): “A Greek proverb for useless resistance—the ox succeeds only in hurting itself.”^{12/1696}

Observation

Outline

_____ (25:13-22)

_____ (25:23-27)

_____ (26:1-23)

_____ (1-11)

_____ (12-18)

_____ (19-23)

_____ (26:24-29)

_____ (26:30-32)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

- 1. How many times did governor Felix or King Agrippa comment that Paul had done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment?

- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

25:13-22

- 1a. What problem did Festus face with Paul’s case? 

- 1b. How could Agrippa help him?  

25:23-27

- 2. Do you ever have to handle matters that you know little about? What do you do? Is there something you can learn from Festus?
 
- _____
- _____
- _____

26:1-23

- 3a. What was the promise of hope that God had made to Israel’s forefathers?  

- 3b. As a Pharisee, Paul had always believed in the resurrection of the dead. But how did his understanding of the resurrection change after his conversion to Christ?  

- 4. In 26:18, the Lord speaks of the blessings that come to those who accept Christ. List and explain them.  

5a. What was Paul’s goal in life after his conversion? 

5b. What has the Lord called you to do? What are you doing to obey that calling? 

6a. How did Paul view his present condition as a prisoner? (22) 


6b. What can we learn from Paul in this regard? 

26:24-29

7a. What did Festus make of Paul’s defense? 

7b. How do unbelievers sometimes make similar remarks about our witnessing today? 

8a. What does Festus’ comment tell us about Paul? 

8b. What does this teach us? 

9a. What was Paul’s wish for King Agrippa and all those who were present? 

9b. How does Paul’s wish inspire you? 

10a. What’s wrong with Agrippa’s words to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” (NIV)? 

10b. How do his words reflect some people’s attitude toward the gospel? 

26:30-32

11. What was Agrippa’s verdict? 

12. Was Paul’s decision to appeal to Caesar wrong since he could have been set free if he hadn’t made the appeal? 

35

Paul’s Journey to Rome

The Basics

Setting

King Agrippa, after hearing Paul’s defense, agreed with Festus that Paul was innocent. But because Paul had appealed to the emperor, he was sent on his way to Rome in Italy, escorted by Julius the centurion and his regiment. The passage of this lesson records this journey to Rome. As they set sail they met with a tempest halfway and almost perished in the sea. By the grace and protection of God they managed to reach the island of Malta safely. They were accorded great hospitality by the locals. Afterwards, they boarded another vessel, which took them on the final leg of their journey to Rome.

Key Verse

“For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you’” (27:23-24).

Did You Know...?

- 1. **Adramyttium** (27:2): “A harbor on the west coast of the province of Asia, southeast of Troas, east of Assos.”^{12/1697}
- 2. **Aristarchus** (27:2): “native of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4), a companion of Paul (Acts 19:29; 27:2). He was Paul’s ‘fellow-prisoner’ at Rome (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24).”⁷
- 3. **Sidon** (27:3): “This was a famous city in Phoenicia, upon the northern border of the land of Israel; it was a maritime place, and noted for trade and navigation.”⁵ It was about 67 miles north of Caesarea.
- 4. **Shelter of Cyrrus** (27:4): “Near the eastern coast, where, by keeping near the shore, the contrary winds would be less felt, being broken by the highlands of the great island. The wind must have been from the northwest.”⁶

5. **Myra** (27:5): “The growing importance of the city of Myra was associated with the development of navigation. Instead of hugging the coast from point to point, more ships were daring to run directly from Alexandria in Egypt to harbors like Myra on the southern coast in Asia Minor. It was considerably out of the way on the trip to Rome from Egypt, but the prevailing westerly wind would not allow a direct voyage toward the west. Myra became an important grain-storage city as well.” ^{12/1700}
6. **Cnidus** (27:7): “From Myra to Cnidus at the southwest point of Asia Minor was about 170 miles. The trip probably took another 10 to 15 days.” ^{12/1698}
7. **Crete** (27:7): “An island 160 miles long. Rather than cross the open sea to Greece, the ship was forced to bear south, seeking to sail west with the protection of the island of Crete on the north...” ^{12/1698}
8. **Salmone** (27:7): “a promontory on the east of Crete.” ⁷
9. **Fair Havens near Lasea** (27:8): “a harbour in the south of Crete, some 5 miles to the east of which was the town of Lasea.” ⁷
10. **The Fast** (27:9): The Day of Atonement. “The Jewish Day of Atonement fell in the latter part of September or in October. The usual sailing season by Jewish calculation lasted from Pentecost (May-June) to Tabernacles, which was five days after the Fast. The Romans considered sailing after Sept. 15 doubtful and after Nov. 11 suicidal.” ^{12/1698}
11. **Phoenix** (27:12): “a town with a harbour on the southern side of Crete.” ⁷ It “served as a wintering place, having a harbor with protection against the storms.” ^{12/1698}
12. **Euroclydon** (27:14): “a tempestuous wind or hurricane, cyclone, on the Mediterranean, and very dangerous; now called a ‘levanter.’” ¹⁰ “Apparently the ship was blown southwest from Fair Havens toward Claudia.” ^{12/1701}
13. **Claudia** (27:16): “a small island off the southwest coast of Crete... It is now called Gozzo.” ⁷
14. **Undergird the ship** (27:17) “with cords and ropes, which they drew under the keel of the ship, and so bound both sides of the ship, that it might not split and fall to pieces” ⁵
15. **Syrtis** (27:17): “A long stretch of desolate banks of quicksand along northern Africa off the coast of Tunis and Tripoli—still far away, but in such a storm the ship could be driven a great distance.” ^{12/1698}
16. **Ship’s tackle** (27:19): “Spars, planks and perhaps the yardarm with the mainsail attached. At times these were dragged behind, serving as a brake.” ^{12/1698}
17. **Adriatic Sea** (27:27): “The sea between Italy, Malta, Crete and Greece. In ancient times the Adriatic Sea extended as far south as Sicily and Greece.” ^{12/1698}
18. **Took soundings** (27:28): “Measured the depth of the sea by letting down a weighted line.” ^{12/1698}
19. **Rudder ropes** (27:40): “Ancient ships had two great broad-bladed oars for rudders. These, when not in use, were lifted out of the water and bound or tied up. When required for use, these bands were unloosed and the rudders allowed to drop into the water.” ⁷ “The rudder was a vertically hinged plate made of wood in ancient times, of metal or fiberglass in modern times—mounted at the stern of a vessel for directing its course.” ^{3/536}
20. **Malta** (28:1): “Known as Melita by the Greeks and Romans. It was included in the province of Sicily and is located 58 miles south of that large island.” ^{12/1699}
21. **Natives** (28:2) “Lit. ‘Barbarians’; all non-Greek-speaking people were called this by Greeks. Far from being uncivilized tribesmen, they were Phoenician in ancestry and used a Phoenician dialect but were thoroughly Romanized.” ^{12/1699}
22. **Leading citizen** (28:7): probably the governor.
23. **After three months** (28:11): “They had to remain here until the sailing season opened in late February or early March.” ^{12/1700}
24. **Twin Brothers** (28:11): Castor and Pollux, “the two ‘sons of Zeus’ (Greek *Dioscuri*), the guardian deities of sailors.” ^{12/1700}
25. **Syracuse** (28:12): “a city on the south-east coast of Sicily... It was distinguished for its magnitude and splendour.” ⁷
26. **Rhegium** (28:13) “a town in the south of Italy, on the Strait of Messina.” ⁷
27. **Puteoli** (28:13): “Modern Pozzuoli, almost 200 miles from Rhegium. It was situated in the northern part of the Bay of Naples and was the chief port of Rome, though 75 miles away. The population included Jews as well as Christians.” ^{12/1700}

- 28. **Forum of Appius** (28:15): “a town on the road, the ‘Appian Way,’ from Rome to Brundisium. It was 43 miles from Rome.”⁷
- 29. **Three Inns** (28:15): “a place on the great ‘Appian Way,’ about 11 miles from Rome, designed for the reception of travellers, as the name indicates.”⁷

Observation

Outline

_____ (27:1-8)

_____ (27:9-12)

_____ (27:13-20)

_____ (27:21-26)

_____ (27:27-32)

_____ (27:33-38)

_____ (27:39-44)

_____ (28:1-10)

_____ (28:11-16)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

- 1. Observe how Paul was the key figure in this story. In what ways did God use Paul to minister to the needs of those around him during this journey?  
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Segment Analysis

27:1-8

- 1. Who did Paul travel with on his journey to Italy? 
- _____
- _____

27:9-12

- 2. What did Paul advice the centurion? 
- _____
- _____
- 3a. Why do you think the centurion listened to the helmsman and the owner of the ship despite Paul’s warning?  
- _____
- _____
- 3b. The centurion’s decision turned out to be a mistake. What can you learn from his mistake?
- _____
- _____
- _____

27:13-20

- 4. Have you ever felt as helpless as the ship in the tempest (15)? 
- _____
- _____
- 5. What did the people do when they encountered the tempest? Did it help? 
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 6. When you have tried everything to deal with a crisis in your life but to no avail, what do you do? 
- _____
- _____

27:21-26

7a. What gave Paul such confidence when everyone else was in total despair?  

7b. What lessons can you learn from him? 

8. Paul did not keep God’s promise to himself but shared it with everyone to lift them up. What motivates you to encourage others when you are in adversity yourself? 

9a. What do these words mean: “God has granted you all those who sail with you”? 

9b. How would God do something similar for you today? 

10a. How did Paul describe God? 

10b. What does this say about our relationship with God and how we live our lives? Do we know God the same way that Paul did? 



27:27-32

11. Why do you think the centurion listened to Paul’s warning this time? 

27:33-38

12a. How was Paul’s faith evident in his actions and words?  

12b. How did his faith in God help his fellow passengers? 

12c. How can you also help others with your faith in God? 

27:39-44

13. Do you see God’s protection in what happened here?  

28:1-10

14. What kind of reception did Paul and his fellow travelers receive at Malta? 

15. How did God work through Paul at Malta?  

28:11-16

16a. How did Paul feel when he saw the believers from Appii Forum and Three Inns? Why?  

16b. Do you also feel the same way when meeting other believers in Christ? 

17. What special treatment did Paul receive in Rome? 

Final Thoughts

18. How do we keep our fervor for the Lord and accomplish His work when we are confined by unfavorable circumstances (e.g. disability, sickness, busy schedule, opposition from unbelieving family members, etc.)? Try to apply the lessons you learned in this passage to your life. 

The Basics

Setting

The journey to Rome was long and treacherous, but God protected Paul and his fellow passengers throughout. Finally, Paul arrived at Rome, accompanied by the brethren in Italy who greeted him on the way to Rome. The final passage of Acts records Paul’s witnessing at Rome, first to the Jewish leaders, then to all who came to him.

Key Verse

“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (28:30-31).

Did You Know...?

- 1. “In the late forties Jews at Rome had been so sharply divided about Christianity that the Emperor Claudius banished them all from the city to stop the riots there... Having been expelled from Rome in 49 or 50 because of riots about Christianity in their community, and having only recently returned to their city after Claudius's death in 54, [the Jewish leaders] were simply not prepared in 61 to become involved in Paul’s case one way or another.” ^{11/570}

Observation

Outline

- _____ (28:17-22)
- _____ (28:23-24)
- _____ (28:25-29)
- _____ (28:30-31)

Key Words/Phrases

General Analysis

1. How is this passage an appropriate conclusion to Acts?  
-
-
-
-

Segment Analysis

28:17-22

- 1a. Why did Paul gather the leaders of the Jews in Rome?  
-
-
-
-
- 1b. What can we learn from Paul in this? 
-
-
-
-
2. How were the Jewish leaders in Rome different from those in Jerusalem?  
-
-
-
-

28:23-24

3. What was the subject of Paul’s preaching? 
-
-
- 4a. How does Luke describe how eager and serious Paul was in his preaching? 
-
-
- 4b. Do you have the same fervor when witnessing to others? What would motivate you to have such a fervor? 
-
-
5. Paul persuaded them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. How would you use the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the Savior? 
-
-
-
-
6. What were the Jewish leaders’ reaction to Paul’s preaching? 
-
-
-
-

28:25-29

7. Paul stated, “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah....” What does this say about the Scriptures? 
-
-
8. What was Paul’s point in quoting from the book of Isaiah? 
-
-
-
-

Acts 28:17-31

9. What did Paul say about the new direction of Christian ministry? 

28:30-31

- 10a. What did Paul do after the Jews dispersed? 

- 10b. What can we learn from this in our preaching? 

11. Where was Paul's preaching and teaching ministry based? Why? How does this inspire you?   

12. How are the words "with all confidence" and "no one forbidding" significant? 

13. How do believers today continue where the apostles left off in Acts? 

Thoughts on Questions

Lesson 2

Observation

Outline

- Prologue to Acts (1:1-2)
- Appearances of the Resurrected Christ (1:3-8)
 - Speaking about things concerning the kingdom of God (3)
 - The promise of the the Holy Spirit (4 –5)
 - The purpose of the Holy Spirit and the Great Commission (8)
- The Ascension of Jesus Christ (1:9-11)

Key Words/Phrases

Power, witnesses, Holy Spirit.

General Analysis

1. The appearances of the resurrected Christ were also recorded in Matt 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20, 21.
2. Jesus' final instructions and words may be summarized as follows:
 1. All authority had been granted to Jesus in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18).
 2. All His disciples were to go into the whole world to preach the gospel to every one and make them disciples (Mt 28:19, Mk 16:15).
 3. The message of the gospel includes repentance and remission of sins through baptism and those who believe and do accordingly will be saved but those who do not will be condemned (Luke 24:47, Mk 16:16, Mt 28:19).
 4. The disciples were to teach the believers all that the Lord Jesus had commanded them (Mt 28:20).
 5. Miraculous signs would accompany the disciples' ministry (Mk 16:17-18)
 6. The disciples were to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit before embarking on the preaching work (Lk 24:49, Acts 1:4-5)
 7. Once they were endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, they would be Jesus' witnesses beginning from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8)
 8. Jesus would be with them to the end of the age (Mt 28:20).

3.
 1. He presented Himself alive by many infallible proofs (3) so that the disciples would have a firm faith in His resurrection.
 2. He spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (3) so that the disciples would have a clearer understanding of the gospel that they were to preach.
 3. He promised them the Holy Spirit (4,5,8), who would empower them to be the Lord's witnesses.
 4. He prophesied and commanded them to be His witnesses to the end of the earth (8).
 5. He ascended to heaven before their eyes and indicated to them through the angels that He would come again (9-11).
- 4a.
 1. The promise of the Holy Spirit (5,8).
 2. The promise of the Lord's return (11)
- 4b.
 1. Although the Lord Jesus has ascended to heaven, He now dwells in the heart of the believers and abides with the church through the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16-20; 20:21-23).

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to witness for Christ (Acts 1:8), grants them boldness (cf. Acts 4:31), and gives them words of power and wisdom (cf. Acts 6:10). The Holy Spirit also directs the disciples in their ministry (cf. Acts 16:6) and leads the church in making decisions (cf. Acts 15:28).

The Holy Spirit also plays a vital role in the believer's life. He testifies to our spiritual sonship (Rom 8:16), seals us for the heavenly inheritance (Eph 1:13-14; 2Cor 5:1-5), renews us (Tit 3:5-6), quenches our soul (Jn 7:37-39), sanctifies us for salvation (2Thess 2:13), teaches us the truth (Jn 14:26; 16:13), intercedes for us (Rom 8:26-27), gives us life (Rom 8:11), and enables us to overcome our sinful nature (Rom 8:13).
 2. The Lord's return is the ultimate hope of all believers. We eagerly look forward to His coming because when He comes, He will save us (Heb 9:28; 1Thess 1:10), transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body (Php 3:21; 1Cor 15:52-54), reward us (Mt 25:14-23; Lk 12:42-44; 2Tim 4:8), usher in the new heavens and new earth (2Pet 3:12-13), and receive us to Himself (Jn 14:2-3). We shall be like the Lord and see Him as He is (1Jn 3:2; Rev 22:4-5; 1Cor 13:12), and we will be with the Lord forever (1Thess 4:16-17).

Segment Analysis

1. It was addressed to Theophilus, most likely a Gentile official.
2. He was referring to the Gospel according to Luke, which was also addressed to Theophilus.

3. It includes all that Jesus began both to do and teach as well as His death, resurrection, post-resurrection appearances, and ascension.
4. The Greek word for "apostle" is derived from the verb that means "send." Therefore, an apostle is someone who has been sent, or a messenger. In this sense, the disciples were called apostles because they had been chosen by the Lord and sent forth to preach the gospel.
5. Things pertaining to the kingdom of God (3).
6. To wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (4) and to be His witnesses (8).
- 7a. The disciples wanted to know the timing of God's activities. But the Lord Jesus told them to focus on their mission of expanding the kingdom of God.
- 7b. Sometimes, we may simply wonder about why God still has not done what He promised He would do or when He would fulfill His promise. But, in the meanwhile, we forget to do our part and carry out what God has commanded us to do. For example, it is not for us to know when God will fulfill His promise of expanding His church to the whole world. God's promise will surely come true in due time. Instead of speculating on God's timing and worrying about what God will do, we should just focus on our divine mission, which is to pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit and preach the gospel to all nations.
8. Mount of Olives (12).
9. The Lord's ascension into heaven shows that God has exalted Him to the highest place and that He is truly Lord and Savior (Acts 2:33; 5:31; Php 2:9-11; Heb 4:14; 7:26-27). Because Christ has received all authority in heaven and on earth, and that it is in His exalted name that we make disciples (Mt 28:18), we know that He will work with us and empower us when we witness for Him. Because He has accomplished the work of salvation, we have confidence that the gospel message we preach is true and effective.
10. The angels told them that Jesus would come in like manner as He went into heaven.
11. In view of the Lord's coming and His judgment, we need to reach out to as many people as we can so that they may hear the gospel and be saved from condemnation. The time for preaching is limited, so we must make the most of every opportunity to save souls while the door of God's grace is still open. Such realization gives great urgency to our mission.

Knowing that our Lord is returning should also remind us to be faithful. Since the Lord has entrusted us with an assignment and told us that He would return one day, we must diligently discharge our duty so we may receive a reward from the Lord when He comes (cf. Mt 25:14-30).

Lesson 3

Observation

Outline

Prayer in Anticipation of the Coming of the Holy Spirit (1:12-14)

Appointment of Matthias (1:15-26)

Key Words/Phrases

Continued with one accord, prayer and supplication, ministry, witness, Matthias.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. Gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem, they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (14).
- 1b. The following are the lessons we may learn based on the disciples' actions:
 1. They returned to Jerusalem according to the Lord's command. Submission and obedience to the Lord's command is the first step in receiving the Lord's promise.
 2. They prayed. Waiting for the promises of God does not mean sitting around doing nothing. We need to do our part and call upon God through prayer and supplication.
 3. They continued in prayer. Waiting for God in prayer requires continual trust and persistence.
 4. They were in one accord. Through meeting together and praying with the brothers and sisters in Christ, we can encourage each other and remind each other to focus on God's promises. Not only do we need to be together physically, our hearts should also unite as one. Unity makes our prayers effective.
2. They included the eleven apostles, the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus' brothers (13-14).
4. About 120
5. He became remorseful, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, and hanged himself (Mt 27:3-5). When he fell, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out (Acts 1:18).
- 6a. He must have accompanied the Lord Jesus and the apostles all the time, beginning from the baptism of John to the Lord's ascension. He would be a witness to the Lord's resurrection.

- 6a. To be a witness for Christ, we need to first be a follower of Christ. Following Christ means having a personal knowledge of and faith in the Lord through hearing and doing God's word. We need to study the life, works, and nature of Christ as well as follow His footsteps (cf. Jn 12:26). We need to give our lives to Christ, trust Him, depend on Him, and obey Him so that we can grow closer to Christ and always experience His marvelous power and grace. With a first hand knowledge of Christ, we can effectively witness to others about Christ (cf. 1Jn 1:1).
7. Barsabas and Matthias. Matthias was chosen.
8. In the last lesson, we saw that the Lord Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit and commanded them to be His witnesses. The choosing of an apostle to take Judas' place, as recorded in the present passage, is a response to the Lord's promise and command. By choosing a replacement, Peter and the other disciples were preparing themselves for the mission that the Lord had entrusted.
9.
 1. The initiative to choose an apostle was based on the Lord's command to witness for Him as well as on the prophecy in the Scripture. In the same way, decisions concerning the ministry need to conform to the principles of the Bible.
 2. Peter clearly stated the purpose for making a decision: to find a replacement to become a witness with the other apostles of the Lord's resurrection. He also set the criteria according to this purpose. Likewise, in every decision we make in church, we must consider whether and how our decision will contribute to the ultimate goal of witnessing for Christ.
 3. The disciples proposed two people as the candidates. This indicates that the disciples were involved in the discussion and the selection process. In our ministry, decisions that would have impact on the church as a whole ought to be the result of a collective effort.
 4. The disciples prayed to the Lord for guidance before casting lots. Prayer is crucial to decision-making in the church. While we may make proposals and offer suggestions, we need to depend on the Lord to arrive at the final decision. The Lord knows all things. He is in the best position to choose the best person for the job or determine the best approach to a task.

Lesson 4

Observation

Outline

The Pouring Forth of the Holy Spirit (2:1-4)

The Multitude's Responses (2:5-13)

Peter's Message: Joel's Prophecy (2:14-21)

Key Words/Phrases

One accord, tongues, Holy Spirit, confused, amazed, perplexed, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

General Analysis

1. The Lord Jesus had promised the disciples that they, as well as all who believe in Him, would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This promise first came true on the day of Pentecost, and was fulfilled again and again on those who subsequently believed. Therefore, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as recorded in this passage signals a new phase in God's redemptive history and the beginning of the NT church.
Furthermore, throughout Acts, the Holy Spirit plays a prominent role in the church's missionary efforts. Thus, the Pentecostal experience marks the beginning of the Holy Spirit's powerful presence and guidance, which ultimately enabled the apostles to fulfill the divine commission.
2. Devout Jews from "every nation under heaven" had returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast (5). God arranged this perfect opportunity for them to witness the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, about 3,000 souls were saved through this occasion (41). Moreover, these Jews must have also brought the gospel message with them when they returned home, thereby further spreading the name of Christ.

Segment Analysis

1. Their being together with one accord indicates that they all obeyed the word of the Lord Jesus and trusted in His promise with one mind and heart. They were all prepared as they waited to receive the promised Holy Spirit.
- 2a. There came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting (2).
- 2b. In both Hebrew and Greek, "spirit" can be also translated as "breath" or "wind." In Ezekiel 37:9-14, the breath that revived the dry bones prefigures the Spirit of God, who will give His people life. In John 3:5-8, the Lord Jesus compares being born of the Spirit to the blowing of the wind. Likewise, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is accompanied by a great sound, as of a rushing mighty wind. This outward sign represents the transforming and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Divided tongues, as of fire (3).

In the Scripture, fire is associated with God's presence (e.g. the burning bush in Exodus 3:2-5 and the pillar of fire in Exodus 40:38).

In Acts 2, however, it was not tongues of fire, but tongues that resembled fire, that sat on the disciples. The focus was on the "tongues," which were probably visible manifestations of the utterance that the Holy Spirit gave to each of the disciples. Their resemblance to fire may represent their divine origin as well as the divine presence among the disciples.

4. They began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (4).
5. They came together (6).
6. They were amazed, marveled, and perplexed (7,12). They had such reactions because they, who had come from 15 different parts of the world, heard the disciples, who were Galileans, declaring the wonderful works of God in their respective languages. They were also perplexed because they could not comprehend the meaning of this great miracle.
7. They mocked them and said, "They are full of new wine" (13).
8. The fact that these devout Jews understood the disciples in their own languages seems to indicate that the disciples were actually speaking 15 different languages. That is why many Bible commentators believe that the tongues that the disciples spoke are different from the unintelligible tongues that Paul mentioned in 1Cor 14:2.

But a more careful examination tells us that the disciples were not speaking languages of earthly nations. These are the reasons:

1. If the disciples were speaking intelligible languages, no one would have mocked them and commented that they were full of new wine. Anyone, even if he was not devout, would have been amazed that these Galileans were able to speak languages that they had never learned. The fact that some mocked the disciples and attributed the phenomenon to drunkenness suggests that the disciples were speaking in a strange and unknown tongue, not foreign languages.
2. Luke does not record that the disciples spoke 15 different languages. It was the devout Jews who said, "*we hear* them speaking in our own tongues" (*italics added*). The disciples were not speaking these languages. It was God who had miraculously opened the ears of these devout Jews to let them hear the disciples speaking in their respective languages. If all the disciples, about 120 of them, were speaking 15 languages at the same time, the various languages would have been indistinguishable, and it would have been impossible for these devout Jews to understand what the disciples were saying.

3. Paul writes, “For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries” (1Cor 14:2). This lends strong support for interpreting the tongues in Acts 2 as an unknown tongue.
4. Based on the experience of members and seekers in the True Jesus Church, we know that when the Holy Spirit comes upon a person, he is given the ability to speak in an unknown tongue. Unless God opens the ears of the listener, no one can understand him. The miracle that happened in Jerusalem continues to reoccur again and again today around the world. When we compare this common phenomenon in the True Jesus Church with the recordings of Acts 2, it is not difficult at all to picture exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost.
9. It was the third hour of the day (9 a.m.). Jews in those days would not become drunk at such an hour (cf. 1Thess 5:7).
10. Peter explained that the disciples’ speaking in tongues was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy that God would pour out His Spirit on man.
12. In the last days.
13. When the Holy Spirit was poured out, the disciples received the divine power that enabled them to witness for Christ and lead people to salvation (cf. Acts 1:8). The power of the Holy Spirit was immediately evident when 3,000 people were cut to the heart, accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, and were baptized into Christ that day. Therefore, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit was an act of God that led men to salvation. By the power of the Holy Spirit, many people since the day of Pentecost have heard the gospel of salvation, called on the name of the Lord, and been saved.

Lesson 5

Observation

Outline

Peter’s Message: The risen Christ (2:22-36)

The Multitude’s Response (2:37-41)

The Life of the Early Church (2:42-47)

Key Words/Phrases

Jesus, Christ, raise up, Holy Spirit, Lord, repent, be baptized, for the remissions of sins, continued steadfastly, apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers, fear, wonders and signs, one accord, gladness and

simplicity of heart, praising God, having favor with all the people, the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. God has made Jesus Christ Lord and Savior (36).
- 1b.
 1. He first reminded them of the miracles, wonders, and signs that Jesus did among them, which testified that He was from God.
 2. Peter pointed out that Jesus, whom they had put to death, had been raised up by God according to the Scriptures.
 3. He then stated that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit was a clear evidence that Jesus has been raised up and exalted by God.
2.
 1. David’s psalm stated that God would not allow His Holy One to see corruption. But David died and was buried (29).
 2. Peter explained that David was not speaking about himself when he wrote the psalm. Instead, he foresaw the Christ, who would be of the fruit of his body (his descendant) and who would be raised up by God to sit on His throne.
3. Jesus’ divinity, atoning death, resurrection, ascension, salvation, and second coming.
4. When a person receives the Holy Spirit, other people can see and hear it (33).
5. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which is an obvious external experience because it is accompanied by the speaking of tongues, is a powerful evidence that Jesus is the exalted Lord and Savior (33). When a person receives the Holy Spirit, he can know firsthand that Jesus is alive and that He is indeed our Lord and Savior.
6. They were cut to the heart when they realized that they had committed the grave sin of killing the Messiah whom they had been waiting for. So they humbly and desperately asked Peter what they must do about their sins (37).
- 7a. Peter told them to repent and that every one of them should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
- 7b. Remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (38-39).
8. Baptism is effective for the remission of sins because God’s word says so. The spiritual effect of baptism is based on the promise of God in the Bible (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1Pet 3:21). Through the witness of the Holy Spirit, the blood of Jesus Christ washes our sins away through the water during baptism (1Jn 5:6-8). Through baptism, we are buried and raised with Christ (Col 2:11-13; Rom 6:3-4), and we receive a new life (Jn 3:5; Tit 3:5).

Baptism is not just a religious ceremony or symbol. God's word designates baptism as the moment when the atoning blood on the cross takes effect upon the believer. Behind the symbolic action of baptism is God's act of salvation through faith. It may be difficult for us to comprehend the marvelous workings of God, but we just need to trust God's promise and obey the command of Christ Himself and of the apostles to be baptized.

9. "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" are not names but different designations of the one God. Although Jesus did not explicitly state it in Matthew, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one, and that name is "Jesus" (Jn 5:43; 17:11; 14:26), for Jesus is not only the Son but also the Father (Isa 9:6; Jn 10:30; 14:9) and the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:18; 16:17). The disciples knew this truth, and therefore commanded the multitude to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
10. Being saved from this perverse generation concerns the daily life of a Christian. As believers, we should not think that accepting Jesus Christ or salvation is a one-time event. True repentance is more than feeling sorry for our sins at our conversion. It also means forsaking our sins and walking in the newness of life every day with a new heart and a new lifestyle (cf. Eph 4:20-24). True salvation is not just being forgiven of our sins during baptism. It also means being set free from the bondage of sin in our lives (Rom 8:1-2) and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16,25).
But all these are not based on our own effort. We have to constantly depend on Christ and turn to Him for forgiveness and help. Only by His saving power can we be saved from this perverse generation.
11. When the church grows, there is an increase in both quality and quantity. In terms of quality, we read of the early believers' steadfast faith and love. In terms of quantity, we see how the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
- 12a.
 1. They gladly received the word (41)—A person who readily accepts the word of God shows that he is humble before God. When believers allow the word of God to be implanted in their hearts and put it into practice, they are bound to grow spiritually (cf. Jesus' parable of the sower in Mt 13:8; Mk 4:8; Lk 8:8).
 2. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (42)—The apostles' doctrine is the pattern of sound teachings and the complete gospel which the apostles had received from the Lord (2Tim 1:13; 1Cor 15:1-3). It is the foundation of the church upon which the church is built and grows (Eph 2:20-21). To be firmly rooted in the faith and to maintain a strong spiritual growth, all believers need to continually learn, practice, and remain true to the word of God, which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

3. They continued steadfastly in fellowship (42)—Having fellowship is crucial to our faith because it strengthens our relationship with God and with one another (1Jn 1:3). Through mutual sharing, edification, and service, the church can grow and be strong (Eph 4:11-16).
4. They continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread (42)—"Breaking of bread" is probably a reference to the Holy Communion (i.e. the Lord's Supper). The Holy Communion is an indispensable part of our faith because it reminds us of our Lord's sacrifice for us and helps us reaffirm our resolution to live for Him. It is also the occasion to examine ourselves of our sins as well as any offenses we may have against our brethren, all of which hinder the growth of the church. By partaking of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which are food and drink for our spiritual lives, we also have the life of Christ in us and grow in our communion with Him (Jn 6:47-58; 1Cor 10:16-17).
5. They continued steadfastly in prayers (42)—Through unceasing prayers, we can grow in our spiritual character and our knowledge of God (Eph 1:15-19; 3:14-19; Php 1:9-11; Col 1:9-11). Through our prayers, God will open the door for the gospel (Col 4:2-4) and lead people to the Lord through signs and wonders (Acts 4:30).
6. Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles (43)—Wonders, miracles, and signs demonstrate God's power and authority (Mt 12:28) and confirm the message that we preach (Mk 16:20; Acts 14:3; Heb 2:3-4). God often uses them to convince people to put their faith in the Lord (cf. Jn 2:11; 3:2; 7:31; 11:45).
7. They sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need (45)—Love is an important ingredient in church growth because love can edify and build up (Eph 4:16). When there is selfless love among the believers, the church becomes a magnet that binds everyone together and draws people to the church.
8. They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house (46)—Meeting regularly with brothers and sisters in Christ is essential to our spiritual growth. Through these meetings, we can encourage one another and serve one another with the various gifts we have received (Heb 3:12-13; 10:24-25; Eph 4:11-13). Family services and home visitations are equally important because they allow members to interact in a more informal setting and get to know each other better.
9. They had the gladness of heart (46)—Joy is the result of inner satisfaction that comes from having Christ in our lives and the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Jn 15:10-11; Acts 16:34; Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22; 1Thess 1:6). It is also an expression of complete trust in the

Lord (Php 4:10-13; 1Pet 1:5-9). When others see the joy that we have, they would want to know the secret and learn to also trust in the Lord.

10. They had the simplicity of heart (46)—Our love for one another needs to be sincere and come from a pure heart (1Pet 1:22). If all the believers in the church can establish a genuine relationship based on mutual trust, it will greatly enhance the unity of the church and attract unbelievers to the fold.
11. They continually praised God (47)—Praising God is not only a duty of believers but also a natural expression of our thanksgiving, and worship to our God. Constantly praising God is a way to remind ourselves and one another to lead a Christ-centered life and grow in Christ (Col 3:16-17). A church that always praises God is vibrant and active because it is filled with thanksgiving and joy.
12. They had favor with all the people (47)—Having a good reputation in the community is the first step for the church to reach out to people outside the church. The believers' godly conduct is a powerful instrument to win over unbelievers (Tit 2:9-10; 1Pet 2:12; 3:1)

Lesson 6

Observation

Outline

- Healing of the lame man and the people's response (3:1-10)
- Peter's message (3:11-26)
 - Pointing out the sin of the people (11-18)
 - Call to action (19-26)

Key Words/Phrases

Hour of prayer, fixing his eyes on him, "look at us," walking, leaping, and praising God, Servant Jesus, repent and be converted.

Segment Analysis

1. Peter and John were going up together to the temple at the hour of prayer (1). We can infer from this that they prayed together regularly. Through constant prayers, they received from God the ability to perform great miracles and witness for the Lord. Likewise, we need to be in constant communion with God through prayer in order to overcome our weaknesses and be the Lord's instrument. We also learn from this verse the importance of unity in prayer and in doing God's work (cf. Ecc 4:9-12, 2 Tim 2:22).

- 2a. The man expected to receive some alms, but what he received was healing by the power of Jesus Christ.
- 2b. The best help that we can render to people is to bring them God's grace and salvation. Had Peter and John given the man money, it would have helped him only temporarily. But by letting him walk in the name of Jesus Christ, the man no longer needed to beg but could sustain himself from then on. More importantly, the man came to know Jesus Christ and received salvation through Jesus' name. That is the best gift that anyone could ever receive.

Today, if the church could only help people financially but lacks the power of God, then the value of her service is very limited. We need to pray for the power from above so that we can truly minister to the needs of the people of the world and lead them to everlasting life.

3. Peter did not ignore this man and continued on his way to prayer. He saw his needs and stopped to help him. As witnesses for Christ, we should open our eyes and look at the people around us with eyes of compassion. That is the first step in bringing the gospel to others.
4. Silver and gold are of some value, but Jesus Christ and His grace far surpass anything money can buy. When we preach the gospel, we need to be careful not to depend on financial resources as the main driving force in the ministry and forget to seek the power from above. While financial support is important, having the guidance and blessings of the Lord is far more important. Without Christ's power and grace, even the most well financed ministry will not be able to accomplish the Lord's commission.
- 6a. He entered the temple with Peter and John. For the first time in his life, this man stepped into the temple instead of lying by the gate (The lame were not allowed into the temple). He could not contain his joy. He was walking and leaping and praising God. He also held on to Peter and John.
- 6b. The man did not hesitate to express his joy and thanksgiving. All the people saw him walking, leaping, and praising God. We, likewise, must let others know what God has done in our lives by continually praising God and sharing our personal testimony. God has done such great things in our lives and brought us the greatest joy. We ought to boldly and joyfully proclaim the good news to everyone around us.
7. See 10-11.
- 8a. They thought that it was by the apostles' power and godliness that the lame man was able to walk (12).
- 8b. The name of Jesus and faith in His name (16).

- 8c. Despite the multitude's adoration of Peter and John, Peter did not allow this miracle to be an opportunity for pride. He knew that it was the power of God that had cured this man. He turned the people's attention to the Lord. He preached Jesus, not himself.

When God accomplishes something through us, we must be alert and not indulge in people's praise and admiration. Jesus Christ, not we, should be the center of attention. We ought to grasp the opportunity to lead people to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and urge them to give glory to God.

9. The healing of the lame man was a living proof that God has raised Jesus from the dead and glorified Him.
- 10a. Peter pointed out the people's guilt for killing Jesus, whom God has glorified and through whose name the lame man was healed. He wanted the multitude to not just be amazed, but to realize their sin and to accept Jesus Christ as Lord.
- 10b. In order to lead people to repentance and to bring them to Christ, it is the responsibility of the preacher to first make the people aware of their sins and their need for forgiveness (cf. Acts 2:23,36,37).
11. Repent and be converted.
12. 1. Sins will be blotted out (19)
2. Times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord (19).
3. God will send Jesus from heaven at the restoration of all things (20-21).
13. The aim of Peter's speech is to make the people realize their sins and their need for repentance. Unlike Acts 2:38, where Peter responded to the multitude's question and instructed them about the steps involved in conversion, here, Luke simply records Peter's call to conversion but leaves out detailed instructions.

Repentance leads to conversion and conversion involves baptism. They are not mutually exclusive. Baptism into Christ is such an integral part of acceptance of Jesus Christ. We cannot treat baptism as a separate requirement and deny its necessity just because it is not mentioned in this verse. If this verse indeed taught that baptism is not necessary for the remission of sins, then it would blatantly contradict other passages of the Bible (e.g. Acts 2:38; 22:16) where it teaches the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins. On the other hand, when we read this verse along with the verses on the necessity of baptism, it becomes clear that we need to repent AND be baptized for the remission of sins.

It is important to read the Bible in its entirety. Silence in one passage should not be used as an argument for exclusion. For example, Peter's speech does not explicitly state the necessity to believe Jesus Christ and

to confess His name for the remission of sins. Can we argue on this basis that these are not necessary? Absolutely not. Although their necessity is not stated, the context implies it and other passages in the Bible teach it plainly.

14. On the one hand, "times of refreshing" can mean regeneration, freedom from sin, and the blessedness that comes as result of conversion (cf. 2Cor 5:17; Rom 5:9-11). Through Jesus Christ, we have restored our relationship with our heavenly Father and we are made new spiritually. On the other hand, the context of this passage suggests that "times of refreshing" is also a reference to the future restoration of all things (21; see next question).
15. Jesus Christ came into the world once and ascended to heaven. He will remain in heaven until the time of His return. Then He will come again to establish a new heaven and a new earth, and He shall reign forever (2Pet 3:12,13; Rev 11:15; cf. Mt 19:28; Rom 8:18-23). God has spoken about this day of restoration of all things through all His holy prophets. By repenting and turning to the Lord Jesus, believers are preparing themselves for this divinely ordained eschatological event.
16. 1. The gospel of Jesus Christ is deeply rooted in God's prophetic words since the world began as well as in God's covenant with Abraham. Just as Jesus suffered and died according to God's prophetic words (18), He will return one day according to God's prophetic words. Therefore, the people must accept Jesus and obey Him.
2. Peter also points out how blessed his listeners are in being able to hear the gospel. As the physical descendants of the chosen race, they are the first to hear the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ.
17. God has blessed us through Jesus Christ by turning us away from our iniquities (26). Repentance and the remission of sins are among the blessings of God (Ps 32:1; 103:1-4).

Lesson 7

Observation

Outline

The Arrest (4:1-4)

The Council's Questioning and Peter's Response (4:5-12)

The Threat (4:13-22)

The Church's Prayer (4:23-31)

Key Words/Phrases

Preached in Jesus Christ the resurrection from the dead; many...believed, filled with the Holy Spirit, the name of Jesus Christ, salvation, boldness, speak the things we have seen and heard, prayed.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. They were greatly disturbed and arrested them and put Peter and John into custody.
- 1b.
 1. They were disturbed because Peter and John, who were just common, uneducated men, were teaching the people. This would disrupt the established religious and political authority of the Sadducees.
 2. Peter and John were teaching about the resurrection of the dead, a doctrine that the Sadducees denied (cf. Mt 22:23; Acts 23:8).
 3. These religious leaders were of the same group of people who had sought to kill Jesus (Lk 20:19; 22:2,52). Now, the apostles were telling the people that Jesus was the Christ, who had risen from the dead. The apostles' message of Jesus' resurrection implied that these religious leaders had been wrong about Jesus, and that they were in fact guilty of crucifying the Christ.
- 2a. See verse 7.
- 2b. Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead and is the only Savior. It was by His name that the crippled man was healed.
- 2c. The chief cornerstone was the most important foundation stone, on which the whole building depends. Like the stone rejected by the builders, Jesus Christ was rejected by the religious authorities of His day. But God had exalted Him to be Lord and Savior, making Him the chief cornerstone of God's house, the only basis of our salvation.
- 3a. When we proclaim that Jesus is the only way of salvation, we are implying that no other religion can lead us to God. This kind of message often offends people of other faiths because they feel it's too exclusive.
- 3b. The purpose of preaching is not to please people, but to show them the only right way of salvation.
4. He spoke by the Spirit's guidance and with the courage given by the Spirit. Just as the Lord Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit would give the disciples power and wisdom to witness for the Lord (Mk 13:11; Acts 1:8).
5. Although Peter and John were uneducated and untrained men, they spoke with boldness before the religious authority. This kind of boldness reminded these religious leaders of Jesus, who had also spoken with authority and power. So they recognized that this extraordinary power could only have come from Jesus Christ Himself.

- 6a. They could not deny the miracle and good deed performed on the lame man as he stood before them (14). The multitudes also glorified God because of the miracle (21).
- 6b. They commanded Peter and John not to preach in the name of Jesus and let them go after further threats.
7. The great miracle of healing was irrefutable, and the council was fully aware of that. Realizing that God indeed had performed the miracle through Jesus, the risen Christ, they should have immediately repented of their sins and turned to the way of salvation.
 Their callousness was not due to ignorance. They knew what was right, but they were blinded by their desire to maintain their power and position as religious leaders. From their questioning and their threats, we can observe that these people were mainly interested in holding on to their authority.
- 8a. Verse 19
- 8b. God's command carries the highest authority. We need to be faithful to God and His words even if doing so may offend people of status and power or result in suffering persecution.
- 9a. They had seen Jesus Christ, His life, works, death, resurrection, and ascension. They had heard from the Lord Jesus the message of salvation (Heb 2:3).
- 9b. What the apostles had seen and heard gave them first-hand knowledge of Jesus Christ. This, in turn, enabled them to have a strong conviction that Jesus was the only Savior and compelled them to witness for Christ. Today, we need to examine our faith to see if we have a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. Only if we have a true conviction that Jesus is our only Lord and Savior would we diligently obey the commission of Christ and earnestly share the good tidings of salvation even in the face of obstacles along the way.
10. They assembled together in one accord to pray to God.
11. In verse 24 and the following verses, we see that the believers were united, and they knew to turn to God for help through prayer in the face of difficulties. Through their prayer in one accord, they overcame the challenge at hand.
12.
 1. They were not shocked by the rise of opposition. They knew from the Scripture that the Sovereign God had already determined long ago that nations, kings, and rulers would gather together against the Lord and His Christ. Now, the purpose of God was being fulfilled. In the same way, we ought not be surprised or discouraged when we meet with oppositions to our preaching of the gospel, for we know these things are bound to happen.

2. These believers' correct attitude about the rise of opposition made them even stronger. They now believed all the more that God was in control, and that they must continue to speak God's word. In the same way, oppositions in the work of preaching should not strike us down. They should strengthen our faith in God and bring us closer to God to seek His help.
13. 1. Boldness to speak God's word. Satan often tries to intimidate believers. But if every believer is not afraid of opposition and sufferings, then no obstacle could stop the spreading of the gospel.
2. Signs and wonders will be done through the name of the Lord Jesus. Signs and wonders in the name of the Lord confirm the message of the gospel and testify to God's power (Mk 16:20; Acts 8:13; Rom 15:19).
14. The place where they were assembled together was shaken. This was a sign of God's presence and power (cf. Ex 19:18). God had answered their prayer. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Lesson 8

Observation

Outline

The Sharing of Possessions (4:32-37)

Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)

Signs and Wonders through the Apostles (5:12-16)

Key Words/Phrases

Of one heart and one soul, had all things in common, great power, grace, "Satan filled your heart," lie, test the Spirit of the Lord, great fear, signs and wonders, believers were increasingly added to the Lord.

General Analysis

1. 1. Believers shared their goods with those in need
2. Believers were increasingly added to the church
3. Believers were of one accord.
4. Great wonders and signs were done through the apostles, and fear came upon everyone.
2. Church growth is more than an increase in membership. A thriving church is also marked by Christ-centered lives of the believers. When believers obey the will of the Lord in their daily lives, the church will

have the abidance of the Holy Spirit and continue to receive God's blessings.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. The believers did not consider their possessions as their own. Instead, they shared them with one another so that no one was lacking.
 - 1b. 1. To achieve unity, it is important to relinquish a self-centered way of life and look to the needs of other members of Christ's body.
 2. Unity of the church is in essence the unity of hearts and souls. Superficial unity, such as forming work teams or holding meetings, without sharing the same heart of love and dedication, will not last very long. For the church to be truly one, everyone needs to have a sincere heart and will to care for other members and seek the common good of the body of Christ.
 2. Each believer in the church has to be ready to give. This would require that we all not consider our possessions as our own but regard ourselves as stewards of God's possessions. In addition, we should learn to show concern for one another so that we can know who is in need. Then whenever we know that someone is lacking, we can generously give our possessions to meet their need.
- Those who have been chosen to manage the affairs of the church should also look out for any member who may be lacking. So when they see a need, they can faithfully and wisely use the funds available to the church to help these members.
- 3a. Peter clearly pointed out that Ananias had total control of the land and the money from the sale of the land (4). There was nothing wrong for keeping some for themselves while offering the rest to the church. But Ananias' sin was in conspiring with his wife to deceive the apostles and the church with the lie that they had actually given all the money from the sale of the land to the church.
 - 3b. What Barnabas did, i.e. selling his land and giving the money to the church, was a very noble act. The fact that this was recorded shows that it was well known by all the believers. Ananias and Sapphira probably wanted to earn people's recognition by way of also giving money to the church. So together they devised a way to put on an appearance of generosity without actually sacrificing too much. In other words, their motivation for giving was very likely to win people's praise, not to help the needy. They used Christian charity to their own advantage.
 - 4a. This passage often alarms the reader and raises the question of whether the sin of Ananias and Sapphira warranted such drastic judgment from God. If we think that God was acting too harshly on a "minor" sin, then we need to reexamine the nature of sin as well as God's justice.

The deliberate act of sinning, regardless of how harmless it seems, is a rebellion against God. In this light, every time we sin, we are committing the crime of treason against our Creator, and the rightful consequence of our action is death, which is separation from God's life. There is no sin that is too small to deserve anything less. Every sin against God is an offense on a cosmic scale.

With this in mind, when we read the account of Ananias and Sapphira, we should not marvel at how swift or severe God sent judgment upon them. Instead, we should marvel at how merciful God has been to us and how often we have taken His mercy for granted. This account should serve to lead us to repentance every time we read it.

Let us also not take lightly the sin of deceiving God, for God cannot be mocked (Gal 6:7). Ananias and Sapphira had declared publicly by their act that they had given all the money to God. So even the portion that they were holding back for themselves no longer belonged to them. Attempting to steal the things that have been dedicated to God is definitely not a "minor" offense by any measure.

As to why Ananias and Sapphira were not given a second chance, we should not be quick to conclude that they never had the chance to repent of their sins. We simply do not have enough information about this couples' lives and possible events that might have preceded this incident. We should also remember that the work of the Holy Spirit was very powerful in the early days of the church. With the Holy Spirit living in them, they would have certainly been taught what was right and wrong, and perhaps have even been warned by the Spirit against committing this sin. But they still chose to let Satan fill their hearts and conspired to "lie to God" (4) and "test the Spirit of the Lord" (9).

The death of Ananias and Sapphira was not only just, it also served a larger purpose. Through this event, God had taught everyone, including Christians today, the important lesson about the seriousness of sin as well as God's penetrating knowledge of the motives of our hearts. God's decisive judgment preserved the purity of the church at the initial stage of church growth and prevented many from committing such corrupt acts.

5. Fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things (11). The indirect result was that the Lord continued to bless the church by working with the apostles and adding believers to the church (12-16). Even people from the surrounding cities came to Jerusalem to experience the healing power and grace of the Lord Jesus.
6. Lying to God or testing the Spirit of the Lord means trying to fool God with an insincere act of piety, such as offering to God with an ulterior motive as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. In a similar fashion, the

Israelites also lied to God by paying Him lip service without any intention to obey Him (Ps 78:36; Isa 57:11; Hos 11:12).

- 7a. We need to consider offerings or charitable deeds as a dedication to God. Since it's done towards God, it must not be self-serving. It should be done purely out of love for God and for the needy. We must not take advantage of an act of piety to earn respect, admiration, or some other reward. As the Lord taught us, we should not carry out acts of godliness with the intention to be seen by others (Mt 6:1-18). Men may look at the outward act, but God looks at the motive behind the act.
- 7b. God detests false piety as well as deliberate acts of sin. We may be able to fool others, but we can never fool God. While God may not always judge us immediately for our secret sins the way He punished Ananias and Sapphira, He is not unaware of our sins. We will still have to give an account to God.
- 7c. Satan's work may come externally in the form of opposition to the faith or the preaching of the gospel. But Satan can also work from within the church through those who obey him. He starts his work by filling a person's heart, even the heart of a believer, and using that person to accomplish his evil purpose. In so doing, he destroys the individual whom he uses as well as causes damage to the spiritual well being of the church. So we need to guard our hearts and our church against Satan's infiltration.
- 7d. If sinners are not rebuked and sin is not removed, church growth may be hindered. Worse yet, the church may become corrupt, for sin can spread like leaven (1Cor 5:6). If one sins, and the church takes no action, others may follow his sin. But if the church stops sin from spreading by condemning that sin, or if the Lord intervenes to send immediate judgment, the fear of the Lord will come upon all. Then the church can preserve her wholeness and continue to grow under the Lord's blessing.
8. There were two kinds of response to the signs and wonders that God had performed. Some dared not join the church (13). But some came to believe in the Lord (14). This is in accord with the Lord Jesus' teaching in John 3:19-21. When the light of the gospel shines brightly into this dark world, those who love sin will avoid the light for fear that their evil deeds may be exposed, but those who submit to the truth and repent of their sins will come to the light and be saved.

Lesson 9

Observation

Outline

- The Apostles Imprisoned (5:17-18)
- The Apostles Freed by An Angel (5:19-21)
- The Apostles on Trial again (5:22-33)
- Gamaliel's Advice to the Sanhedrin (5:34-40)
- The Apostles Persecuted and Released (5:41-42)

Key Words/Phrases

Indignation, words of this life, taught, obey God rather than men, Jesus, Prince and Savior, repentance, forgiveness of sins, witnesses, furious, Gamaliel, rejoiced, counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

General Analysis

1. 1. God's will is for us to preach the words of life (20) and to witness for the Lord (29-32).
2. God's will cannot be frustrated by men's opposition (19, 39).
3. We need to discern God's will and be careful not to stand in opposition to it (39).

Segment Analysis

- 1a. They were filled with indignation.
- 1b. 1. They were furious because the apostles did not heed their threat but still preached Jesus Christ.
2. For the apostles to preach that Jesus was the Christ was to condemn the high priest and his men for murdering the Messiah (cf. 5:28).
2. At night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out (19).
3. "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life" (20).
6. He was angry that he and his men had been considered as the murders of Jesus (28).
- 7a. 1. God has raised up and exalted Jesus to be Prince and Savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins
2. The apostles and the Holy Spirit are witnesses to the risen Christ. Therefore, they must obey God rather than men by proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ.

- 7b. For the apostles, obedience to God meant witnessing for the Lord Jesus.
- 8a. God gives His Holy Spirit to those who obey God. Unlike evil spirits, the Spirit of God does not possess a person and force him to do what he does not want to do. In order for the Holy Spirit to help us, we need to yield to His guidance and walk by the Spirit. That is why God gives the Holy Spirit only to those who are submissive to Him.
- 8b. While we pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, we need to also determine to surrender our lives to the Spirit's will.
9. The men in the council were furious and plotted to kill the apostles. This goes to show that they were unrepentant of their sins. In fact, they were bent on multiplying their sin by plotting to murder Jesus' followers also.
- 10b. When God's word contradicts men's views, we would face criticisms, pressure, isolation, and even persecution from men when we carry out God's word. Because the consequences of offending men are much more immediate, it is easy to yield to men so as to avoid hardship. But if we have true faith in God and want to obey Him, we need to have the courage, readiness, and perseverance to meet the opposition of men.
- 11a. Gamaliel advised them to leave the apostles alone because if the apostles' work was of men, it would come to nothing. He quoted two contemporary examples to illustrate his point. On the contrary, Gamaliel stated, if the apostles' work was from God, they would be unable to stop them and even be found to fight against God.
- 11b. Sometimes, like the high priest and his men, we may oppose other people's work because we think they are wrong. On the surface, we seem to be upholding truth and justice, but we may actually be doing it because our own interests are at stake. So before we make a judgment about something, we need to first make sure that we are not blinded by our prejudice and emotions. Only then can we clearly discern what God's will is.

God's work cannot be frustrated, whereas man's work will surely come to nothing. When we are not certain whether something is from God, we need not take immediate actions to stop it because we may run the risk of opposing God. Instead, we can carefully observe its outcome and let God Himself reveal to us what is right and wrong.
12. The council heeded the advice of Gamaliel. They released the apostles after beating them and commanding them again not to preach in the name of Jesus.
13. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name. They remembered what the Lord Jesus had taught them. They rejoiced because they knew that their reward in heaven was great and that they were considered worthy to take part in the same kind of

sufferings that the prophets before them had also undergone (Mt 5:10-12).

Upon their release, the apostles continued to preach Jesus Christ daily in the temple and in every house. The beatings and threats from the council could not stop them from witnessing for Christ because they chose to obey God rather than men.

14. They preached “daily” and “did not cease.”
15. We need to imitate their spirit in serving God. They carried on their duty even in the face of great sufferings and opposition. They never gave themselves any excuses for not witnessing for the Lord. In fact, they felt honored to suffer for Christ. In the same way, we ought to consider obeying God our most noble goal in life and determine to carry out our mission regardless of the cost. When we suffer as a result of our service, we should rejoice that we are worthy of suffering for Christ.

The fact that the apostles preached daily in the temple and in every house shows us the importance of meeting together with believers regularly as well as preaching constantly. In addition to the evangelistic services at church, the church can also conduct door-to-door outreach or family services in order to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Lesson 10

Observation

Outline

- Problem Faced by A Rapidly Growing Church (6:1)
- Solution to the Problem (6:2-4)
- Ordination of the Seven Men and the Outcome (6:5-7)

Key Words/Phrases

Daily distribution, good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, prayer, ministry of the word, pleased, Stephen.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. The Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution (of food and other necessities). These widows depended on the church to care for their livelihood.
- 1b. As the number of disciples greatly multiplied, the congregation was growing too rapidly for the existing church structure to cope. Linguistic and cultural differences probably also played a part in creating this problem.

2. Believers brought their offerings and laid them at the apostles' feet. The apostles, in turn, distributed daily necessities to everyone according to his needs (Acts 4:34,35).
3. Church growth is a good thing and should be the goal of every congregation. However, when the church is expanding, it is also the time for us to be very sensitive to the growing needs of the church. When caring for a large congregation, it is very easy to overlook the needs of some members. Hence, we need to pay special attention to the minority groups in the church, such as members of smaller ethnic groups, the elderly, immigrants, and visitors.
3. When groups of members are unhappy with each other, the unity of the church is severely undermined. If the church did not address this problem immediately, it would have adversely affected the fellowship of believers as well as impede the growth of the church. Worse yet, the group that felt neglected could easily have split from the church.
4.
 1. Avoid forming small circles based on ethnicity, thereby implicitly excluding members of other ethnic groups. Every member should make an effort to reach out to everyone else. Even when there is a language barrier, simple gestures of love, such as extending a helping hand, sharing some good thing, or just a smile, would go a long way.
 2. Take extra care to make sure that no member is neglected because of his culture or language. For example, when there are believers who speak different languages, all sermons, titles, and announcements should be translated. During fellowship meals, the food should be acceptable to members of different cultures. When making decisions, the church should do its best to consider the needs of everyone and listen to everyone's suggestion.
5. They decided to recruit qualified workers to handle this particular area of church work. So they proposed to the congregation to select seven men from among them.
6. They were pleased (5).
- 7a. They must be of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- 7b. In all areas of sacred work, spiritual qualifications should precede other qualifications. The purpose of all church work is to build up the believers. A person with good skills but lacks good conduct and spiritual wisdom may bring more harm than good because his service may not edify the believers.

The men chosen to serve must be of good reputation so that outsiders would not speak evil of the name of Christ and that members would not stumble in faith because of them. They needed to be full of the Holy

Spirit so that they would do things in accordance with God's will and have the power to accomplish their tasks. They also needed to have wisdom in order to know how to solve problems and handle various situations in a manner that pleases God.

- 8a. 1. They were not unresponsive or slow to react. They addressed a problem quickly before it deteriorated. The church today needs to be keen to the current as well as potential problems that confront the church and take timely actions to solve the problems.
2. They were not defensive. They acknowledged that they were inadequate in meeting the growing needs of the church and took measures to recruit more workers. Today, we may have tried very hard to serve, but the needs of the members we are serving may have outgrown our capacities. Instead of taking it personally and becoming upset with their complaints, we need to see our own inadequacies and bring up the issue to the church for a satisfactory solution.
3. They did not ignore the voices of the minority. Even though it was easy to overlook the needs of the minority and only care for the majority, the apostles heard the complaint of the minority and addressed their complaint. In the same way, we need to pay special attention to the weaker members of the body of Christ.
- 8b. The apostles did not try to do everything themselves. They knew their mission, and were therefore willing to delegate the work to other qualified workers. As the church grows in size, it is necessary to recruit more workers to cope with the increased work load. If only a few try to do most of the work, some areas of the work would bound to be neglected.
- The apostles had a clear focus on their primary mission, which was prayer and ministry of the word. They did not allow other duties to take time and energy away from their mission. On the other hand, they also did not ignore taking care of the material needs of the believers, for they understood that poor administration in the church could adversely affect the faith of the believers and the unity of the church. In the same way, the church today ought to have a clear distribution of work so that the gospel may continue to go forth and the believers can remain sound in faith and united in spirit.
10. This indicates to us that the congregation looked out for the special needs of this group, and they were caring enough to make sure that their needs were adequately met. Since the complaint came from the Hellenists, it seemed best to them to select workers who could speak their language and understand their culture to handle this sensitive issue.

- 11a. The multitude set them before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them (6).
- 11b. Even such a seemingly minor task as the distribution of food required much care because every kind of service could have a great impact on the church. Therefore, the church ought to take every aspect of church work as well as the choosing of workers very seriously. The workers that are appointed to serve must also recognize that they have been entrusted with a solemn duty.
- 12a. The word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith (7).
- 12b. There is an important connection between addressing the internal problems of the church and the spreading of the gospel. In addition, having a good distribution of workload also contributes to the growth of the church.

Lesson 11

Observation

Outline

- Opposition to Stephen's Ministry (6:8-15)
- Stephen's Speech (7:1-53)
 - God's Appearance to and Covenant with Abraham (7:1-8a)
 - God's Deliverance through Joseph (7:8b-16)
 - God's Deliverance through Moses (7:17-36)

Key Words/Phrases

Full of faith and power, the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke, Moses, holy place, Abraham, God gave him no inheritance in it, promised, Joseph, God was with him, Moses, "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?", holy ground, ruler and deliverer.

Segment Analysis

1. 1. He was full of faith and power, and did wonders and signs among the people (6:8).
2. He spoke with wisdom and by the Spirit; his adversaries were not able to resist his words (6:10).
3. He had the face of an angel when he was brought to trial before the council (6:15).

- 2a.
 1. They disputed with Stephen, but were unable to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke (6:9-10).
 2. Then they secretly induced men to bring false accusations against Stephen (6:11).
 3. They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes to seize Stephen and bring him to the council (6:12).
 3. They also set up false witnesses against Stephen (6:13). This was a transgression against the ninth commandment.
- 2b. Speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God, and against the holy place and the law (6:11,13). The false witnesses claimed to have heard Stephen say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the holy place and change the customs handed down from Moses.
3. Mesopotamia (7:2).
- 4a. Abraham had no inheritance in the land, not even enough to set his foot on (7:5). He lived as a stranger and sojourner in Canaan.
- 4b. He had the promise of God, who told Abraham that He would give him the land as a possession and to his descendants after him (7:5).
5. Abraham's descendants would dwell in a foreign land for four hundred years (7:6).
6. While God gave the promised land to Abraham and his descendants as a possession, God's relationship with His chosen people was by no means limited to the possession of Canaan. Even before Abraham arrived in Canaan, God had appeared to him in Mesopotamia. Even though Abraham himself did not have inheritance in the land, he received God's promise and covenant. Even though Abraham's descendants would suffer in a foreign land, God would judge that nation and deliver His people. Therefore, it would be a mistake to only take pride in the holy land while failing to believe and obey God Himself.
- 7a. He was envied and sold by his brothers (7:9)
- 7b. The religious leaders at the time of Jesus were jealous of Jesus and killed him (Mt 27:18). Jesus Christ was rejected by His own people. (Jn 1:10-11).
- 8a. Joseph was sold into Egypt. But God was there with him (7:9).
- 8b. God is with the faithful regardless of where they are. Even though Joseph was away from the promised land, God did not forsake him. God's presence transcends physical boundaries.
9. He was rejected by his own people (7:25-28,35).

- 10a. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai (7:30). Mount Sinai was outside the promised land.
- 10b. Holy ground (7:33).
- 10c. The fact that God appeared to Moses at a place away from the holy land and called that place holy ground once again demonstrates that God's presence and His works are not confined to the land of Canaan. Wherever God is, that place is a holy ground. So we should always seek to please God and not become complacent because we have received some favor (such as good health, riches, success in career, gift in sacred work, etc).
- 11a. He was sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush (7:35).
- 11b. Just as the people of Israel had rejected Moses, who was sent by God to be their ruler and deliverer, the Jews who opposed Jesus had also rejected the Messiah, the Ruler and Deliverer anointed by God.

Lesson 12

Observation

Outline

- Stephen's Speech Continued (7:37-53)
 - The Israelites' Rejection of the Living Oracles (7:37-43)
 - The True Dwelling Place of God (7:44-50)
 - Stephen's Charge against the Accusers (7:51-53)
- Stephen's Death (7:54-8:1a)

Key Words/Phrases

Moses, Prophet like me, Him you shall hear, living oracles, idols, tabernacle, temple, stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears, resist the Holy Spirit, law, have not kept it, Jesus, standing at the right hand of God, Saul, "Do not charge them with this sin."

Segment Analysis

1. Moses said to the children of Israel, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear" (7:37). This was a Messianic prophecy pointing to the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:22-26). Moses, one of the most honored OT figures, prophesied about the coming of Jesus Christ and commanded his people to hear the words of Christ. But most of the Jews had refused to heed his words and rejected the greatest Prophet, Jesus Christ.

2. God had given His commands to the Israelites through Moses, but the Israelites rejected Moses and the commands he passed down to them. Instead, they offered sacrifices to idols. Although the chosen people had the living oracles of God, they did not do them any good because they refused to obey them.
- 3a. The tabernacle of Moloch (43).
- 3b. The Israelites had the tabernacle among them as a sign that they were worshippers of God. But there was actually no place in their hearts for God. Out the outside, they seemed to be serving the true God, but in their hearts, they were inclined to the tabernacle of idols.
4. God does not dwell in temples made with hands. No physical building could serve as the resting place of God the Creator, who fills heaven and earth (7:47-50).
5. This temple is the body of Jesus Christ, which God had prepared as an atoning sacrifice (cf. Heb 10:5-10).
6. We may sometimes fool ourselves with doing things that seem Christian-like, such as quoting from the Bible, praising the name of Christ, participating in church activities, thinking that God is pleased with us, when we have actually failed to obey God in our daily lives.
- 7a.
 1. They were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears (51).
 2. They always resisted the Holy Spirit, just as their fathers did (51).
 3. Like their fathers, who killed the prophets, they had become the betrayers and murderers of the Just One, Jesus Christ (52).
 4. They and their fathers had received the law by the direction of angels but had not kept it (53).
- 7b. The Scripture uses the expression “uncircumcised heart” to refer to an unbelieving and unyielding heart (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:26; Ezek 44:7,9; Rom 2:29). So we can understand “uncircumcised ears” in the same light. Circumcision was a sign of God’s covenant with His people, and “the uncircumcised” was a term that referred to Gentiles who were outside God’s covenant. In the same way, hearts and ears that are “uncircumcised” are hearts and ears that are foreign to God’s laws and decrees.
8. Conceptual knowledge is not enough to save us if it is not accompanied by a heart-felt desire to obey God. The Israelites saw the works of God and heard His words for forty years, but they did not respond to God’s words and works with faith, and their hearts were hard (Heb 3:7-4:1-2). In order to see and hear God’s will, we need to humble ourselves and seek God with all our hearts. When we are willing to surrender ourselves to God, then we will be able to “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:1-2).
9.
 1. Stephen infuriated the multitude by exposing their misguided veneration of the holy place and the law of Moses. He reversed the charges made against him by pointing out that it was they who had rejected the laws of Moses and murdered God’s servants, including Jesus Christ the Just One.
 2. Stephen then related his vision to them, saying that he saw the heavens open and Jesus, the One they had hated and murdered, sitting at the right hand of God. Hearing what they considered to be the ultimate blasphemy, they lost control and went into a murderous frenzy.
- 10a. Stephen was able to rise above the angry and violent reactions of his accusers because he was full of the Holy Spirit and was able to see the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
- 10c. When we try to endure persecutions and sufferings with mere human effort, we soon discover that our perseverance is very limited. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we, like Stephen, can do what is humanly impossible and transcend the anger, grudges, and dismay in severe trials. So we must turn our eyes to God and ask His spirit to fill us. If we gaze into heaven and focus on God’s glory, we will also be able to rise above the slanders, ridicules, and sufferings that others may impose on us (cf. Rom 8:31-39; 2Cor 4:17-18; Heb 12:2-3).
11.
 1. He asked the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit.
 2. He asked the Lord not to charge the people who stoned him with the sin of murdering God’s servant.
- 12a. He knelt down and cried out with a loud voice (60).
- 12b. Stephen did not hate or revile those who were stoning him. Even at the verge of death and in the midst of great pain, he remembered the need of these murderers for God’s forgiveness. Moreover, the fact that he knelt down and cried out shows how sincere and earnest he was. He was not praying for them half-heartedly, but he gave the last bit of his strength to pray for those who hated him. Through the Holy Spirit in him, Stephen had left us a perfect example of how we are to love our enemies.
13. Luke states that Stephen fell asleep (60). Even though believers may die physically, this death is only temporary. Unlike the unsaved, who will face the second death, believers in Christ do not experience spiritual death (Rev 20:6,14-15). Even now, believers who have died physically are with the Lord in spirit. On the last day they will rise again to everlasting life (Jn 5:28-29; Rom 6:5; 1Cor 15:22).

Lesson 13

Observation

Outline

- Rise of Great Persecution (8:1-3)
- Preaching of the Word and Its Results (8:4-8)
- Conversion of Simon (8:9-13)
- Peter and John Sent to Samaria (8:14-25)

Key Words/Phrases

Great persecution, Judea, Samaria, scattered, preaching the word, Philip, great joy, Simon, sorcery, believed, baptized, receive the Holy Spirit, lay hands, "Your heart is not right in the sight of God."

Segment Analysis

1. Stephen's accusers stoned him to death on the charges of blasphemy because his defense of the Christian faith had seriously challenged the established traditions and views of the mainstream Jews. Hence, it was inevitable that the adversaries of Stephen, including Saul, now turned their attention to the Christians in Jerusalem and began an all-out attack on the church.
2. The death of Stephen, the scattering of the disciples, the violence of Saul, the all-out arrest and imprisonment of both men and women disciples all give us a dismal and sad picture of the great sufferings that the church was undergoing. Oppositions against the church not only did not subside but continued to mount and intensify. Persecutions and arrests had now even penetrated into believers' homes. It seemed as if the evil forces had prevailed and were unstoppable.
3. Saul persecuted the Christians out of ignorance. He did not know who Jesus was (1Tim 1:13) and he also thought that he was being zealous for his forefathers and God (Acts 22:1-3). This teaches us that zeal that is not based on true knowledge can be misguided and very dangerous. We should always seek to know the will of God while we serve God with our zeal. Then, our fervor will please God and edify people.
4. The scattering of the disciples led to the rapid expansion of the gospel beyond Jerusalem. Whereas the apostles had been the primary evangelists in Jerusalem, now, every believer became an active witness for the Lord.
- 5a. The fact that they went everywhere to preach the word shows that the persecution did not shake their faith in the Lord Jesus. They did not

complain or shrink back, but saw their adversity as an opportunity from the Lord to carry out their mission.

- 5b. We tend to only focus on our sufferings and our loss when bad things happen to us in our lives, and we may even lose faith in the Lord. But from the example of these early believers, we learn that difficulties in life ought not deter us from serving the Lord and preaching the gospel. We need to see beyond our own interests to see God's higher purpose in the sufferings we experience.
6. In the early days of the church, believers did not think of reaching out to places beyond Jerusalem. Not only so, Samaria was considered by the Jews a region of an impure race. So for Philip and the other believers to reach out to the Samaritans was a bold and important step in the expansion of the church.

Today, there may be places or groups of people that have either been neglected or looked upon unfavorably by the majority of people. We should take the initiative to bring the gospel of salvation to them and not let our negligence or prejudices become a hindrance. We should also not be afraid to venture into uncharted territories to share the gospel message.
7. The miracles confirmed the message of Philip. The people submitted to God when they heard and saw the mighty works of God that accompanied the preaching.
8. They experienced great joy (8). Jesus Christ brings joy into believers' lives because He has reconciled us with God, gives us the hope of eternal life, sets us free from the bondage of Satan, and grants us peace in our hearts.
9. He was greatly revered by all the people throughout the region of Samaria. People extolled him as if he was divine.
- 10a.
 1. Whereas the people honored the man Simon because of the sorceries he had performed, the people turned to the Lord as a result of the miracles Philip did. In other words, Simon's sorceries were self-serving, but the miracles by Philip led people to God.
 2. Whereas the sorceries astonished the people and caused great fear, the miracles from God brought them great joy.
- 10b.
 1. The work of the evil spirit puffs up a person's pride, but the work of the Holy Spirit brings glory to God.
 2. The work of the evil spirit may cause awe, but it is harmful to people. The work of the Holy Spirit brings people great joy because it provides healing and leads them to salvation.

11. Simon was amazed at the miracles and signs that Philip had performed. He appeared to be more interested in supernatural power than living a new Christian life.

12a. The fact that none of the converts in the city received the Holy Spirit suggests that God had intentionally delayed the sending of the Holy Spirit to these new believers. The unity and oneness of the church is very important in God's eyes. It was God's will for this new group of believers to be united with the church in Jerusalem and not become an isolated Christian group. All Christians need to identify themselves as members of the body of Christ, regardless of where they are or what their ethnicity is.

Since the Jews would normally not associate with the Samaritans in those days, it became even more paramount for the church in Jerusalem to recognize and embrace the believers in Samaria. God's intentional delay in sending the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came to lay hands on the believers in Samaria sent a strong message to all that the believers in Samaria were equally accepted by God and had become members of Christ's body, since they had received the same gospel message and had received the Holy Spirit at the laying on of hands by the apostles.

12b. It is God's intention for His church to be one (cf. Jn 10:16). Some people may have the gift and calling to venture into new territories to preach the gospel. This is a good thing. However, this new area of ministry needs to be united with the rest of the church so that the church as a whole can remain as one body. Converts from this ministry should also see themselves as part of the original church.

For example, suppose a pioneer worker felt the calling to venture into a place where there has never been a True Jesus Church to preach the gospel of salvation. As a result, a number of people accepted the gospel and were baptized into Christ by this pioneer worker. Then the assembly of the established churches, such as represented by the general assembly or international assembly, should support this new area by sending workers to assist in the sacred work. On the other hand, the pioneer worker should welcome workers from the general assembly or international assembly, and the new converts in the new area ought to see themselves as members of the True Jesus Church.

As another example, suppose a sister started a campus crusade and won many people to Christ on campus. The closest local church or general assembly should support this ministry by providing the necessary resources to continue the ministry. This sister also ought to work with the church to further the ministry and not try to claim any exclusive ownership to the ministry or keep the new group of converts away from the church.

Another lesson all workers of God should learn from this event is that evangelical and pastoral work are not a one-person show. Although Philip was able to convert many people and even perform miracles, he still needed the support of the apostles from Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit distributes various gifts to different believers so that they can work together to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-13). Therefore, it is critical for workers of God to work together to achieve the unity of Christ's body and to bring glory to God.

13a. It is obvious that the coming of the Holy Spirit was always accompanied by some external visible signs. That is why Simon "saw" that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given (18). By the same token, the absence of such external signs meant that the Holy Spirit had not fallen upon any of the believers.

13b. The fact that the believers in Samaria did not receive the Holy Spirit even after their belief in the Lord Jesus and their baptism clearly contradicts the misconception that a Christian receives the Holy Spirit the moment he puts his faith in Jesus Christ.

The early believers, including the apostles, never assumed that the Holy Spirit was given upon a person's initial acceptance of Jesus Christ or upon his baptism. If they had such a view, they certainly would not have concluded that the believers in Samaria had not received the Holy Spirit.

This passage per se does not describe the external evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. It simply tells us that the coming of the Holy Spirit was a visible phenomenon. But we know from other passages in Acts that speaking in tongues was the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit, and it was the evidence with which the apostles determined whether a person had received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:44-47; 11:15; 19:6).

14a. God gave us His grace freely because of His love and mercy. He had already paid the ultimate price by offering His only begotten Son. Believers are able to receive the Holy Spirit because of the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ (Tit 3:4-7). No one can earn or purchase God's saving grace (Ps 49:7-9). Only God alone may give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. So it was a great insult to God for Simon to think that he could purchase God's gift with money (cf. Song 8:7).

14b. When this world offers something good, it usually expects something in return, be it monetary or otherwise. In this sense, what this world offers can be purchased as long as you have something to give in exchange.

On the contrary, the gift of salvation that God offers has a value that is far beyond what we can give Him in return. But He gives it to us freely even though we have sinned against Him and do not deserve His grace.

15. Simon's attempt to purchase the gift of God with money was driven by his lust for power and glory. Perhaps he was too used to being

worshiped by people as someone great. He had given up his sorceries, but now, he wanted the power to lay hands and give people the Holy Spirit as he wishes. He hoped he would be able to regain his former glory with this special power.

16. God considers wrong thoughts and intentions as sin even before they are committed in action (cf. Mt 5:22,28; Acts 5:1-5,9; Rom 2:16).
17. A believer is not immune to sin. If we accept Jesus Christ and are baptized but allow our former sins to take possession of our hearts, we could still fall from the grace of God and be controlled by sin (cf. Mt 12:43-45; Heb 10:26-29). While we may have come to Christ because we have experienced some miracles in our lives and seen God's great power, we need to put off our old selves and seek to grow in Christ through His word and His Spirit (Eph 4:21-24; 1Pet 2:1-2).
18. They preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans (25). By this time, the church in Jerusalem, including the apostles, had recognized the need to step outside the Jewish community to bring the message of salvation to even the Samaritans. This was a major step in the fulfillment of the Lord's commission to preach the gospel to people of all nations.

Lesson 14

Observation

Outline

- Philip Sent to Meet the Eunuch (8:26-28)
- Philip Approached the Eunuch (8:29-30)
- The Eunuch's Invitation for Instruction (8:31-35)
- The Eunuch's Belief and Baptism (8:36-39)
- Philip Continued to Preach in All the Cities (8:40)

Key Words/Phrases

"Arise and go," eunuch, Spirit, preached, Jesus, believe, baptized, rejoicing.

General Analysis

1. The Ethiopian eunuch was probably the first African convert to the Christian faith. Not only had the gospel reached Judea and Samaria, it had now also reached a foreigner.
2.
 1. City versus desert road.
 2. Multitude versus one man.
 3. Samaritans versus an Ethiopian

4. Conversion through abundant miracles versus conversion through preaching alone.

- 3a. He was devout and zealous in worshipping God. He had traveled a long distance to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning home. Even though he was a man of great authority in his own country, he was not content with his status, power, and wealth. He had a heart that thirsted for the true God, and was willing to make the effort to come to Jerusalem to worship.

Today, in times of prosperity, we may feel that we do not really need God. As a result, we may be reluctant to put in effort to worship or serve God in our daily lives. If the Eunuch, who lived so far from Jerusalem and had all the power and wealth that others could only wish to have, traveled so far in order to worship God, how much more should we grasp every opportunity to draw near to God? We ought not let our comfortable lives or busy schedules become a reason for neglecting personal or family devotions and for missing church services.

- 3b. The eunuch thirsted for the words of God. Having in his hands the OT Scripture, which was not easy to obtain in those days, he did not waste any time but read the Scriptures even as he was riding in a chariot.

Most of us probably have several copies of the Bible at home. How often do we pick up the Bible and study it? Do we use our busy schedule as an excuse for not studying the Bible every day? May the eunuch's thirst for God's word motivate us to do the same.

- 3c. The eunuch was not just reading the Scripture to fulfill some religious duty. He was studying and thinking about the word of God, and he wanted answers to his questions.

Furthermore, although he was a man of great authority, the eunuch was humble enough to admit his ignorance. He invited Philip to sit with him on the chariot and asked Philip to guide him to understand the words of God (8:30-31).

When you study the Bible, do you ponder on the meaning of the passage and have a heart to search for answers? Are you humble enough to ask questions and seek guidance?

- 3d. After Philip had answered his question and preached to him, the eunuch readily accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and immediately requested for baptism.

When we have understood the words of God, we should not hesitate to carry them out (Ps 119:60). We need to immediately put what we have read and heard into practice. That is what true faith means.

- 3e. The eunuch rejoiced after baptism because he had come to know Jesus Christ and had received salvation. Are you rejoicing as you walk on your

heavenly journey? Or have you lost sight of the glorious hope in Christ and always feel downcast?

4. 1. **Obedience:** The angel of the Lord told Philip to arise and go to the desert. Verse 27 writes, “So he arose and went.” Philip did not hesitate or question the Lord’s instruction, even though he was not told why he should leave the cities and go to the desert.
 When Philip saw the eunuch, the Spirit told Philip to go near and overtake the chariot. So Philip ran to the chariot. He followed the Spirit’s guidance every step of the way.
 To be effective evangelists, we need to be close to the Lord and submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We also need to have a heart that readily obeys God’s commands. Then we can be the Lord’s useful instruments.
2. **Well-Versed in the Scripture:** Philip was able to preach about Jesus directly from the passage that the eunuch had a question about.
 When we preach the gospel, we need to equip ourselves with the knowledge of God’s word. Only then can we readily meet any situation that comes our way and address the needs of the people we are preaching to.
3. **Moving On:** Just as the Lord told Philip to leave Samaria to go to the desert, the Spirit caught Philip away after the eunuch’s baptism. God had work lined up for Philip to do, and Philip submissively carried out one new assignment after another according to the Spirit’s guidance. He was always on the move and did not slack in his effort to preach the gospel. He did not tarry to enjoy the fruits of his labor.
 As Christians and servants of God, we need to learn to “forget those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead” (Php 3:13). If we only linger in our past accomplishments, we will not be able to make progress in our spiritual growth or service.
- 5a. The Holy Spirit guided Philip throughout the entire process of the eunuch’s conversion. He called Philip, instructed him to go to the chariot, and caught Philip away after the eunuch’s baptism. He also made arrangements so that the work could go smoothly. The eunuch just happened to be reading the passage on the suffering servant in the Book of Isaiah (the perfect passage to use to preach about Jesus). The Holy Spirit also moved the heart of the eunuch to readily accept Philip’s message. When the eunuch accepted Philip’s preaching, they happened to come to some water (36), which led to an immediate baptism.
 From the story of the eunuch’s conversion, we can see that the Holy Spirit is actively involved in a person’s conversion. He chooses the

person, sends and leads the preacher, arranges the opportunity, and moves the heart of the seeker.

Segment Analysis

1. He was a man of great authority and was the treasurer for the queen of Ethiopia (27).
 1. Every soul is precious in the sight of God (1Tim 2:3-4; Lk 15:7-10).
 2. God looks at our hearts and He is not far from us. Everyone who sincerely seeks Him will find Him. (Jer 29:13, Mt 7:7; Acts 17:27).
4. 1. Belief in Jesus Christ (37).
 2. Baptism in natural water (36).
 3. Full immersion in water. “They went down into the water” (38) and “came up out of the water” (39).
 4. The baptist needs to have the Holy Spirit of God (29; cf. 6:3,5)
- 5a. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Receiving the salvation of Jesus Christ gives us the greatest joy because we have been reconciled with God, set free from sin and eternal condemnation, and we have the hope of the glory of God (Rom 5:1-2).
- 5b. We need to constantly remember the saving grace of God and fix our eyes on the eternal glory that awaits us. Then our current troubles in life would not take away the joy that we have in Christ (Rom 8:18). Furthermore, we have the Holy Spirit to comfort us and strengthen us. He is able to provide us joy (Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22). So we can experience and maintain the joy in Christ if we constantly pray and walk in the Spirit.

Lesson 15

Observation

Outline

The Lord Appeared to Saul (9:1-9)
 The Lord Sent Ananias (9:10-16)
 Saul’s Healing and Conversion (9:17-19)
 Saul Preached Christ in Damascus (9:20-25)
 Saul Preached Christ in Jerusalem (9:26-30)
 Effect on the Churches (9:31)

Key Words/Phrases

Saul, Damascus, the Way, fell to the ground, without sight, Jesus, Ananias, chosen vessel, filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized, preached the Christ,

Jerusalem, Barnabas, had peace and were edified, fear of the Lord, comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Segment Analysis

1. Saul was journeying to Damascus. He had obtained authority from the high priest so that he might arrest any disciples in Damascus.
2. In his misguided zeal for God, Saul did not think it was enough to just persecute the Christians in Jerusalem. He was so committed to his cause that he was willing to travel as far as Damascus to accomplish his goal.
3. The gospel that the disciples preached was concerning the way of salvation (Acts 16:17) and the way of God (Acts 18:25-26). In fact, the Lord Jesus called Himself “the way.” (Jn 14:6). Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ required obedience to the way of salvation through Jesus Christ and conforming to a new way of life (cf. Acts 2:37,38,40).
4. Jesus shone on a light from heaven around Saul and spoke directly to him.
5. “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? (4).
- 6a. “Who are you, Lord?” (5). “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (6).
- 6b. It was beyond any doubt that the voice from heaven was that of God. But Saul was confounded by the rebuke from the Lord because it had never occurred to him that he was persecuting God.
When the Lord answered that He was Jesus, Saul was even more confounded. Jesus was actually the very God he thought he was serving! Saul’s past beliefs and fervor had suddenly been shaken to the core. Absolutely not knowing how to respond, he could only ask, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”
- 6c. The Lord answered Saul, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Anyone who persecutes the church and her believers is persecuting Jesus Christ Himself, since the church is the body of Christ (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18). The Lord considers offenses against believers as personal offenses against Himself (Matt 18:5; 25:45; 1Cor 8:12).
The Lord also said, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (cf. Acts 26:14). For Saul to oppose the way of the Lord was as futile as for an ox to resist the goad. Anyone who persecutes the Lord and His church would only hurt himself.
- 6d. Saul was trembling and astonished (6). At this moment, he realized how mistaken he had been. He had committed the worst offense against God even though he thought he was serving God. His zeal for God had turned out to be a direct persecution against God.
7. While most of us are not under the same circumstances as Saul, it is important for us to ask the questions he asked.

We need to ask, “Who are you, Lord?” We may acknowledge that there is an almighty God, but we also need to understand and accept that Jesus is this God. We need to come to personally accept that Jesus Christ loves us and died for our sins (cf. Gal 2:20). We need to acknowledge Him as the Lord of our lives and submit to His will. It is only when we have established a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that we can truly be His disciples.

Having personally known Jesus Christ as our Lord, we need to then ask, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” If we acknowledge Jesus as the master of our lives, then we ought to live our lives to accomplish His will (2Cor 5:15). We should determine to study and carry out all the teachings of the Bible. When we do not understand certain teachings in the Bible, we can ask the Lord to teach us His ways. We need to ask the Lord to show us His specific purpose for us in our lives. Just as He had a mission for Saul, He also has a specific mission for each of us. Having identified the tasks and gifts the Lord has given to us, we should diligently serve in these areas (cf. Rom 12:6-8)

8. The Lord probably wanted Saul to learn humility and submission. Instead of revealing His will directly to Saul, the Lord told him to wait for Ananias’ instructions. Whereas Saul had intended to imprison the Christians in Damascus, he would now have to rely on a Christian in Damascus to tell him what to do.
Another possible reason is that the Lord meant to show Saul the importance of the fellowship of believers. God did not just speak to Saul, but He also spoke to Ananias. So Saul needed to not only receive instructions from God directly but also join the other believers and learn from them.
9. The shocking event must have been a humbling experience for Saul. From a man who had great authority and breathed murderous threats, Saul had fallen to the ground, been completely confounded, and become blind. Instead of leading the company of men who went with him, he now had to be led by the hand into Damascus.
10. He was praying (11). Saul needed time to be alone with God and to come to terms with the divine revelation that Jesus was God. He must have also sought to know the Lord’s will for him as he waited for instructions.
When facing a dilemma or difficult question in our lives, we need to take the time to pray in order to seek for understanding and wait for God’s answer.
11. Ananias was probably surprised by the Lord’s instructions to look for Saul, a mass murderer of Christians. It may also have been that he was hesitant to go. So he told the Lord what he had heard about Saul,

including his persecutions of the church and his intentions to arrest Christians in Damascus.

12. God had chosen Saul to be His vessel to bear His name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. In carrying out the Lord's mission, Saul would have to suffer many things for the sake of the Lord's name (15-16).
13. Ananias was submissive to the Lord's instructions. Despite his initial reservations, Ananias obeyed the Lord and went to lay hands on Saul. Also, because he honored the will of the Lord, he was willing to let go of his personal prejudices against Saul. Since the Lord had chosen Saul to be His vessel, Ananias gladly put aside all animosity and addressed Saul as "Brother Saul."
- 14a. Immediately there fell from Saul's eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once (18).
- 14b. He arose and was baptized. He received food and was strengthened. Then he spent some days with the disciples at Damascus (18-19).
- 15a. Immediately Saul started to preach Jesus Christ in the synagogues in Damascus. Even new believers should preach the gospel. We do not have to wait until we are well-versed in the Scripture to start witnessing for the Lord. Like Saul, who increased all the more in strength (22), we can also become more effective witnesses the more we preach the gospel.
- 15b. Saul preached that Jesus is the Son of God (20) and that He is the Christ (22).
16. They were amazed that the one who had come to destroy Christians was now preaching Christ.
17. From a powerful persecutor of Christians, Saul had become a refugee who had to escape persecution and flee at night in a basket. Now that he had become a believer of Jesus Christ, he had to learn to endure sufferings and humiliation for Christ. Just as the Lord had foretold Ananias that Saul would have to suffer many things for His name's sake, Saul was beginning to experience suffering as a bearer and preacher of Jesus' name.
18. They were afraid and suspicious of him.
19. Like Ananias, Barnabas placed the Lord's will above his personal fears and biases. He knew that the Lord had chosen Saul (27). So he accepted Saul as a brother and introduced him to the apostles. Barnabas built a bridge between Saul and the apostles, opening the way for them to be coworkers in the future. Barnabas' spirit of reconciliation and building unity is worthy of imitation.

Today, we sometimes notice a few individual brothers who seem to have been neglected in the church. We ought to be like Barnabas and be the first to welcome the unwelcome or those who are left out. We should also see the potential gifts in newcomers to the fellowship and help provide opportunities for them to grow through service.

20. He was with the apostles, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists (28-29).
 21. Saul did not become discouraged or angry because most of the brethren were suspicious of him. He did not leave the group and try to evangelize on his own. He had personally learned that the believers are one with Christ (9:5) and knew the importance of having fellowship with other believers. So he humbly joined the disciples after Barnabas helped build the bridge between him and the brethren.
- As members of Christ's body, we cannot do without one another (1Cor 12:14-20). There are times when we may feel others do not welcome us or look down on us. But these should not be reasons for us to stay away from the fellowship of believers. We need to be humble, gentle, and bear with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:1,2). If we love the Lord Jesus Christ and recognize that the church is His very own, we will make every effort to strengthen the bond we have with our brothers- and sisters-in-Christ.
- 22a. They attempted to kill Saul (29).
 - 22b. They brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.
 23. The churches had peace and were edified (31).
 24. The phrase "Fearing the Lord" in the Scripture ties in with obeying God's commandments (cf. Deut 5:29; 8:6; Job 1:8; Ecc 12:13). Walking in the fear of the Lord, therefore, means living our daily lives according to the teachings of the Lord out of our reverence for Him.

The early church had just gone through a period of intense persecution and suffering. But the Holy Spirit was ever present in and among the believers to give them courage and strength (Acts 4:8,31; 7:55). He also worked mightily in the further advancement of the gospel (Acts 8:5-8; 26-40). In the same way, we can also depend on the Holy Spirit as our source of comfort and joy when we undergo trials and oppositions.

Lesson 16

Observation

Outline

Ministry in Lydda (9:32-35)

Ministry in Joppa (9:36-43)

Cornelius' Vision (10:1-8)

Peter's Vision (10:9-16)

Peter Commanded by the Holy Spirit to Go to Cornelius (10:17-23a)

Key Words/Phrases

Peter, Lydda, Aeneas, all...turned to the Lord, Joppa, Tobitha, full of good works and charitable deeds, many believed on the Lord, Caesarea, feared God with all his household, gave alms generously, prayed to God always, a memorial before God, pray, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

Segment Analysis

- 1a. He healed a paralytic by the name of Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years.
- 1b. The miracle led everyone in Lydda and Sharon to turn to the Lord. This was a 100 percent conversion rate.
2. She was full of good works and charitable deeds (36). She helped many widows by making tunics and garments for them (39)
3.
 1. Tabitha abounded in works of love (36). Loving others should not be something we do only occasionally. We need to do good all the time and be generous in our love for others.
 2. What Tabitha did for the widows was very practical and useful. She made use of her skills to care for those who tended to be neglected. In one way or another, we all have certain talents or skills that we can use to offer practical help to the needy. Let us not love in speech only, but with action and truth (1Jn 3:18).
 3. Works done out of love have a profound and lasting influence on others. Just picture how the disciples sent men to implore Peter not to delay in coming to them (38), how the widows held on to the tunics and garments Tabitha had made for them, and how they stood and wept for Tabitha (39). They were grieving for this woman of love and could not bear the thought of losing her. Today, our seemingly small deeds of love can also have a profound impact on the needy.

Through our works of love, people can experience the love of Christ through us and come to know Christ (Jn 13:34,35).

4. Many of the people in Joppa came to believe in the Lord because of Tabitha. Miracles are a powerful way to draw people to Christ. God often delivers people from sufferings and tragedies to manifest His grace, mercy and power and to lead people to believe in Him.
5. No strict Jew would associate with tanners. Workers of leather were considered ceremonially unclean because of their constant contact with the skin of dead animals. Peter, however, following the example of Jesus, was willing to be with a social outcast (Recall how Jesus touched the lepers, ate with tax collectors and sinners, and let a sinful woman come near him).

We, likewise, should learn to break through various forms of discrimination and reach out to the the social outcasts. We ought to be willing to accept them and touch them with the love of Christ.

6. A centurion of the Italian Regiment in Caesarea.
- 7a. He was a devout man and one who feared God with all his household. He gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.
- 7b. Cornelius was not only himself God-fearing, all his household and even the soldier he sent were devout. It is evident that Cornelius had a godly way of life, thereby passing his piety to those around him.

People, especially those close to us, can observe our lifestyles and conduct clearly. What we do in our daily lives can affect whether they also share our devotion to God (cf. 1Pet 3:1).

We also should not neglect leading our family members to the Lord and set good examples for them. While we need to build up our personal faith and zeal, it is our responsibility to build up the faith of our families and to preach to our relatives and friends as Cornelius had done.

8. Cornelius was a man of authority. While it was common for Roman soldiers to intimidate and extort the people (Lk 3:14), Cornelius did not abuse his power and oppress the Jews despite his great authority. On the contrary, his godliness and charity earned him the respect of the Jews (Acts 10:22).
9. Cornelius' prayers and alms had reached God. Therefore, the Lord responded and sent an angel to him to instruct him to seek the way of salvation (4-5, 31-32).
10. He told Cornelius to send men to Joppa and send for Simon Peter, who would come and tell him what to do.
- 11a. He saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds

of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air (i.e. all the ceremonially unclean animals of the Mosaic law) (11-12).

- 11b. God then told him to kill and eat. When Peter objected because he had never eaten any unclean animals, God told him that what God has cleansed he must not call common.
- 11c. It is very difficult to break away from traditions and long-held beliefs. By repeating the vision three times, the Lord wanted to impress deeply upon Peter an important truth and help Peter overcome his reservations and doubts in obeying the Lord's command.
- 11d. God used the vision to reveal an important truth about cleanliness. For Peter to associate with Gentiles was as unthinkable as eating unclean animals because the Jews considered the Gentiles as impure. But through the analogy of the unclean animals, God taught Peter that it is God, not man, who determines what is clean and unclean. What God considers clean is truly clean, despite what men may think. It had always been God's will to save the Gentiles and He had considered them clean. Peter must not let his prejudices and traditions stop him from obeying the will of God and from preaching the gospel of salvation to the Gentiles.

Peter kept the teachings of this vision to heart. Later on, he defended his evangelizing the Gentiles with the revelation that he had received in this vision (Acts 11:5-10; 15:9).
- 11e. As difficult as it is to break away from deep-seated traditions and values, God's will must come first. Often times, God's ways are directly contrary to men's values (Lk 16:15). So we cannot hold tenaciously to our traditions without examining whether they conform to God's will.

Another lesson we can learn is that we should remove any racial or social prejudices that we might have against certain individuals or groups of people. These prejudices may prevent us from preaching the gospel to them, either because we simply do not associate with them or because we feel that they are unlikely to accept the gospel. Peter's vision teaches us that God's will to offer salvation to all must prevail over our personal biases.
12. The Holy Spirit told Peter, "Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them" (20).

Lesson 17

Observation

Outline

- Peter Arrived at Cornelius' House (10:23b-33)
- Peter's Preaching (10:34-43)
- Receiving of the Holy Spirit and Baptism (10:44-48)
- Peter's Defense before the Jewish Brothers (11:1-18)

Key Words/Phrases

Called together his relatives and close friends, "I myself am also a man," "came without objection as soon as I was sent for," immediately, present before God, "God shows no partiality," every nation, peace through Jesus Christ, Lord of all, Holy Spirit, power, raised up, Judge of the living and the dead, believes, remission of sins, Gentiles, speak with tongues, magnify God, baptized, just as we have, in the name of the Lord, those of the circumcision, contended, "Who was I that I could withstand God," glorified God, repentance to life.

Segment Analysis

1. 1. He was obedient to God (23b,28,29). Having received revelation and instructions from God, he simply obeyed despite his former beliefs. Not only so, he obeyed the Holy Spirit to go with Cornelius men without even knowing why he was going (29).

In the same way, God's words should take precedence over our own opinions and doubts. We also do not need to expect an explanation from God before carrying out His command.
2. Peter did not let Cornelius worship him but told him that he was also a man. In the eyes of Cornelius, Peter was to be honored because he was sent by God. But Peter did not bask in glory. He immediately reminded Cornelius that he was only a man.

When we serve God, we often receive respect from others, who highly esteem the workers of God. We cannot fall into the temptation of elevating ourselves. Instead, we need to remind ourselves that we are only human, and we are useless servants who are doing our duty.
2. 1. Cornelius was a humble man. Although it was wrong for him to worship Peter, it was commendable for him, a man of authority, to fall down at the feet of a common Jew like Peter.
2. He obeyed the Lord's instructions through the angel. Not only did he send for Peter immediately, he also called together his relatives and

close friends and waited for Peter (24). He eagerly and reverently waited to hear the message that God wanted Peter to deliver (33).

3.
 1. He brought peace (36).
 2. He is Lord of all (36).
 3. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, and went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (38).
 4. God was with Him (38).
 5. He was killed and hung on a tree (39).
 6. God raised him up on the third day, and showed Him openly to witnesses chosen by God (41).
 7. He ate and drank with the disciples after He arose from the dead, and He commanded them to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead (41-42).
 8. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins (43).
4.
 1. God looks at a person's heart, not the person's race, gender, or social standing. He accepts everyone who fears Him and works righteousness. Everyone has an equal opportunity before God, and as long as they fear God and obey Him, God will bless them. The things that we own, such as status, appearance, and wealth play no part in finding God's acceptance.
 2. God's salvation is for all. No one is too insignificant or unworthy in the eyes of God. If we seek God, we will find Him and receive His saving grace.
 3. Since God's salvation extends to all nations, it is our responsibility as believers to witness to all nations so that all who fear God may hear the good news about Jesus Christ.
- 5a.
 1. They heard them speak in tongues and magnify God (46).
 2. They saw that these Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit just as the apostles had (47). In other words, the experience was the same as that of the disciples on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:4).
- 5b. They were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. Their preconception that God only saved the Jews was instantly shattered by this miracle.
- 5c. Receiving the Holy Spirit is not a silent experience. Peter and the Jewish brethren knew that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon the Gentile believers because they heard them speak in tongues and magnify God. Without this evidence, Peter would not have concluded that the Holy Spirit had

come upon them, and the Jewish brethren would not have been astonished. Nor would they have proceeded to baptize Cornelius and the rest.

The evidence of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit was so clear, and it was visible to all who were present. And the evidence was the same as that which had occurred to the disciples on Pentecost. Because of these reasons, Peter cited the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and the rest as an indisputable proof that God also wanted to give salvation to the Gentiles (11:15-17).

6. Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Now that God's gift had come upon them, the logical thing to do was for them to be baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ.
Those who have accepted Jesus Christ need to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins and for salvation (Acts 2:38; Mk 16:16). It is through baptism that we receive a new life in Jesus Christ and put on Christ (Col 2:11,12; Rom 6:3,4; Tit 3:5; Gal 3:27). Therefore, it was necessary for Cornelius and the others to be baptized so that they could be saved and become children of God.
7. Generally, the Holy Spirit is poured out on a person after his baptism into Christ, since the Holy Spirit is God's promise to those who repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38). But God sometimes gives the Holy Spirit to manifest His power and to convince a person to believe in Him.
In the case of Cornelius, God probably poured out the Holy Spirit first in order to make it absolutely clear to the apostles and Jewish believers that He had also chosen the Gentiles. Because Peter saw that Cornelius and the other listeners had received the Holy Spirit, Peter commanded them to be baptized.
8. The Jewish believers confronted Peter for going to the house of a Gentile and eating with him. Not only had Peter broken the tradition of the Jews, his actions could potentially stir up antagonism from the unbelieving Jews against the Christians.
9.
 1. God's revelation to Peter through a vision (5-10).
 2. The exact timing of the arrival of the men from Cornelius (11).
 3. The Spirit's command to go with these men and to doubt nothing (12).
 4. Cornelius' vision and the angel's instructions to send for Simon Peter (13-14).
 5. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit (15-17).
10. The Lord's promise of the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples. The fact that God also poured out His Holy Spirit on Cornelius and the rest

signified that God had also chosen them to be His own. God made no distinction between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers, but gave the Gentile believers the Holy Spirit just as He gave the Jewish believers the Holy Spirit. If it is God's will to give the same gift to Jews and Gentiles alike, who can exclude the Gentiles from being baptized and from becoming members of the same body of Christ?

11. They became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." (18).
12. From Peter's defense we could see that Peter gave up his long-held traditions and submitted to the will of God because of the truth that God taught him and the confirmation of God through the miraculous deeds of God.

Today, we should humbly examine our traditions to see if they conform to the truth of God and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Traditions that are contrary to God's will need to be abandoned. Sometimes, God also arranges special circumstances or does miraculous deeds to bring His truth to light. We ought to ponder on these things to see what God wants to teach us and surrender ourselves to obey God's word.

Lesson 18

Observation

Outline

- Scattered Members Preached as Far as Antioch (11:19-21)
- Barnabas Sent to Minister in Antioch (11:22-24)
- Barnabas Sought for Paul's Help (11:25-26)
- Church in Antioch Sent Aid to the believers in Jerusalem (11:27-30)

Key Words/Phrases

Antioch, reaching, Jews, Hellenists, the hand of the Lord was with them, the church in Jerusalem, Barnabas, good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, Saul, Christians.

General Analysis

1. As can be seen on a map, Antioch was situated to the north of Samaria and Jerusalem, and it was a gateway to Asia Minor and beyond. From the recorded development of the church thus far, we can see that the gospel had reached the north beyond Judea and Samaria, and it was now ready to move into the Gentile world. As we will see later on in Acts, this would be the direction that the apostle Paul would take in his missions to the Gentiles.

2. Antioch was the third largest city in the empire, and it was a city of diverse cultures. Therefore, the church had much exposure to various ethnic groups. In fact, the church itself was made up of Hellenists as well as Jews (11:19-20). This mix of different cultural backgrounds both within and surrounding the church afforded a good opportunity for the workers to prepare for missions beyond Judea and Samaria.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. They went beyond Judea and Samaria and preached along the Mediterranean coast, going as far as Phoenicia and Antioch, and even crossing the sea to Cyprus (19).
- 1b. Most of them preached only to the Jews, but some also preached to the Hellenists in Antioch (19-20).
- 1c. "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord" (21).
2.
 1. The Lord worked with these believers because He was pleased with what they were doing—they were carrying out the Lord's commission of bringing the gospel to remote regions. From these believers' experience, we know that our Lord is pleased when we share our faith with those we come in contact with and make preaching the gospel the priority in our daily lives.
 2. It was because of the Lord's guidance that a great number believed and turned to the Lord. In preaching the gospel, it is not by our own eloquence or persuasion that we can convert people. We need to depend on the Lord's power to turn people's hearts to the Lord.
4. They sent Barnabas to go as far as Antioch in order to help the believers in Antioch grow in their faith and to continue with the Lord with all their hearts (22-23).
5. It is very important for well-established churches or general assemblies to support the work of younger churches by sending workers to them. The purpose is to help build up the faith of the believers, strengthen the bond between the churches, and maintain unity in doctrine.
In the same way, when a local church branches out into new locations, the mother church should also support and encourage the new churches, especially in the initial stage of development, so that the new churches may become strong and self-sustaining.
6. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. In other words, he had a strong relationship with the Lord and had excellent spiritual qualities.
7. A great many people were added to the Lord (24).

8a. Good workers who are close to the Lord and who have the divine qualities of Christ play an important role in church growth. They practice what they preach, and therefore draw people to the Lord through their Christ-like character. Not only so, the Lord works with them to make their work effective. So if there are many people in church who are like Barnabas, the church will grow and be strong.

9. He went to Tarsus to look for Saul and brought him back to Antioch to help him in the ministry.

10. 1. Barnabas was a humble and God-fearing man. He was not interested in claiming credit for the pastoral work in Antioch, but took the initiative to invite a coworker to work with him. He was also a wise man. He recognized his need for help and sought for help immediately.

Even though we may be serving in an area of the ministry quite well, we do not have to always do everything ourselves. As the needs of the church grow, we should seek help and bring new workers into the ministry, and we should work alongside the new workers to give them on-the-job training. Doing so will benefit the new workers as well as the whole church.

2. Another distinctive quality of Barnabas was that he was magnanimous and knew how to bring out the best in others. Without Barnabas, Paul would not have been accepted by the apostles or members in Jerusalem or serve in Antioch. As we will see later, Paul's involvement in the ministry in Antioch prepared him for his future missionary journeys. In the same way, without Barnabas, Mark, who deserted him and Paul during Paul's first missionary journey, would not have been given a second chance and eventually become a good worker for God. Barnabas was keen on raising up newer and younger workers and providing them with the opportunities to serve God.

Today, we ought to take note of people's gifts in serving and provide them with ample opportunities to join the ministry. Even when the younger workers may seem incapable of the work at first, we need to give them time to grow and be patient with them.

3. For Barnabas to seek Saul's help was not an easy task. Not only did he have to travel all the way to Tarsus, he had to look for Saul when he reached Tarsus until finally locating him. Barnabas knew that God had called Saul to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and he had a heart of love and patience to train potential workers. That was why he went through all that trouble.

Similarly, it often takes some extra effort to discover the gifts in younger workers and to encourage them to serve. But if we

understand that involving more help is beneficial to the church, we would make the effort to help them join the ministry.

11. For a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. Through the teachings of God's word, Barnabas and Saul helped them to be rooted in their faith. The church should aim for not only an increase in membership but also an increase in the quality of the members. If pastoral work is neglected, the believers will decline in their faith or be unable to withstand trials. On the other hand, believers whose faith are firmly rooted in the Lord will make a church strong. Therefore, the ministry of teaching is crucial to the well-being of a church.

12a. The disciples in Antioch were called Christians by the outsiders probably because their lifestyles and conduct distinguished them from unbelievers and identified them as followers of Christ. Their lives were a living demonstration of the spiritual qualities of the Lord Jesus.

Another reason might have been the fact the outsiders saw that the believers in Christ were clearly distinct from followers of Judaism. Both Jews and Gentiles in the Antioch church must have fellowshiped freely in a way that was never seen in Judaism.

13. 1. When the believers in Antioch learned that the believers in Judea were in need, they sent relief to them through Barnabas and Saul. Just as the church in Jerusalem assisted the church in Antioch by sending them Barnabas, the church in Antioch now helped the brethren in Judea with material provisions. They showed their love by their actions (cf. 1Jn 3:18). This is an excellent example of how brethren in Christ ought to supply each other's needs.

2. Another lesson we can learn from the believers in Antioch is how everyone in the church was involved in the relief effort. They "each according to his ability, determined to send relief" to the brethren in Judea. Every member was compelled by their love for their fellow believers and each took up the responsibility to send aid.

In the same way, everyone in the church should learn to take part in giving. Rather than delegating the task to a few wealthy donors, each person can be involved, regardless of how much they can give. If the whole church takes up the task, "each giving according to his ability," then God will be pleased, and all believers can share in the blessing of giving (2Cor 8:12).

Lesson 19

Observation

Outline

- Herod's Violence against the Church (12:1-4)
- Peter Delivered from Prison (12:5-19)
- Herod's Death (12:20-23)
- The Word of God Prevailed (12:24)

Key Words/Phrases

Herod, Peter, constant prayer, delivered, did not give glory to God, the word of God grew and multiplied.

General Analysis

1. Herod was a cruel man who killed innocent people for his own political gain. He was also pompous and arrogant.

Segment Analysis

1. He harassed some from the church and executed the apostle James, who became the first among the apostles to be martyred. Then he arrested Peter and put him in jail, intending to kill him after the Passover.
2. As we can see in the previous chapters of Acts, the religious authorities in Jerusalem had, from the very beginning, been opposing the works of the church and even persecuting the apostles. Later on, Stephen's preaching and speech incensed his accusers as well as all who were present at his trial. Upon Stephen's martyrdom, great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem. From this series of events, we know that the Jews, particularly the religious leaders, did not welcome the Christians in Jerusalem. This is why the Jews approved Herod's oppression of the church.
3. He wanted to gain public support among the Jews. See "Did You Know...?", Entry 1".
4. They were united and joined together in prayer. They did not disperse when they saw their leaders arrested and killed. Instead, they turned to God for help and trusted Him through earnest prayers (12:5,12). Today, we also need to remove all the obstacles that the church faces through prayer. Through faith in God and constant earnest prayer, what is impossible can become possible.
5. Peter was in a very uncomfortable environment, being chained in prison between two soldiers. Worse still, he was going to be executed the next

day. But he was able to sleep soundly, untroubled by his surroundings or his imminent death.

Peter had completely entrusted himself to the Lord. It was as if he was sleeping in the arms of the Lord. He knew that the Lord would watch over him, and even if he were to suffer death, he would soon be with the Lord forever. If we are close to the Lord at all times and serve Him faithfully, we will not fear in times of danger or even in the face of death. For we know that to be apart from the body is to be with the Lord, and we can stand before God with confidence because we have pleased Him in our lives. With such an assurance, we can be at peace and not be afraid (cf. Mt 10:28-33; 16:25-27; Rev 2:10,11).

6.
 1. The angel of the Lord stood by Peter, woke him up, raised him up, and led him out of the prison (7-10).
 2. The chains fell off Peter's hands (7).
 3. The iron gate opened of its own accord (10).
 4. None of the guards woke up.

He first went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, to inform the members there of his escape and to leave a message for the rest of the brethren and James before going into hiding.

- 7b. Mary had turned her home into a house of prayer, allowing many believers to gather there to pray. Her house must have been a regular place of gathering because Peter knew to go there to look for the believers after his escape from prison.

Today, we can also open up our homes to be a place of gathering for believers and a place of prayer. In so doing, we as well as others can be encouraged in the faith through mutual help. We can also build up regular group prayers, which are essential for the growth of the church.

8. Luke tells us that Herod died because he did not give glory to God (23). By accepting the praise that was meant for God alone, Herod had made himself equal with God—a sin equivalent to that of blasphemy. The context of this event (e.g. verse 23) also suggests that Herod's persecution of the church also contributed to the divine judgment upon him.
9. Giving glory to God means acknowledging Him and thanking Him for what He has given to us (cf. Ps 96:8; Lk 17:18). Giving glory to God starts from a heart of humility and gratitude. We need to know that we are nothing, and that everything we have comes from the Lord (1Cor 4:7). Then we will not keep for ourselves honor and praise but surrender them all to Him.
- 10a. He was struck by an angel of the Lord and was eaten by worms.

- 10b. Even such a powerful and haughty man as Herod was killed by worms. This is a perfect illustration of how lowly and useless all human beings are. We have nothing to boast about.
- 11a. The word of God grew and multiplied after Herod the persecutor was removed.
- 11b. No persecution or opposition can stop the spreading of the gospel of God.
- 12. James died a glorious death as a righteous and faithful servant of the Lord. His reward in heaven was great. Herod, on the other hand, died as a result of God's punishment on his wickedness. He died a humiliating death, and the judgment of hell awaited him.
- 13. Regardless of how great the opposition or persecution we face, God is always in control, and His will shall prevail. Therefore, we do not have to fear the forces of evil. We just need to continue to trust in the Lord with a peaceful heart and not lose hope. In times of trial, we ought to offer constant and earnest prayers so that we can remain strong and that God may manifest His power.

Lesson 20

Observation

Outline

- Barnabas and Saul Returned from Jerusalem (12:25)
- The Commission (13:1-3)
- Ministry at Cyprus (13:4-12)
 - Preaching in the synagogue in Salamis (4-5)
 - Preaching to the proconsul in Paphos (6-12)

Key Words/Phrases

Holy Spirit, fasted, Barnabas, Saul/Paul, prayed, sent, Salamis, preached, synagogues, John, Paphos, Bar-Jesus, Sergius Paulus.

Segment Analysis

- 1. They had gone up to Jerusalem to send the gifts from the Antioch church to the brethren in Judea, who were suffering a great famine (Acts 11:27-30).
- 2. The Holy Spirit (2,4).
- 3a. They were ministering to the Lord and fasting (2).
- 3b. They fasted and prayed, laid hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them away.

- 4. This new phase in the church's missionary work had a remarkable beginning. This ministry was not the result of careful planning. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the prophets and teachers in Antioch received direct revelation from the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul to carry out His work.

Today, while we may have the ambition to fulfill the Lord's commission or have some plans on how to do so, it is even more important for us to first seek the Lord's will through prayer and fasting. If we have the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then our work will have the blessings of God, and we will effectively carry out what He wants us to do.

- 6. John, who was also called Mark
- 7a. Elymas was a false prophet and a sorcerer. He tried to dissuade the proconsul from accepting the gospel by means of either false teachings or witchcraft. As Paul pointed out through the Holy Spirit, Elymas was an instrument of the devil.

From the story of Elymas, we can see that the devil is the enemy of all righteousness and often seeks to turn those who thirst for the truth from the faith. He uses deceit and fraud to pervert the straight ways of the Lord. In other words, he uses false teachings, philosophies, and values to confuse those who are searching for the truth in order to mislead them away from the true gospel of Christ.
- 8. Paul rebuked Elymas through the power of the Holy Spirit (9). When we face the opposition of the devil, we cannot use our fleshly courage or anger to stop the opposition. We need to pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit to overcome the works of the devil. Spiritual warfare must be won by the power of God, not by our own resources.
- 9a. Upon Paul's rebuke, a dark mist fell on Elymas immediately, and he became blind (11).
- 9b. When the proconsul saw this mighty deed of God that accompanied Paul's preaching, he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord and believed (12). Signs and miracles serve to confirm the message of the gospel and to lead people to the faith.

Lesson 21

Observation

Outline

- Preaching on the First Sabbath (13:13-43)
- Preaching on the Second Sabbath (13:44-52)

Key Words/Phrases

Perga, promise, Jesus, word of this salvation, God raised Him from the dead, glad tidings, forgiveness of sins, believes, justified, continue in the grace of God, everlasting life, filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Segment Analysis

1. He departed from Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem (13).
2. They preached in the synagogue. They would do the same in many of the cities that they would subsequently visit.

Those who attended the synagogue were men of Israel and people who feared God, including some Gentiles and devout proselytes (16,26,42,43). These people knew the Scriptures (15), and so the groundwork had been laid for them to receive Jesus Christ. Since the promise of the Savior is in the Scriptures, these people were the natural candidates to understand how Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of God's promise.

Another reason why the apostles preached at the synagogue is that it was God's will for the gospel to be preached to the Jews first (46), and the Jews congregated at the synagogue every Sabbath day. God chose the Israelites in the Old Testament times, made a covenant with them, and promised them that a Savior would come from the line of David. God was faithful to His promise and His covenant. Therefore, He raised up a savior for Israel (23) and sent Him to preach to the house of Israel first (cf. Mt 15:24). The apostles understood the will of God. That is why they knew they had the obligation to tell the good tidings of Jesus Christ to the Jews first, even though many of the Jews refused to accept the gospel.

3. The apostles and Luke considered the Sabbath day kept by the Jews to be the Sabbath day (14). There is not the slightest mention of a Jewish Sabbath day (Saturday) as opposed to a Christian Sabbath day (which many Christians today incorrectly believe to be Sunday). In the New Testament, for the Christians and the Jews alike, there was only one day in a week that was called the Sabbath day.
4. God chose their fathers (17), exalted the people when they dwelt in the land of Egypt (17), brought them out of Egypt with an uplifted arm (17), put up with their ways in the wilderness for forty years (18), destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan (19), distributed their land to them by allotment (19), gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years (20), gave them Saul when they asked for a king (21), removed Saul after forty years (22), raised up for them David as king (22), and raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus (23).

- 5a. God had promised to raise up a savior for Israel who would not see corruption (23,34-37). This Savior would deliver them from their sins and make them holy and righteous before God (Lk 1:68-75).
- 5b. God gave them Jesus (33). After Jesus was put to death and buried in a tomb, God raised Him from the dead (27-30).
6. Because He is the Anointed One of God, we can obtain the forgiveness of sins through Him (38), and can be justified by faith in Him (39).
7. Paul quoted from the prophetic warning in the Old Testament to urge his listeners to repent and turn to the Lord. If God had already prophesied the coming of the Savior and the plight of the unbelieving, those who hear the gospel message must take the prophet's warning seriously and believe in the Lord Jesus in order to escape God's judgment.
8. It drew a much larger audience. Almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. Apparently, word had spread about the good tidings that Paul and Barnabas were proclaiming. But opposition also rose up against Paul and Barnabas.
- 9a. They were filled with envy to see Paul and Barnabas attract such a large multitude of Gentiles who were eager to hear the word of God (45). They were angry to see the apostles break beyond the traditions of Judaism to share God's word with the Gentiles.
- 9b. They contradicted and blasphemed the message of Paul (45).
- 10a. They did not shrink back, but courageously told the Jews that since they had rejected the word of God and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, the apostles would now preach to the Gentiles instead. The apostles continued to spread the word throughout the region (49).
- 10b. Oppositions are bound to happen when we preach the word of God. But just because some people refuse to hear us should not stop us from preaching altogether. There are others who are thirsting for the truth and are in need of God. We cannot become discouraged, but must continue to carry out our mission.
11. Luke commented that "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." (48). Those who believe Jesus Christ have been appointed to eternal life. This means that it is God who chooses people and destines them to receive eternal life (Jn 15:16; Rom 8:30; Eph 1:4-5). On the other hand, a person who rejects the gospel message judges himself unworthy of everlasting life. He pronounces judgment and brings condemnation on himself (Jn 3:18,36).
12. They stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region (50).

13. They were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Although they would most definitely face the same persecution that the apostles were facing, these new believers were not afraid because they had accepted Christ into their lives and they were experiencing the wonderful grace of the Lord.

Lesson 22

Observation

Outline

- Ministry at Iconium (14:1-6)
- Ministry at Lystra (14:6-20)
 - Preaching in Lystra (7)
 - Healing a lame man (8-10)
 - The people's attempt to worship Paul and Barnabas (11-18)
 - The multitudes stoned Paul (19-20)
- Ministry at Derbe (14:20-21)
- Strengthening the Disciples in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (14:21-24)
- Preaching in Perga (14:25)
- Returning to Antioch (14:26-28)

Key Words/Phrases

Iconium, spoke/preached, word of His grace, signs and wonders, Lystra, Derbe, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, tribulations, appointed elders in every church, prayed with fasting, commended them to the Lord, opened the door of faith to the Gentiles

Segment Analysis

1. The multitude was divided. While many Jews and Greeks believed, the unbelieving Jews stirred up some Gentiles and poisoned their minds.
2. Through signs and wonders, God bears witness to the word of His grace (3). God often uses miraculous deeds to confirm the truth of the gospel message and to lead people to the faith (Mk 16:20; Acts 8:6; 13:12; 19:11-20; Rom 15:18-19).
3. Paul and Barnabas became aware of the opponents' attempt to abuse and stone them, they fled to nearby cities.
4. He healed a crippled man who was lame from birth.
5. He heard Paul's preaching and had faith in the Lord (9).

- 6a. One moment, they considered Paul and Barnabas to be gods and wanted to sacrifice to them. The next moment, they were persuaded by the unbelieving Jews and stoned Paul.
- 6b. The devil first tried to corrupt the apostles by making the people worship them as gods. If the apostles had not been watchful and humble, they would have accepted the people's worship and sinned against God by robbing Him of His glory. When this "soft" tactic did not work, the devil used the "hard" tactic by making the people stone Paul and forcing the apostles to leave the city.
- 6c. Sometimes, he tempts us and hopes to make us fall into sin. Other times, he uses unbelievers who are callous in their hearts to oppose our work or even persecute us.
7. Being greatly distressed by the actions of the multitudes, the apostles tore their clothes and ran in among the multitudes. They tried all they could to dissuade and restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.
8. We must turn from useless idols to the living God, who is the Maker and Provider of all things.
9. The crippled man listened to Paul's preaching and accepted the gospel with faith. On the contrary, the multitudes were still inclined to idol-worship despite the apostles' preaching. They simply marveled at the miracle, but their hearts were unchanged. Since they did not accept the truth in their hearts, upon the persuasion of the unbelieving Jews, these adorers of the apostles quickly turned into persecutors and violent criminals.
- 10a.
 1. They strengthened the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith (22).
 2. They appointed elders in every church, prayed with fasting, and commended the believers to the Lord (23).
- 10b. Conversion is not the completion of a preacher's job. It is of utmost importance that we care for the souls of the new converts and build up their faith. It would be a great pity if we win many converts only to lose them quickly. Therefore, after a person becomes a believer, it is the preacher's and the church's responsibility to teach him the word of God and exhort him to grow in the Lord. When a new church is planted, elders should also be appointed to look after the well-being of the congregation. Finally, we need to pray with fasting for the new believers and ask the Lord to personally watch over their souls. Only if we pay careful attention to the soul of every convert can we minimize the drifting away of believers.
11.
 1. He is to oversee, watch over, and set an example for the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1Pet 5:1-3; cf. 1Tim 3:5)

2. He is to teach and exhort by sound doctrine as well as convict those who contradict (1Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9).
3. He is to direct the affairs of the church (1Tim 5:17).
- 12a. “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (14:22). Being a citizen of God’s kingdom involves many trials and difficulties.
- 12b. It helps us understand that tribulations are a necessary part of our walk of faith. With this understanding, we would not be caught by surprise or be disheartened when we face tribulations (1Thess 3:3; 1Pet 4:12).

This truth also encourages us that tribulations cannot defeat us because they are part of the process of entering God’s kingdom. Since our brothers throughout the world are undergoing the sufferings for their faith, and since many saints before us had overcome tribulations, we know that we are not alone (Heb 12:1-4; 1Pet 5:9). By the Lord’s help, we can also be victorious.
- 13a. To commend believers to the Lord means entrusting them to the Lord’s care.
- 13b. To commend the workers of God to God’s grace means entrusting them as well as their ministry to God’s blessing and guidance.
- 13c. Since the Lord is the Shepherd and Overseer of our soul (1Pet 2:25) and we are God’s workmanship created in Christ (Eph 2:10), the Lord is the Ultimate guardian of our spiritual well-being. Thus, in addition to faithfully and diligently teaching the believers, we need to ask the Lord to help them grow and watch over their soul.

By the same token, while the church embarks on different ministries, we have to trust God and seek His grace every step of the way. We plant and water, but it is God who gives the growth (1Cor 3:6). “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps 127:1). Only by God’s grace can we accomplish His good works.
14. Through their missionary efforts, God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. It was God’s intention to extend His grace of salvation beyond the Jewish race.

Lesson 23

Observation

Outline

- Dispute over Circumcision for Gentiles (15:1-5)
- The Council held in Jerusalem (15:6-21)
 - Apostles and elders gathered to consider the matter (6)

- Peter stressed salvation by grace (7-11)
- Paul and Barnabas testified of God’s grace among the Gentiles (12)
- James drew the conclusion and resolution on this matter (13-21)
- The Council’s Letter (15:22-29)
- Result of the Letter and the Ministry of Silas, Paul, and Barnabas in Antioch (15:30-35)

Key Words/Phrases

Circumcised, saved, the custom/law of Moses, Paul and Barnabas, church, apostles and elders, Gentiles, “purifying their hearts by faith,” yoke/burden, grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, Judas, Silas, rejoiced

Segment Analysis

1. Whether the Gentile converts needed to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses (1,5).
2.
 1. No one can be justified by trying to keep the law (Gal 2:16; Gal 3:11); those who are under the law are under a curse (Gal 3:10).
 2. Since the law could only condemn us but not justify us, God gave us His Son Jesus Christ as a propitiation for our sins so that we may be justified freely apart from the law (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:21-26).
 3. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works (Eph 2:8-9). God gives us this grace freely through the washing of regeneration (in baptism) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5-7).
 4. Through His death, the Lord Jesus has abolished the law of the commandments contained in ordinances and removed the handwriting of requirements that was against us (Eph 2:14-15; Col 2:13-14). If a believer of Jesus Christ still seeks to be justified by keeping the law of Moses, he is denying the atoning death of Jesus and is fallen from His grace (Gal 2:17-21, 5:4).
 5. Requiring circumcision would pose an unnecessary hindrance in preaching to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 15:19).
 6. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love (Gal 5:6).
 7. Those who insisted that Gentiles must be circumcised did so for their own selfish and hypocritical reasons. They hoped to avoid suffering for Christ and boast in the flesh by advocating circumcision. But in reality, they did not keep the law themselves (Gal 6:12-13).
3. The believers in Antioch were humble and knew to seek help. Instead of taking matters into their own hands, they asked the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to help resolve this important issue. They realized that the

church in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch were both of the same body of Christ. So it was necessary to reach a common belief over this issue. They were also ready to obey whatever the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem would decide.

Today, when we face controversies concerning certain teachings or practices that might affect more than just the local church, the local church ought to ask the general assembly or international assembly of churches to discuss the issue and try to reach a resolution that all the churches can follow. This is how we, as the body of Christ, can preserve unity in doctrine.

4. They rejoiced greatly (3).
- 5a. The conversion of Cornelius
- 5b. If God had accepted Cornelius and the other Gentiles with him by giving them the Holy Spirit and purifying their hearts by faith, the Jewish brethren should not impose the laws of Moses upon Gentile converts. Jews and Gentiles alike are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, not by observing the laws of Moses.
- 5c. From the account in Galatians, Peter definitely had felt the pressure from the Judaizers. But he never forgot the divine revelation he received when he was sent to Cornelius' house to preach to the Gentiles. Here, he chose to honor and please God despite the strong pressure from powerful men. His submission to God's will gave him the courage to speak so decisively against imposing the laws of Moses on the Gentile believers.
6. They declared how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles (12).
7. He quoted from the words of the prophet Amos concerning how there would be Gentiles who are called by God's name. He also pointed out that the words of the prophets agreed with Peter's personal experience.
- 8a. The church would not trouble the Gentile converts, but would just teach them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood (19-20).
- 8b. If certain long-held traditions and practices in the church are not required by the Scripture, or if it becomes clear that they are contrary to God's will, we must surrender our own prejudices and yield to God's will. Oftentimes, holding on to the traditions of the majority and imposing them on the minority can become an obstacle to the expansion of the church because it creates an unnecessary burden and excludes many others from joining the church. So we must always measure our practices and policies against the teachings and works of God so that we will not hinder God's will.

9. From the deliberations at the council, we see that the apostles and elders were willing to seek and submit to God's will. Peter shared from his own experience, which demonstrated that God intended to choose the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas testified of God's miracles and wonders. James finally referred to the OT Scripture to come to the conclusion.

In making decisions, it is of the utmost importance that we seek what God wants and not what we want. We need to carefully observe God's guiding hands. Personal experiences as well as God's workings through miracles and wonders can definitely help us perceive God's will. Most importantly, we need to search the Scriptures to see what God has to say, for all Scriptures are God-breathed. Once we see the direction that God wants us to take, we ought to humbly submit ourselves to His will.

- 10a. Eating food offered to idols, sexual immorality, and eating meat of strangled animals and blood were common sins among the Gentiles. Therefore, the reason was probably that the Gentile converts needed to be cautioned against these specific sins so that they would not be polluted by the idolatrous and immoral practices around them.
- 10b. Things sacrificed to idols are sacrificed to demons. Eating food sacrificed to idols is having fellowship with demons. We must have no part with demons, since God is a jealous God (1Cor 10:19-22).

Sexual immorality is unacceptable to God because it defiles our bodies, which has been dedicated to God as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6: 13-20). Sexual immorality is also evil because it destroys the sacred institution of marriage (cf. Heb 13:4). Those who practice sexual immorality cannot enter the kingdom of God (1Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21). Sexual immorality includes adultery (extra-marital sex), fornication (pre-marital sex), homosexuality (sex between members of the same sex), bisexuality (sex with both sexes), bestiality (sex with animals), incest (sex with close relatives or members of the same family), necrophilia (sex with the corpse), pedophilia (sex with children), and prostitution. Examples of some of the sins listed here are recorded in Lev 18:1-30.

We should refrain from blood because the life of an animal is in its blood, and life belongs to God (Lev 17:10-14).

We also need to refrain from eating meat of strangled animals because their blood has not been shed.

11. James' point is that since the laws of Moses have been preached throughout many generations in every city and are read in the synagogues on every Sabbath, the teaching of the Mosaic laws should be left to the synagogues. The church does not need to take up the responsibility of teaching the laws of Moses to the Jewish believers, and it should not burden the Gentile believers with the requirements of the

- law. Instead, the church will just write to the Gentile converts and point out the four specific things that they must abstain from.
12. They wrote an official letter and sent it with Paul and Barnabas. They also sent along men they had chosen, namely Judas and Silas, who would also make a verbal report of the resolution.
 13. The decision was made jointly between the Holy Spirit and the church (28). This means that the decision of the council was not based on the personal views of some authoritative figures, but rather, it was through the guidance of the Holy Spirit that they reached this conclusion. They were able to discern the will of the Holy Spirit, and they agreed with it fully. The divine will behind the decision made the decision itself very significant.
 14. The church in Jerusalem sent Judas and Silas as representatives to personally deliver the letter and confirm by word of mouth the decision that had been made (27). Doing so removed any doubt that skeptics might have about the authenticity of the letter.
 15. The members rejoiced and were encouraged by it.
 16. They not only delivered the letter but also stayed in Antioch for a period of time, exhorting and strengthening the brethren with many words (32-33).

Lesson 24

Observation

Outline

- Paul's Intention (15:36)
- Paul and Barnabas Parted from Each Other (15:37-39)
- Pastoral Visit to the Churches in Syria, Cilicia, and Lycaonia (15:40-16:5)
- The Macedonian Call (16:6-10)
- Lydia's Conversion (16:11-15)

Key Words/Phrases

Paul, Barnabas, "See how they are doing," Mark, Silas, strengthening the churches, Timothy, strengthened in the faith, increased in number daily, Holy Spirit, Macedonia, Lydia, the Lord opened her heart, baptized

Segment Analysis

1. He wanted to visit the churches that had been established during their first missionary journey to see how the brethren were doing.

2. Barnabas was determined to take Mark with them, but Paul insisted otherwise because Mark had deserted them during the first missionary journey. The contention between them became so sharp that they departed from one another (15:37-39).
3. Paul gave up on Mark after Mark's first failure, but Barnabas was willing to give Mark another chance. Had it not been for Barnabas' insistence and patience, Mark might never have become a useful worker for God. This story teaches us that we should give younger workers a second chance even when they do not perform well initially, especially when they show a desire to improve themselves. Since we are all fellow workers for the Lord, we have no right to deny someone else a second chance if they are willing to try again. We need to bear with one another's shortcomings just as the Lord bears with ours. Mark became a useful worker in the ministry because of Barnabas' loving help. We, likewise, can train useful future workers in the church if we bring them up diligently and patiently.
4. Timothy (16:1)
5. The resolution of the Jerusalem council was that Gentile converts were not required to be circumcised or follow the customs of Moses to be saved. Paul did not go against this resolution because he did not circumcise Timothy for the sake of Timothy's salvation. Instead, he did it in order to minimize the resistance from the Jews in that region and remove an unnecessary hindrance to the work of the gospel.
- 6a. The churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.
- 6b. The decrees of the Jerusalem council upheld a fundamental message of the gospel, that God gives His gift of salvation to Gentiles and Jews alike. Because the church obeyed God's will and freely embraced Gentile converts into the church, it greatly encouraged the believers in the church as well as opened wide the door of the gospel to the Gentiles. This led to the strengthening of the brethren's faith and the rapid increase of believers.
- 6c. Whether the church obeys and upholds the correct teachings has a direct effect on the growth of the church. If human traditions take priority over God's word, they will hinder the work of God; and if false teachings are not corrected right away, it may even lead to the decline and division of the church. But if the church stands united in the truth and teaches the believers to obey sound doctrine, God will work with the church and make it grow.
7. When we do the work of the Lord, the Lord's will always comes first, because it is His work, not ours. While we may make plans on how to carry out a work, it is even more important to heed the guidance of the

Holy Spirit. God often shows us His plans in various ways, and we should be ready to submit to His guidance anytime, even if it is contrary to our original plans. Because Paul obeyed the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was able to bring the gospel to Europe for the first time—a result that surpassed his expectations. We can likewise do greater things than what we envisioned if we hear and trust the Lord's leading.

8. He went out of the city to the riverside to preach because there was no synagogue in that city. The proselytes gathered by the riverside on Sabbath days to pray. This is an indication that the Jewish population in Philippi was quite small.
- 9a. He opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul (14).
- 9b. Sheer eloquence or human effort cannot win souls. The Lord must work with us to touch people's hearts in order for those who listen to the gospel message to believe and accept it.
10.
 1. She was a devout woman who kept the Sabbath and devoted herself to prayer.
 2. She had a positive influence on her whole household. That is why she was able to lead her whole family to believe in the Lord and be baptized.
 3. She immediately put her faith into practice by receiving the traveling missionaries into her house. Later, her home also became a gathering place for the believers (cf. 40).

Lesson 25

Observation

Outline

- Paul Cast out the Spirit of Divination (16:16-18)
- Paul and Silas Imprisoned (16:19-24)
- The Jailer's Conversion (16:25-34)
- Paul and Silas Released from Prison (16:35-40)

Key Words/Phrases

Praying and singing hymns to God, earthquake, keeper of the prison, "What must I do to be saved?", "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household", baptized, rejoiced

Segment Analysis

1. On the surface, the evil spirit seemed to be promoting the gospel by loudly announcing the work of the missionaries. But the evil spirit

actually intended to disrupt their preaching because he made the slave girl follow the missionaries and scream out behind them for many days.

2. See 18-24.
- 3a. They were praying and singing hymns to God (25).
4.
 1. There was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken (26).
 2. All the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed (26). This was miraculous because an earthquake can hardly open all the prison doors, not to mention loosening prisoners' chains.
 3. No one escaped from prison (28). It must have been obvious to all the prisoners that the earthquake, the opening of the prison doors, and the loosening of the chains were the acts of God in response to Paul and Silas' prayer and singing (cf. 25). That is why no prisoner took the situation to escape.
5. God wanted to save the prison keeper and his household.
6. At first, the prison keeper was sure that he was doomed because all the prisoners must have escaped, and the magistrates would demand his life for failing his responsibility. But Paul stopped him and reassured him that no one had escaped. This showed that Paul and Silas were men of God who had great love for him. The fact that all the prisoners stayed behind with Paul and Silas also showed that Paul and Silas were righteous men, who had such great influence on all the convicts. The prison keeper had seen for himself the great power of God in the miraculous events and that the missionaries were men sent by God. This realization led him to come before Paul and Silas and fall down trembling before them. Moreover, it led him to see his need for salvation.
7. Baptism was closely connected to the command and promise, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Paul and Silas did not wait to baptize the prison keeper until a more convenient time. As soon as the prison keeper and his family accepted the word of the Lord, they were baptized immediately because baptism was part of believing on the Lord Jesus and it was necessary for salvation.
8. We see in these two verses a sharp contrast between total despair and complete joy. Before we believed in the Lord, we were without hope in life, and were often overwhelmed by problems that were beyond our control. But having believed in the Lord, we can trust in the Lord in all things. Most importantly, we have great joy, knowing that we have been delivered into God's eternal kingdom.
9. Paul demanded the magistrates to bring them out of prison openly probably because he did not want the public to have the impression that

they had been punished as criminals, a situation that would have greatly dishonored the name of God (cf. 1Pet 4:15-16). If their preaching had been viewed by the people as illegitimate, the church would have had a difficult time to thrive in that city.

Lesson 26

Observation

Outline

Ministry at Thessalonica (17:1-9)

Preaching in the synagogue (1-4)

Jason's house under attack (5-9)

Ministry at Berea (17:10-15)

Fair-minded Bereans accepted the gospel (10-12)

Thessalonians stirred up opposition (13-15)

Ministry at Athens (17:16-34)

Paul reasoned with the Athenians (16-21)

Paul's sermon at Areopagus (22-34)

Ministry at Corinth (18:1-17)

Meeting Aquila and Priscilla (1-3)

Preaching and teaching (5-11)

The Jews' accusation and the proconsul's dismissal (12-17)

Ministry at Ephesus (18:18-21)

Returning to Antioch (18:22)

Key Words/Phrases

Thessalonica, reasoned, rise again from the dead/resurrection, Jesus is the Christ, Berea, received the word with all readiness, searched the Scriptures daily, Athens, his spirit was provoked, Corinth, compelled by the Spirit, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent", "I am with you."

Segment Analysis

1. Paul went into the synagogue of the Jews, as his custom was, and for three Sabbath reasoned with them from the Scriptures (2).
3. The Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and that Jesus is the Christ (3).
4. Some Jews, a great multitude of devout Greeks, and not a few leading women were converted. However, the Jews who did not believe were envious and gathered a mob to stir up trouble for the believers (4-9).

5. They accused the Christians of acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar and claiming that there is another king—Jesus (7).
- 6a. The Bereans were more fair-minded than the Thessalonians, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so (11).
- 6b.
 1. The Bereans received the word with all readiness. Being eager to accept the truth shows that a person honors God's will and thirsts for the word of God. When we study or listen to God's word, we need to first remove our personal biases and come with the desire and the humility to submit to whatever God teaches us. With this right attitude, God will reveal His will to us and be pleased with us.
 2. The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether what they had heard was true. While it is good to be submissive, we need to weigh carefully everything we hear against the Scriptures. We should not blindly accept everything that is being taught, because there are many false and misleading messages in this world that may appear to be from God (cf. 1Jn 4:1). God's word is the ultimate authority, and every believer needs to be equipped with the heart to discern whether the message they hear is based on God's word (cf. 1Cor 14:29; 1Thess 2:13; Rev 2:2).
7. When the unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching God's word in Berea, they came to Berea and stirred up the crowds. Because of this trouble, the believers in Berea thought it would be best to send Paul away.
8. They were very religious in all things (17:22); their city was given over to idols (17:16).
Athens was the home of the intellectuals. Two great schools of philosophy, Epicureanism and Stoicism, were prominent at that time (cf. 17:18). The Athenians loved philosophy as well as new ideas. They enjoyed spending their time telling or hearing some new thing (17:19-21).
- 9a. His spirit was provoked within him (17:16).
- 9b.
 1. Dedication to the Lord's commission. The apostle Paul had a strong conviction and determination to fulfill the great commission to which he had been called (cf. Acts 26:16-19). It was this strong sense of mission that compelled him to preach to the Athenians. Like Paul, we also need to be dedicated to the mission that we have been entrusted with in order to be active in preaching the gospel.
 2. Fervent love for the lost souls of this world. Paul felt indebted to the people of the world because he had great compassion for them. This attitude drove him to preach the gospel to all (Rom 1:14; 1Cor 9:19-20).

23). He must have felt greatly distressed to see the spiritual ignorance of the Athenians, which provoked his spirit to reach out to them. In the same way, we need to open our eyes to the needs of this world and pray to God to pour out His love into our hearts. Sincere and earnest love will motivate us to tell others about the good news of salvation.

10. The Jews and the Gentile worshippers in the synagogue as well as those who happened to be in the marketplace
11. Paul did not simply denounce the idolatry of the Athenians. Instead, he noted how religious the Athenians were and pointed out that they even worshiped “the unknown God.” By acknowledging the Athenians’ desire to worship, he led them to the understanding of the true God. Later on, Paul also made reference to the words of two Greek poets to explain man’s relationship to the true God.
Today, we can also learn to recognize and establish common grounds between our listeners and us when we preach to them. By acknowledging the things that both we and our listeners already believe in, we can more effectively explain what we would like to share with them as well as tell them what further steps they need to take.
- 12a.
 1. God is the maker of the world and everything in it; He does not dwell in temples of man or be worshiped with man’s hands.
 2. God is the giver of life and all things.
 3. From one man God has made every nation of men to dwell on earth, and He has determined their life span and the boundaries of their dwellings.
 4. In God we live and move and have our being; we are His offspring.
 5. In the past, God had tolerated man’s ignorance, but He now commands everyone to repent.
 6. God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ; He has given us assurance of this by raising Jesus from the dead.
- 12b.
 1. We should seek the Lord and find Him (17:27).
 2. We ought to turn away from the gods made by man’s hands (17:29).
 3. We need to repent of our sins and accept Jesus, whom God has appointed to judge this world (17:30).
13. See 17:32,34.
- 14a. Aquila and Priscilla (18:2-3)
- 14b. Paul made tent to support his livelihood and to not be a burden to the Corinthian believers (2Cor 11:9). But Paul’s primary goal was to preach

the gospel. This is why he made it a point to go into the synagogue every Sabbath to reason with the Jews and Gentiles.

Today, we may not be able to preach the gospel on a full-time basis, and we need to study or work to sustain ourselves and our families. However, our ambition and purpose should not be placed on our education or career. Working is only the means to living, but the goal of living is to carry out the Lord’s will of saving the lost. So while we may spend most of our time on the job or in school, we need to keep the Lord’s commission in our hearts all the time and take every opportunity to share our faith with others.

15. See 18:6-7.
- 16a. See 18:9-10.
- 16b. From the events that took place in Corinth, we understand that the opposition was strong and persistent. The Lord’s words to Paul suggests that the situation was quite disheartening and menacing. Paul himself later recounted his feelings at this time in his letter to the Corinthians (1Cor 2:3). Therefore, the Lord spoke to Paul at a time when he was in great need of God’s comfort and guidance. The vision was also to instruct Paul to stay longer in Corinth, for God intended to save many people in that city.
17. Gallio chose not to interfere with the activities of the Christian missionaries and dismissed the Jews’ accusations. His wise decision afforded Paul and his companions protection against harm—a fulfillment of the Lord’s promise to Paul (18:10).
- 18a. Ephesus (18:19)
- 18b. Priscilla and Aquila (18:18)
19. He wanted to return to Jerusalem in time to keep the Passover feast.

Lesson 27

Observation

Outline

Strengthening the Disciples in Galatia and Phrygia (18:23)

The Ministry of Apollos (18:24-28)

Ephesian disciples received baptism and the Holy Spirit (19:1-7)

Key Words/Phrases

Galatia, Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples, Apollos, eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in spirit, speak boldly, vigorously refuted, Ephesus,

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”, baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. He did so to strengthen the churches that were established in the second missionary journey.
- 1b. It is important to send workers regularly to newly developed areas to help the believers there grow and be strong in faith.
2.
 1. He was mighty in the Scriptures (18:24). God’s word is living and powerful (Heb 4:12). It is the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). Only if we are well equipped with the knowledge of the Scriptures can we effectively persuade the unbelieving, convince the wavering, refute the critics, nourish the needy, strengthen the weak, and guide the lost.
 2. He was fervent in spirit (18:25). Fervency, both in terms of love for others and dedication to the Lord, is the driving force behind our service and preaching.
 3. He spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord (18:25). We need to know the Lord well as well as teach His way faithfully. Then we can lead others on the right way of salvation and present every believer perfect in Christ Jesus (Col 1:28)
 4. He spoke boldly (18:26). If we are timid and are afraid of rejection or persecution, we would not be able to tell others about God. But courage enables the preacher to declare God’s word freely and faithfully.
 5. Despite his eloquence and knowledge of the Scriptures, he was willing to receive instruction (18:25) and humbly accepted the teachings of Aquila and Priscilla (18:26). God’s word is given to the meek and the humble (Jas 1:21; Mt 11:25). If we are humble enough to receive correction and guidance, we will continue to grow in the knowledge of God.
3. He helped build up the believers in Achaia and debated with the Jews to prove that Jesus was the Christ (18:28).
4.
 1. They must have been well-versed in the Scriptures in order to instruct someone as knowledgeable as Apollos.
 2. They were not mindless worshippers who simply took in everything that was taught. Rather, they paid close attention to the teaching of God’s word, and were able to discern whether someone had taught the word accurately.
 3. They were a loving couple who cared about the work of God as well as workers like Paul and Apollos. That is why, when they saw something lacking in Apollos, they made an effort to invite him to their home and explain to him the way of God.
4. They served the Lord quietly. Although they were not preachers and they probably did not teach people in public, they had become a great help to the preachers behind the scene. This is the kind of service that our Lord desires (Mt 6:3-4).
5. They were considerate. They taught Apollos not because they wanted to humiliate Apollos, but they truly wanted the best for Apollos. This is why they chose to educate him in private rather than correct him in public.
- 5a. “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (19:2)
- 5b.
 1. It is important and necessary for believers to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit after their conversion (cf. 8:14-15), since the Holy Spirit is the Counselor that the Lord has promised would abide in believers (Jn 7:38; 14:16-17; Acts 2:38-39). Believers who are yet to receive this promise need to ask God for the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:13) and the ministers of the church should pray for them and lay hands on them (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6).
 2. Whether a group of believers has received the Holy Spirit can be an indication about their knowledge of the truth. If the experience of the Holy Spirit is absent, it is possible that something is missing in their knowledge about the Lord Jesus and about the teachings of the Scriptures. Since the disciples whom Paul met had already believed in the Lord even before Paul evangelized in Ephesus, Paul was interested to know whether they also shared the same experience as Paul in receiving the Holy Spirit. It turned out that these believers had never received or heard of the Holy Spirit, and this helped Paul discover what was missing in their understanding of the truth.
6. “Into what then were you baptized?” Hearing that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit, Paul wanted to know more about the baptism they had received and what name they had professed to believe when they were baptized. We can infer from Paul’s question that whether a person has the correct faith and has received the true baptism can determine whether he receives the Holy Spirit.
7. John was the forerunner for Christ. He preached repentance to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the Lord. His baptism was a baptism of repentance, which only served to pave the way for Jesus Christ (Mt 3:11-12). John’s ministry was completed when Jesus Christ came, for Jesus was the one John had been preaching about all along. Belief in John’s message without belief in Jesus Christ would be inadequate and missing the mark. Therefore, those who followed John

needed to believe in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29,36-37).

After Jesus' resurrection, the Lord taught His disciples to baptize in His name (Mt 28:18-19). Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), not just for repentance. That is why it was necessary for these believers in Ephesus, who only knew about the baptism of John, to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

8. What does this event teach us about
- 8a. Believing the name of Jesus Christ with our hearts and confessing it with our lips is not enough. We need to believe in the Lord and be baptized into Christ to wash away our sins and be clothed with Christ (Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 10:48; 16:15,30-31,33; 22:16; Gal 3:27). These believers in Ephesus not only needed to learn more fully about Jesus Christ, but were also baptized again in the name of the Lord Jesus. It was only after they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus that they received the Holy Spirit. If baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus were optional and carried no spiritual effect, Paul could have just given them a Bible lesson about Christ without asking them to be baptized again.
- 8b. Faith and baptism are inseparable (Mk 16:16). Faith needs to be followed by baptism, and baptism needs to be accompanied by faith. When these disciples at Ephesus were baptized into John's baptism, their faith was incomplete. They did not know about the remission of sins through faith in Jesus Christ. After being taught more about Jesus Christ, they were baptized again, but this time, the baptism was done in the name of the Lord Jesus. The difference here was more than just the difference in the name that was invoked during baptism. The difference also lies in the fact that they were now baptized with faith in Jesus Christ and in the cleansing effect of baptism in Jesus' name.
- 8c. The experience of the disciples at Ephesus tells us that baptism is related to receiving the Holy Spirit. This is consistent with Peter's message, which called the people to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ in order to receive the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). If we are yearning for the Holy Spirit and have yet to receive baptism, we ought to be baptized first. Sometimes, a person may receive the Holy Spirit prior to baptism, as was the case for Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48). But in such a situation, the person should also be baptized after receiving the Holy Spirit, as Cornelius was, so that the Holy Spirit may continue to dwell in Him.
9. They spoke in tongues and prophesied.
10. 1. A person does not automatically receive the Holy Spirit the moment he accepts Jesus Christ.

2. A person does not automatically receive the Holy Spirit the moment he is baptized (cf. Acts 8:14-16).
3. When a person receives the Holy Spirit, there should be some external evidence (Acts 2:33; 8:18). The common evidence we see recorded in Acts is speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-4; 10:46; 19:6). The apostles never assumed that someone has received the Holy Spirit just because they professed Jesus Christ (Just as Paul did not assume that these disciples had received the Holy Spirit). They, as well as Luke, considered speaking in tongues as the evidence to determine that a person has received the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 28

Observation

Outline

- The Gospel Preached in Ephesus and Heard throughout Asia (19:8-10)
- God Worked Mighty Miracles through Paul (19:11-12)
- The Seven Sons of Sceva (19:14-20)
- Paul's Plans (19:21-22)
- The Riot at Ephesus (19:23-41)

Key Words/Phrases

God worked unusual miracles, the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed, great commotion, Demetrius.

General Analysis

1. Paul preached daily while he was in Ephesus. As a result, all in Asia, including both Jews and Greeks, heard the gospel (9-10). At this time, God also performed some marvelous miracles through Paul, and these miracles became so well known that even exorcists tried to cast out evil spirits in the name of Jesus. The incident of the seven sons of Sceva invoked great fear on all the Ephesians and many who practiced magic came to the Lord. The Lord's work was so powerful that the silver-makers for the shrines for Diana became desperate and caused an uproar.

Segment Analysis

11. For the first 3 months, Paul preached in the synagogue. But when some at the synagogue resisted the gospel, Paul departed from them and reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years.

12. All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.
13. See 19:11-12. The great miracles that God performed through Paul fulfilled Jesus' prophesy in Jn 14:12.
14. These exorcists, as well as many others, must have marveled at the mighty miracles that Paul had performed in the name of Jesus. They recognized the great power in the name of Jesus and tried to imitate Paul.
15. See 19:15-17. They were not able to cast out the evil spirit. Instead, they were cast out by the evil spirit.
16.
 1. They did not believe in Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, for they called Jesus "the Jesus whom Paul preaches" (19:13). They simply invoked the name of Jesus as if the invocation itself would produce some magical power. But God has given the ability to cast out demons only to believers (Mk 16:17), not just to anyone who invokes the name of Jesus.
 2. They probably had some ulterior motive in trying to exorcise the evil spirit, whether it was for financial gain for to win people's respect. Misusing the name of Jesus for personal interests certainly would not please God. Knowing that God was not with these self-made exorcists, the evil spirit had no fear of them. (Casting out of evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus is not a profit-making business or a means for self-promotion. It should be done out of faith in Christ as well as compassion for the demon-possessed.)
17.
 1. It carries great power when called upon by those who believe in Him.
 2. It is not to be called on carelessly or for personal use.
 3. It is to be revered and magnified.
- 18a. See 19:18-19.
- 18b. What happened to the sons of Sceva taught everyone at least two things:
 1. The name of Jesus Christ is to be honored. Only with true faith can a person be worthy to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.
 2. Believers must lead God-fearing lives. Mere profession of Jesus' name is not enough. Faith must be accompanied by a life that pleases God. A believer cannot possibly call on the name of Christ but continue to live in sin as if God doesn't know it. If even the evil spirit could tell false believers from true believers, how could any believer hide their secret sins from God?

These realizations made the people confess their wicked deeds and renounce their sorcery.

20. By the movement of the Holy Spirit, Paul planned to go to Jerusalem after passing through Macedonia and Achaia. He also intended to go to Rome after that.
- 21a. Demetrius tried to solicit support from his fellow tradesmen by bring up the name of Diana. But he was more concerned about the loss in profit if people stopped buying the silver shrines he made (19:24-25). The temple of Diana was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. It's not hard to imagine how lucrative Demetrius' trade must have been.
22. Paul's ministry must have had a great impact on the city of Ephesus and all of Asia, as indeed it had (cf. 19:17-20), for it to have seriously affected such a huge market as that of Demetrius' profitable business.
23. Most of them simply followed the crowd to proclaim the greatness of Diana, but they were actually confused and didn't know the reason for the gathering.
24. Because Demetrius had used the name of their revered goddess to stir up the emotion of all the people, the crowd was almost out of control. They had seized Paul's travel companions, and the disciples would not allow Paul to go into the crowd. Even some of the officials sent a message to plead with Paul not to venture into the theater. The actions of the crowd and the great concern of Paul's brethren and friends tell us that Paul's safety was at great risk. After all, Demetrius' complaint was against Paul and his missionary activities. If Paul were to appear on the scene at this time, and if the crowd found out that Paul was the target of their fury, they would have certainly turned violent.
25. The Jews were probably afraid that the crowd might turn against them as a result of this incident, since the Jews abhorred idolatry. Therefore, they might have hoped to win over the public by having their spokesman, Alexander, make a public statement in their defense and declare that they had nothing to do with Paul or the Christians. But when the crowd learned that Alexander was a Jew, their religious sentiment and fury were stirred up even more.
26. See 19:35-41.

Lesson 29

Observation

Outline

- Ministry in Macedonia and Greece (20:1-6)
- Ministry at Troas and Resurrection of Eutychus (20:7-12)
- From Troas to Miletus (20:13-16)

Paul's last exhortation to the Ephesian Elders (20:17-38)

Journey to Jerusalem (21:1-17)

Miletus to Tyre (1-3)

Visiting the disciples at Tyre (4-6)

Short stay at Ptolemais (7)

Visiting Philip at Caesarea (8-14)

Final leg of journey to Jerusalem (15-17)

Key Words/Phrases

Embraced, Eutychus, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials, kept back nothing, "finish my race... and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus," testify, whole counsel of God, take heed, shepherd the church of God, watch, remember, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace," support the weak, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," Agabus, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

General Analysis

1. 1. He diligently encouraged the believers (20:2,7-11).
2. He taught the believers by word and by personal example (20:18, 33-35)
3. He served the Lord with all humility (20:19)
4. He sincerely cared about the well-being of the believers, often toiling for them and teaching them in tears (20:18,31).
5. He endured the trials that came from the Jews (19)
6. He kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed to the believers the whole counsel of God (20:20,27).
7. He taught them in public and from house to house, catering to the general as well as specific needs of each believer (20:20).
8. He preached to everyone, both Jews and Greeks (20:21).
9. He submitted to the guidance of the Spirit, even when he did not know what would happen, except chains and tribulations (20:22,23).
10. He was not unsettled by sufferings, nor did he count his life dear to himself, in order to finish the race with joy and the ministry which he received from the Lord Jesus (20:24; 21:13). This shows his total loyalty to Christ.
11. He was faithful to God and had a clear conscience (20:26).
12. He cared about the believers' faith in the future, when he could no longer be with them, and so he earnestly exhorted the elders to shepherd the church of God (20:28-31).

13. He warned the believers night and day against spiritual danger (20:31). He was persistent and diligent.

14. He did not take advantage of the believers, but worked hard to support himself, his coworkers, and the needy (20:33-35).

2. Paul's closeness with the believers everywhere truly came to the fore as he bade farewell to them on his way to Jerusalem. Paul as well as the believers knew that suffering awaited him in Jerusalem, and that they probably would never see him again. Luke's vivid descriptions of the events as well as his recording of Paul's words bring out a touching, and even heart-wrenching, sentiment. Some of the detailed phrases that indicate this sentiment are "wept freely" (20:37); "after we had torn ourselves away" (21:1NIV), "pleaded with him" (21:12), and "breaking my heart" (21:13).

Segment Analysis

1. To encourage the believers there (20:2)
2. Knowing that he would be harmed by the Jews if he traveled by sea, Paul decided to return through Macedonia instead of sailing directly to Asia.
3. They made contributions for the brethren in Jerusalem who were in need.
4. These few brethren were probably representatives from their respective churches who had been sent to accompany Paul to Jerusalem to deliver the gifts from these churches.
5. Raising Eutychus from the dead (20:9-12)
6. Paul was leaving the next day, and he probably was never going to see the brethren in Troas again (cf. 20:25). He loved them dearly, so he wanted to spend as much time with them as he could to encourage them for the last time.
7. They were greatly comforted (12). Paul's lengthy encouragement, their fellowship together, and the miraculous resurrection of Eutychus must have greatly strengthened the believers.
- 8a. He was in a hurry to go to Jerusalem, hoping to be there by the Day of Pentecost (20:16). A likely reason was that he wanted to bring to Jerusalem the gifts from the churches overseas as soon as possible.
9. See 20:19-21.
- 10a. Paul proclaimed God's word to the people publicly as well as from house to house.
- 10b. As shepherds of God's flock, we need to minister to the needs of the congregation from the pulpit in the form of sermons or seminars. In addition to that, we should cater to the needs of each individual believer

on a personal level. This can be done through house-to-house visitations as well as personal counseling and encouragement.

- 11a. Sufferings and even death did not bother him, as long as he could accomplish the ministry that the Lord Jesus had entrusted to him.
12. Soon, the church would have to face persecutions from the outside and apostasy from the inside (29-30). All these things will become a great trial for the shepherds of the flock. Therefore, they must be fully aware of the danger that lay ahead, guard the believers, and remember the examples left by Paul as an encouragement.
- 13b. The flock that we shepherd is the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood (20:28). God has entrusted the very people whom He had purchased to the shepherds of the church. This is a serious and noble responsibility, and we ought to carry out our commission wholeheartedly, for we are directly accountable to God. If we care for the flock of God willingly and diligently, we will receive the crown of glory when the Chief Shepherd appears (1Pet 5:1-4).
15. God's word of grace is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among those who are sanctified. God's word proceeds from God Himself, and is able to give us spiritual life (Mt 4:4; Jn 6:63; Jas 1:21). It gives us the wisdom of salvation, showing us how to walk in the way of God through faith in Jesus Christ (2Tim 3:15; Rom 10:17). It also purifies and strengthens us so that we become spiritually fit for the kingdom of God (1Pet 1:22; 2Tim 3:16-17; Ps 119:9).
17. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem (20:4).
18. These disciples had probably been revealed by the Spirit that tribulation awaited Paul in Jerusalem. So they told Paul not to go there. Their advice was based on what they had been revealed, but the text does not say that the Holy Spirit had instructed them to stop Paul from going forward. We know that from the very start, Paul's resolve to go to Jerusalem was by the movement of the Spirit, not of his own will (19:21; 20:22). The Holy Spirit would not give contradictory revelations to different individuals. This leads us to the conclusion that the disciples in Tyre had only been told by the Spirit about the dangers that faced Paul, but their words to Paul came from sincere concern for Paul's safety rather than from any explicit instructions of the Holy Spirit.
- 19a. Paul wanted to go Jerusalem not for his own sake. Neither was he indifferent to the feelings of those who cared about him. In fact, he felt very hurt to see them weep for him (21:13). But he still had to carry out the will of God, knowing that the sufferings that awaited him were for the name of the Lord Jesus. He expected that the Lord had a good purpose for him, and that he would eventually testify for the Lord in Rome (19:21). That is why, as difficult as it was for him to see the sorrow

of those who loved him, he chose to place the divine will above their advice.

Lesson 30

Observation

Outline

Paul Takes Part in Purification Rites (21:17-26)

A Mob Tries to Kill Paul (21:27-31)

Paul Put under Roman Custody (21:32-40)

Key Words/Phrases

Jews, Gentiles, "the people, the law, and this place," all the city was disturbed, commander

General Analysis

- 1a. Some of the Jews believed that Paul was teaching other Jews to turn away from the Mosaic law (cf. 21:21). Perhaps they were offended that Paul preached to the Gentiles (even though the apostle Peter had received a revelation from God to do so [cf. Acts 10:34-36]). Perhaps they misunderstood Paul's message that one cannot be justified by the law of Moses (cf. 13:39). Also, because the news about Paul had traveled great distances, perhaps what they heard was not what Paul had actually said. Nevertheless, people are inclined to believe the worst.

Later, some Jews claimed that Paul had brought Greeks into the temple area and therefore defiled the holy place. They had assumed that Paul had brought Trophimus the Ephesian into the temple because they were seen together in the city (cf. 21:28-29). Because of their preconception about Paul, they made false assumptions. Also, it's possible that these Jews simply made up false allegations and tried to back up their claim.

Segment Analysis

2. The church elders were worried that people had misunderstood that Paul taught the Jews to forsake the Mosaic law, and that his arrival would stir people up against the church. The ensuing mob (30-31) proved the validity of their concerns.
3. They heard rumors that Paul had been teaching the Jews to forsake the Mosaic law (21,28). In their eyes, Paul was more so a traitor because he used to be a zealot for the law and persecuted Christians for heresy.

Nothing in Acts or in Paul's epistles tells us that Paul advocated the Jews to abandon the Mosaic law. The elders knew that the rumors about Paul

were false (cf. 24), but it was important for Paul to personally dispel the misconception through his actions in Jerusalem. He complied with the elders' suggestion to appease the Jews. Also, he did not bring Trophimus, a Gentile, into the Jewish temple (29). His actions show that he respected Jewish traditions.

- 4a. family relationships; food; formal/informal language; format of wedding; ancestor worship; Halloween; New Year; Christmas; Thanksgiving
- 4b. Some traditions are against biblical teachings (ancestor worship, Halloween, etc.); we must resolve to turn away from those practices. However, it is not necessary to abandon the traditions that do not lead us astray from the truth, but neither should we insist others to continue to practice the traditions that have nothing to do with salvation.
5. With our freedom in Christ, human traditions become secondary to our salvation. We are saved by faith, not by obeying laws and regulations. Nevertheless, Paul respected the Jewish traditions. He would not abuse his freedom if it would cause a brother to stumble (Rom 14:20-21).
6. Peter's mistake was not in following Jewish customs, but in misguiding the Gentile believers by his hypocrisy. Had Paul not corrected Peter openly, Peter's action of disassociating with the Gentiles would have been understood by the Gentiles to mean that they were inferior to Jewish Christians because they did not conform to Jewish customs. This implicit message would have contradicted the gospel of grace.

Paul's situation, however, was very different. His compliance to the purification rites had nothing to do with the church's stance on the Gentile believers. For the church had already written to the Gentile believers that they did not need to observe Jewish customs (25). What Paul did was to calm an unnecessary hostility from the Jews; it did not send any misleading message that Gentiles needed to follow Jewish customs. It also did not in any way compromise the Christian doctrine on salvation.
- 7a. Hagar (Gen 16:6-9); Isaac (Gen 26:12-22); Hosea (Hos 1:2-3; 3:1-2); Jesus (Lk 2:49-51; Jn 2:3-9)
- 7b. In matters of opinion or preference, Paul teaches that the strong should bear with the weak (Rom 15:1). In this case, to appease the Jews, Paul submitted to the purification rites.

However, if you feel that the church has erred in doctrines related to salvation, trust that God always reveals the truth to more than one worker (Amos 3:7). Bring up the issue to church ministers, and submit to the decision of the church and of the Holy Spirit (as was done with the issue of circumcising Gentile members; cf. Acts 15:1-31).

Even if we are proven right in the end, the act of submission itself is valuable in God's eyes. It would be to our own detriment if we depart from the church over a disagreement; a branch broken off from the tree cannot survive on its own. For example, Joshua and Caleb submitted and stayed with the Israelites, even though they alone had told the truth about the land of Canaan. Instead, we should pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal to the church workers what is right. We must put our faith in God to guide us in the truth.

8. The Jews from Asia (27). These were probably the same people as those who persecuted Paul during his missionary work.
9. 14:5, 19; 17:5; 18:12. The unbelieving Jews were jealous of Paul for converting many Jews to Christianity. They accused the apostles before the Roman officials, and sometimes took the law into their own hands by stoning the apostles.
10. In both cases, a few Jews used false witnesses to stir up a crowd against the apostles (cf. 7:11; 21:27). They seized both Stephen and Paul and accused them of defiling the temple and overturning the law of Moses (cf. 7:13-14; 21:21,28). However, whereas Stephen was martyred for speaking the truth, Paul's life was spared to continue the ministry. It is interesting to note that Paul was persecuted the same way he had persecuted Stephen (cf. 7:60). As Jesus said, "With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Mk 4:24).
11. It was easier to remove the cause of the riot than to deal with the mob. Also, he thought Paul was a wanted murderer (cf. 21:38).
12. God allowed Paul to be persecuted, but spared his life because Paul's ministry was not yet finished. This time, God arranged the Roman chief captain to snatch Paul from danger.
- 14a. Paul spoke in the Jewish language to demonstrate that he was their brother, and that he respected Jewish language and traditions. He also honored the crowd by addressing them as "brethren and fathers" (22:1). Because Paul spoke wisely, his words calmed down the crowd (22:2).

Lesson 31

Observation

Outline

- Paul before his conversion (22:1-5)
- Paul confronted by Jesus (22:6-10)
- Paul after his conversion (22:11-21)

Key Words/Phrases

Jew, zealous, persecuted, “Who are you, Lord?” Jesus of Nazareth, “What shall I do, Lord?”, witness, testimony

General Analysis

- 1a. Acts 9:1-30; 22:1-21; 26:2-23; Gal 1:13-24
- Except for the Acts 9:1-13 (which was probably transcribed from Paul’s testimony), all of these passages are Paul’s first-person perspective of his conversion.
- 1b. Paul was converted directly by the voice of God. He was a living testimony of the life-changing power of Jesus Christ. One can imagine that every time Paul spoke to a new crowd, he was compelled to testify his conversion. For the rest of his life, he did not forget how Jesus Christ had saved him. (cf. 1Cor 15:9-10; 1Tim 1:13-16).
2. Paul had been zealous for the law. He believed that he was acting on God’s behalf when he persecuted the Christians (cf. 22:3-4). After he was converted, he applied the same zeal to preach Jesus Christ (cf. 2Cor 11:2), so much so that people thought him mad (cf. Acts 26:24; 1Cor 4:10).

4a.

Command	Reason
“Arise and go into Damascus” (22:10).	“There you will be told things which are appointed for you to do” (22:10).
“Receive your sight” (22:13).	“The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know his will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of his mouth. For you will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard” (22:14-15).
“Arise and be baptized” (22:16).	“Wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (22:16).
“Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly” (22:18).	“They will not receive your testimony concerning me” (22:18).
“Depart” (22:21).	“I will send you far from here to the Gentiles” (22:21).

- 4b. Only Jesus knows our future and the people we will meet. From the beginning of Paul’s conversion, Jesus had laid out a “road map” for him: to preach to the Gentiles. Sometimes God sends us where we long to go

(like Paul going to Rome [cf. Acts 23:11; Rom 1:11-13]). Sometimes He sends us somewhere we have not planned to go (cf. Acts 8:29; 16:6-8; 2Cor 1:15-16, 23). Our duty is to obey the Holy Spirit, trusting that He will send us to where we are needed the most.

Segment Analysis

1. Paul knew his audience, and knew the best way to make them listen. Our background might help us establish a common ground with the person we are talking to. We can gradually lead the conversation to Jesus Christ and His true gospel, as Paul did.
- 2a. Paul was zealous in doing what he believed was right. He thought he was acting on God’s behalf, having received authority from the high priest (cf. 22:5). He was so determined that no one could slow him down or change his mind. No one, that is, except God.
- 3a. “Who are you, Lord?” (22:8); “What shall I do, Lord?” (22:10)
- 4a.

The One Called	The Calling	The Response	The Promise
Abraham	“Get out of your country ... to a land that I will show you” (Gen 12:1).	“So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him” (Gen 12:4).	“To your descendants I will give this land” (Gen 12:7).
Samuel	“Samuel!” (1 Sam 3:4, 6, 8, 10)	“Here I am” (1 Sam 3:4); “Speak, for your servant hears” (1 Sam 3:10).	“I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle” (1Sam 3:11).
Isaiah	“Whom shall I send?” (Isa 6:8)	“Here am I. Send me” (Isa 6:8).	“So the holy seed shall be its stump” (Isa 6:13).
Peter and Andrew	“Follow me” (Mk 1:17).	“They immediately left their nets and followed Him” (Mk 1:18)	“I will make you become fishers of men” (Mk 1:17).

6. Through baptism, we call on the name of the Lord, and our sins are washed away (see also Acts 2:38).
7. Paul thought that his conversion from a former persecutor to a preacher of Jesus Christ was such a strong testimony that it would convince the Jews to believe in the Lord. But just as the Lord had predicted, the Jews in Jerusalem refused to accept his testimony.

Lesson 32

Observation

Outline

- The crowd rejects Paul's words (22:22-23)
- Paul reveals his Roman citizenship (22:24-29)
- Paul causes an uproar in the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:11)
- The Jews plot to kill Paul (23:12-22)

Key Words/Phrases

lawful

General Analysis

1. Both Paul and Jesus were being judged for preaching the gospel, having been sent by God. Both caused an uproar in the council by making a simple but true declaration (when Jesus proclaimed that he is the Christ [Mt 26:64], and when Paul spoke of his hope in the resurrection [Acts 23:6]). Jesus was forsaken by everyone. The members of the Sanhedrin were united in their condemnation of Jesus. He died on the cross alone. In contrast, God sent help to Paul because it was not yet time for him to be martyred for the gospel. The Pharisees accepted Paul due to their shared background and beliefs. The Roman commander performed his duties and protected Paul from harm.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. The crowd rioted when Paul said that God had sent him to the Gentiles. They were offended that the gospel was also given to the Gentiles; it implied that the Jews were not the only chosen people.
- 1b. Many people today are offended that God saves the "good people" and "sinners" alike; they judge whether or not another person can be saved. However, no one deserves to be saved, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). We are saved by God's mercy, through faith in Jesus Christ.

2. It must have been a strange sight to the commander to see Paul addressing this huge crowd in a foreign language (Hebrew/Aramaic) and the crowd in attention, when suddenly, they erupt into a riot. When it was explained to him, he must have thought it absurd. The commander was unfamiliar with Jewish customs and Christian beliefs. He considered that it had to do with Jewish law (cf. 23:29), which to him was a local problem.
3. Clearly, the law carried weight in the land. The soldiers responded swiftly when they discovered that they had violated the civil rights of a Roman citizen (Paul): "Immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him." Perhaps they were trained to obey the law, or they were afraid that they would be punished for their mistake.
4. The Roman soldiers obeyed the law, while the members of the Sanhedrin violated the law, which they claimed to uphold. In spite of Jesus' harsh warning, (cf. Mt 23:2-36; Mk 12:38-40), the high priest, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees continued to be hypocrites. Like Paul said, "You sit to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law" (23:3).
- 5a. Jesus summarizes the commandments in Matthew 22:37-40. He explains the spirit of the law in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). The Bible gives many practical advice on how to apply Christian principles into our everyday lives (Rom 12:9-21; Eph 4:25-32; 5:22-6:9; Col 3; Jas 2:5).
- 5b. Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven (Jn 14:2-4); The Holy Spirit is our counselor (Jn 14:23-26); the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom is revealed to us (Mk 4:11); triumph over sin and death (1Cor 15:55-56)
- 5b. Be a slave to righteousness (Rom 6:19); offer our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1); take care of the Lord's sheep (Jn 21:15-17); preach the gospel (Acts 1:8)
7. Paul was struck after he said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (23:1). The high priest was offended that someone accused of serious crimes could claim a clear conscience. Or, perhaps, he was convicted of his own sin by Paul's words.
8. Paul was apologizing for unknowingly rebuking the high priest. At the same time, he might be implying that the high priest had done worse by deliberately violating the law by ordering that Paul be struck. More serious, the high priest and the whole Sanhedrin had committed a greater sin when they opposed the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were well versed in the Old Testament and Jesus' message, but they stubbornly rejected the truth. "For if we sin willfully after we have

received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (Heb 10:26).

9. Jesus teaches us to “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Mt 10:16). He used the most effective method to address the issue. Paul was making an essentially true claim: he was a Pharisee, and he was preaching a resurrected Jesus. Framed in these terms, he immediately gained the Pharisees as allies, who took it upon themselves to argue it out with the Sadducees. The Pharisees said, “Let us not fight against God” (23:9), which echoes Gamaliel’s earlier advice to the Sanhedrin (cf. 5:38-39). However, Paul’s strategy might have worked too well; the argument between the Pharisees and the Sadducees became so fierce, that Paul was almost “pulled to pieces” (23:10).
- 10a. Paul barely survived the persecution in the Sanhedrin. While in custody, perhaps he had lost a sense of direction, and was disappointed at how the gospel was rejected. Therefore, the Lord appeared to him to encourage him to “be of good cheer” and face the task ahead. Jesus affirmed Paul’s testimony about Him in Jerusalem. Furthermore, He gave Paul a clear direction of his task ahead (to “bear witness at Rome”), promising him that he would be freed from his current imprisonment. Paul might have been disappointed that his two public sermons in Jerusalem had ended in chaos, and now he was imprisoned.
- 10b. The apostles rejoiced because they were “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41). In prison, Paul rejoiced and encouraged the members to do the same (Php 3:1; 4:4). “Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1Pet 4:13-14).
11. The commander must now be certain that these Jews are crazy in their endless and violent disputes. Previously, it was over the one word “Gentiles.” Now it was over the one word “resurrection.” Nevertheless he faithfully carried out his duties to keep the peace and to protect Paul from the Jews.
12. When we meet a non-Christian with a good heart, we must thank God for His mercy; in spite of the fact that sin had entered into the world, God put kindness into those who still do not know Him. The best way to show your gratitude to your benefactors is to bring them to Christ.

Lesson 33

Observation

Outline

Paul Sent to Caesarea by Night (23:23-35)

Before Felix (24:1-27)

Tertullus’ accusations (1-9)

Paul’s defense (10-21)

Paul’s preaching to Felix (22-27)

Before Festus (25:1-12)

The Jews’ accusations (1-7)

Paul’s defense (8)

Paul’s appeal to Caesar (10-12)

Key Words/Phrases

Felix, “had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains,” Tertullus, a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, tried to profane the temple, the Way, resurrection of the dead, strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men, bring alms and offerings to my nation, heard him concerning the faith in Christ, Felix was afraid, favor, Festus, complaints...which they could not prove, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all,” “I appeal to Caesar.”

General Analysis

1. Felix left Paul in prison in order to please the Jews, even though he knew that Paul was innocent (24:27). Festus also wanted to do the Jews a favor, and asked Paul if he was willing to be tried in Jerusalem, even though he knew that Paul should be tried at a Roman court, not in the Jewish council (25:9-10).

Segment Analysis

- 1a. According to the commander himself, he rescued Paul from those who conspired to kill Paul because Paul was a Roman citizen (23:27). The commander was faithful to his duty of guarding his prisoner, as can be seen by the extra effort he put in to ensure Paul’s safety.
- 1b. Behind the commander’s protection was the Lord’s protection. Before this, the Lord had assured Paul that he would finally bear witness for Christ in Rome. So the Lord Himself was watching over Paul every step of the way and did not allow those who hated Paul to harm him.
2. In his view, none of the things that were charge against Paul was deserving of death or chains (23:29).
3. Both Tertullus and Paul complimented the governor in their opening remarks. Tertullus’ words were long-winded flatteries. Words such as “through you we enjoy great peace” and “we accept it always... with all thankfulness” couldn’t be further from the truth (See Did You Know 5).

Tertullus was obviously appealing to Felix's vanity. His flatteries, which were outright lies, certainly say much about the nature of his charges against Paul.

On the contrary, Paul did not try to flatter the governor. He simply addressed the governor politely before stating his defense. Instead of counter-attacking his accusers, he presented the facts, which made it obvious that the charges against him were unfounded.

4. Because their charges were not grounded in the truth, they had to resort to eloquence and flatteries to make their case.
5.
 1. Creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world (24:5).
 2. Ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (24:5).
 3. Tried to profane the temple (24:6).

These accusations portrayed Paul as not only a capital offender against the Jewish religion, but also an insurrectionist threatening the peace of the Roman empire. The high priest and elders probably hoped that Felix would execute Paul as another insurrectionist.

6.
 1. It had been only 12 days since he went up to Jerusalem to worship (24:11). There was no way for him to form a mob in such a short period of time
 2. The accusers could not cite any incidents where Paul had disputed with anyone or incited the crowd (24:12).
 3. The accusers could not prove their accusations (24:12).
 4. He worshiped God according to the Way, which the accusers called a sect. He believed in the Law and in the Prophets, and hoped in the resurrection of the dead just as their accusers believed. Because of his faith, he always strove to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. Paul explained that he was serving God according to the way of Jesus Christ and shared in the same hope as that of the Jews. Christianity was not aimed at creating any political uprising. He was not a troublemaker, but he aimed to be right with God and with all men.
 5. He came to Jerusalem to bring alms and offerings to his nation (24:17), not instigate a riot. The Christian faith was one of giving and sharing.
 6. Paul had actually been purified according to the law when he went into the temple. The Jews from Asia, who incited the whole city against Paul (Acts 21:27-30), did not see Paul with a mob nor with tumult (24:19). They did not even come forward to testify because their accusations were unfounded (24:20).

7. The real reason that the Jews wanted to put away Paul was his belief in the resurrection of the dead (24:21)—a central belief of the Christian faith that had been first fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ the First Fruit.

7. He adjourned the proceedings and claimed that he would make a decision when the Roman commander arrived. But he never did what he said he would do.
- 8a. Paul preached to Felix concerning his faith in Christ (24). He took the opportunity to speak about righteousness, self-control and judgment (25), teachings that Felix needed the most considering his sexual immorality, greed, and cruelty.
- 8b. Although Paul was in prison, he continued to make use of every opportunity to preach. In this case, he even preached to the cruel and immoral governor. He was also not afraid to speak the truth and point out the mistakes of Felix, who had the power to detain or release him.
- 9a. He was afraid (25). He knew how sinful he was before God and probably dreaded God's final judgment.
- 9b. Sometimes, we feel afraid because God's word has exposed our sins and we fear God's judgment. However, deep in our hearts, we may not sincerely want to repent of our sins, and we may not truly believe in God with faith. Then the words that we hear would have little effect in us, except perhaps giving us a temporary scare. Also, we may fail to change because we are reluctant to give up the pleasures of sin and submit to God's command.
10. He hoped that Paul would bribe him to secure his release (26).
11. Felix kept Paul in prison despite Paul's innocence because he wanted to do the Jews a favor. He was so selfish that he sacrificed an innocent man's freedom for his own gain.
- 12a. He was there for two long years (27).
13. They asked Felix to do them a favor by summoning Paul to Jerusalem to be tried there. They hoped to set an ambush along the way and murder Paul (3).
14. Paul's accusers brought many serious complaints against him, but they could not prove any of it because they didn't have any evidence and because their accusations were false (7). Inferring from Paul's defense, the accusations had to do with transgression against both Roman and Jewish laws as well as defiling the temple.
15. He proclaimed his innocence towards the law, the Jews, the temple, and Caesar (8). Paul was willing to be punished if he were indeed guilty. But because Paul did not commit any crimes, Festus had no right to deliver him into the hands of the Jews (11).

16. By this time, it was clear that Festus, like Felix before him, was not going to uphold justice. These governors wanted to please the Jews more than they cared about Paul's fate. Paul also realized that the Jews would harm him if he was released. Thus, he felt that he had no other option except to appeal to Caesar (28:19). By appealing to Caesar, he could still hope for a release. More importantly it would allow him to testify for Christ in Rome, as the Lord had told him he would.
17. From Luke's recordings of Paul's detention and trials, the reader can see for himself that Paul was innocent and that the allegations against him by the murderous Jews were either outright false or distortions of the Christian faith. The wrong motives of the governors, which led to Paul's prolonged imprisonment, further proved that Paul was an innocent victim. All in all, Luke's account allowed his reader to discern for himself that the Christian faith which Paul championed and suffered for was honorable and trustworthy.

Lesson 34

Observation

Outline

- Festus Briefs King Agrippa (25:13-22)
- Festus Presents Paul to Agrippa (25:23-27)
- Paul's Defense (26:1-23)
 - His past (1-11)
 - His conversion and mission (12-18)
 - His obedience to God's calling (19-23)
- Festus' and Agrippa's Response and Paul's Reply (26:24-29)
- King Agrippa's Conclusion (26:30-32)

Key Words/Phrases

Agrippa, Festus, "he had committed nothing deserving of death," hope of the promise, Jesus of Nazareth, open their eyes, from darkness to light, forgiveness of sins, inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith, "I was not disobedient," Christ would suffer, the first to rise from the dead, proclaim light, "This man might have been set free."

General Analysis

1. Twice (25:25; 26:31)

Segment Analysis

- 1a. Festus did not know how to try Paul's case because the issues concerned were not civil matters but matters of the Jewish religion. Being unfamiliar with Judaism and Christianity (25:19-20), he did not know how to present this case to Caesar. Not only so, the accusers could not prove the charges they brought against Paul (25:7). This made the case very shaky.
- 1b. Since Agrippa was an expert in Jewish customs, he was probably the best person to help Festus examine Paul's case, since the case was over matters of the Jewish religion.
2. Festus was at least honest about his ignorance and asked for Agrippa's advice. He didn't try to come to a verdict or write up some false charges. He responsibly took the time to understand more about the nature of the charge against Paul. In the same way, we do not need to be hasty in making a judgment on matters we know little about in order to cover up our ignorance. To deal with the matter fairly, we ought to understand the issue more thoroughly before acting on it.
- 3a. The resurrection of the dead (26:6-8, 23; cf. Dan 12:2,3,13).
- 3b. Upon his conversion, Paul came to know that Jesus Christ was the Savior, the first to rise from the dead (26:23). It is through Christ and His resurrection that the light of salvation would come to the Jews and the Gentiles. It is also through Christ that the people of God will rise to eternal life on the last day (cf. 1Cor 15:22, 47-49).
4.
 1. Their eyes are opened—Believers are given the spiritual eyesight to see their need of salvation and to know Christ as their Savior (1Jn 5:20).
 2. They are turned from darkness to light—Believers are delivered from a lifestyle of sin and brought into a new life of holiness (Eph 5:8-9).
 3. They are turned from the power of Satan to God—Believers are delivered from the control of Satan and brought into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col 1:13). Satan cannot harm them if they keep themselves within the love of God (1Jn 5:18-19).
 4. They receive the forgiveness of sins—Through baptism into Christ, their sins are washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16). By the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, believers are made guilt-free before God (Rom 3:23-26).
 5. They receive an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ—Believers are heirs of eternal life and the glorious riches, which they will receive in God's eternal kingdom (1Pet 1:3-5). God

gives them the Holy Spirit as a deposit that guarantees this inheritance (Eph 1:13-14; Rom 8:15-17; 2Cor 4:5)

- 5a. His goal was to obey God's calling to be the witness and minister of the gospel of Christ and bring the gospel to the Gentiles (16-19; Acts 9:15).
- 6a. He believed that it was God who had helped him all this time and enabled him to witness for Christ. To him, his imprisonment and trial was an opportunity from God to witness for Him. He did not have any bitter complaint against God but gave God thanks for preserving him while in prison.
- 6b. We can look at a situation from two angles. We can either feel that we are suffering so much and God doesn't care, or we can thank God and use the opportunity to bring glory to His name. What we can learn from Paul is that he was thankful in every circumstance and he made the best use of every opportunity to accomplish his mission.
- 7a. He thought that Paul was mad because of his great education. Again, Festus showed his ignorance in the matter. He probably didn't understand what Paul was saying at all!
- 7b. Some unbelievers view preachers of the gospel as fanatics. They do not try to understand the message of the preaching, but simply make some cursory judgment about the preacher and dismiss the preaching completely. Or they may reject the testimonies about miracles of God and conclude that they are absurd.
- 8a. Like the Lord Jesus, Paul was so devoted to his calling that people thought that he was mad (cf. Mk 3:20-21). His complete transformation after conversion and unwavering dedication was incomprehensible for Felix.
- 8b. We may be viewed as strange because of our convictions and Christ-centered goals in life. But we just need to remember that we are certainly not the first to be thus viewed. As long as we are obedient to God's calling, we do not need to let others' view of us deter us from our commitment.
- 9a. He wished that all of them would become Christians like him except not be in chains as he was.
- 9b. Paul made use of every opportunity to preach—even when he was standing in trial. He loved everyone dearly and hoped that they could be saved. Today, we can also reach out to the lost souls around us even when we are suffering. May we be filled with compassion to see the dire spiritual need of the unsaved.
- 10a. Agrippa, to maintain his dignity in public, did not want to answer Paul directly. He held himself back from accepting the gospel even though it was the truth.

- 10b. Some people are able to see the truth of the gospel, but they resist the gospel and refuse to make a commitment to Christ. It is either because they do not want to give up their sinful lifestyle or they do not want to appear "weak" by acknowledging their need of God. So they find some excuse to avoid making a decision on whether to give their lives to Christ.
11. He concluded that Paul was innocent and that he could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar (32).
12. If Paul did not appeal to Caesar, King Agrippa would not have been brought in to try his case in the first place. Secondly, the Jews were very much against setting Paul free, and if Paul had been set free without the protection of the Roman army he could have been killed by the Jews who had plotted against him. So Paul was compelled to appeal to Caesar (28:19). Most importantly, his appeal was a response to God's vision to him (23:11) that he would bear witness for the Lord at Rome.

Lesson 35

Observation

Outline

From Caesarea to Fair Havens (27:1-8)
Paul's Advice vs. the Majority's Advice (27:9-12)
Struck by A Tempest (27:13-20)
Paul Relays God's Promise (27:21-26)
The Sailors' Attempt to Escape (27:27-32)
Paul's Encouragement (27:33-38)
Shipwreck at Malta (27:39-44)
Paul's Ministry at Malta (28:1-10)
Arriving at Rome (28:11-16)

Key Words/Phrases

"I urge you to take heart"; "There will be no loss of life among you"; "Do not be afraid"; "You must be brought before Caesar"; "God has granted you all those who sail with you"; they were all encouraged; they all escaped safely to land; suffered no harm; healed; he thanked God and took courage.

General Analysis

1. 1. He forewarned the centurion about a possible disaster (27:9).
2. He relayed God's promise to the people in their despair (27:20-25).

3. He helped preserve lives by cautioning the centurion about the sailors' attempt to escape (27:30-32).
4. He encouraged the people to take nourishment for their survival (27:33-36).
5. He healed Publius' sick father and others on Malta (28:8-9).

Segment Analysis

1. Luke (the author), Aristarchus, Julius the centurion and his regiment and some other prisoners (27:1-2).
2. He advised him not to sail any further as he perceived that the voyage would endanger their lives and the ship.
- 3a. The centurion probably chose to listen to the advice of the helmsmen and the owner of the ship because they were the experts in sailing. Also, it was quite inconvenient to winter at Fair Havens, and the majority of the passengers was against staying there (12).
- 3b. Decisions based on expert opinion, majority rule, or personal convenience are not always right. We need to always seek God's guidance and not base our decisions solely on the common standards of this world.
5. They secured the skiff; they used cables to undergird the ship; they lightened the ship by throwing some of the cargo overboard; on the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard; they abstained from food because they had no appetite.
All their efforts were useless against the forces of nature and they lost all hope of being saved.
- 7a. The promise of God to Paul through an angel assured him that he and everyone on board would be protected. In response, Paul showed an unwavering trust in God's promise.
- 7b. We have also received many promises from God today. Although God does not always speak to us in a vision to promise us deliverance from our trouble, He has given us many wonderful promises in the Scripture, including peace in Him in the midst of afflictions (Jn 16:33), answer to our prayers (Mk 11:24; Jn 16:24), His continual providence (Mt 6:33; Heb 13:5; Rom 8:28,32), His strengthening and keeping (1Pet 5:10), the crown of life (Jas 1:12), the hope of resurrection (Rom 8:18-21; 1Thess 4:13-17), and reward in heaven (Mt 5:12). By trusting fully in God's promise with faith, we can also be confident even in despair and adversity. For we know that God is faithful to His promises, and He will not forsake us.
8. If we have a sense of commission from the Lord to share the gospel with everyone around us, and if we have the great love that Paul had, we will

want to reach out to others regardless of our circumstance. If we have been blessed with God's guidance and assurance, we also ought to share this blessing with others (cf. 2Cor 9:8-11). Besides, having the strength, peace, and joy from God in our own adversity can serve as the best living testimony. When others see our calm and confidence in God, they will be attracted to Him.

- 9a. From what Paul did throughout the journey, we see that he loved his fellow passengers and wanted to turn them to God. So God decided to preserve the life of everyone on board so as to give Paul the opportunity to share with them his faith in Christ. Because of Paul's ministry, the people came to know the God that Paul served.
- 9b. May God also grant us the people we meet in our lives so we may share with them the gospel of Christ and serve them for Christ's sake.
- 10a. He called God "the God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (27:23).
- 10b.
 1. We belong to God. We are His treasured possession, whom He has purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28; 1Cor 6:20; Eph 1:14; 1Pet 2:9-10). Since we belong to God, we are under His special protection (Deut 32:9-10; Rom 8:31-39; 1Jn 5:18-19). We ought to live as people of God, and dedicate ourselves to carry out His will (Rom 6:11-14; 12:12; Col 3:12; 1Pet 1:14-16).
 2. We serve God. God is our Lord and Master because we belong to Him. We need to understand His purpose for us in our lives and make it the reason to live (2Cor 5:14-15; cf. Acts 20:24). Also, as servants, we owe everything to God, and do not deserve anything from God in return. Our service to God is only our duty, so we ought to do His work thankfully and humbly (Lk 17:7-10).
11. We don't know whether the centurion listened to Paul this time simply because Paul's advice made sense to him or because he had gained a deeper respect for Paul. But it is clear that by this time, everyone knew that Paul's words were trustworthy, for they met with this disaster because they did not heed Paul's warning the first time (27:21). Not only so, they could see that God was with Paul and gave him courage (27:21-26).
- 12a.
 1. He was confident that God would not fail to keep His promise. That's why he assured them that "not a hair will fall from the head of any of you" (34), and encouraged them to eat something.
 2. His faith was also evident in his thanksgiving to God (27:35). Giving thanks to God in the middle of a storm is certainly not easy. But because Paul knew that God always had a good purpose, even in times of trouble, he was able to show his gratitude to God.

- 12b. When the people saw Paul's faith and heard his words of encouragement, they were also encouraged and finally took some food (27:36).
- 12c. If we truly believe that God watches over us even in our afflictions, our actions will show it. We will not fear, but will remain calm. We will not despair, but will be hopeful. We will not be depressed, but will be thankful. Faith in God makes us a source of encouragement and stability to those around us.
13. 1. God protected Paul from harm through the centurion (27:42-43).
2. Everyone made it to shore safely, as God had promised (27:44).
14. The natives on the island showed them "unusual kindness" (28:2). Publius, one of their leading citizens, received them and entertained them courteously for three days (7). The islanders also honored them in many ways, and even provided them with necessities when they departed (10).
15. 1. God protected Paul even though he was bitten by a viper (This was a fulfillment of the the Lord's promise in Mk 16:18).
2. Through Paul, God healed Publius' father and everyone on the island who had diseases.
- 16a. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage because they came all the way to see Paul as soon as they heard of his arrival (28:15). It must have been very encouraging for Paul to see these faithful and loving believers on arriving in Italy, which was a foreign soil. He thanked God probably because of the warm reception he received as well as seeing how God was working in these believers to bear such spiritual fruits.
17. Whereas the other prisoners were delivered to the captain of the guard, Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him (28:16).

Lesson 36

Observation

Outline

- Calling together the Jewish Leaders (28:17-22)
- Witnessing to the Jewish Leaders (28:23-24)
- Solemn Declaration (28:25-29)
- Witnessing and Teaching without Hindrance (28:30-31)

Key Words/Phrases

"For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain"; it is spoken against everywhere; explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God; persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets; from morning till evening; did not agree; "The salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"; great dispute among themselves; received all who came to him; preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence; no one forbidding

General Analysis

1. At the beginning of Acts, the Lord promised the apostles that they would be His witnesses from Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (1:8). By the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles did bring the good news of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem all the way to the remotest regions of the earth. At the end of Acts, we see the fruition of the great commission in the apostolic era, although this commission was to be continued by believers in succeeding generations until the Lord comes again.

Segment Analysis

- 1a. He gathered them to make clear to them that he did not appeal to Caesar because he had something against his own people but because he had no choice but to defend himself from false accusations.
He did not want them to only hear one side of the story and allow prejudice to be built up against the gospel message and against him. If they had already been brainwashed by the Jews from Judea, they would have opposed Paul's ministry at Rome as well.
- 1b. Whenever people have misunderstanding about us or our beliefs, we do not need to be afraid to communicate to them and clarify the misunderstanding. By establishing a channel of communication, we can avoid a lot of unnecessary conflict and opposition.
2. Unlike the murderous leaders in Jerusalem, they were quite open-minded and were willing to hear what Paul had to preach (22). Even when they did not all accept Paul's message, they did not try to hinder or suppress the Christian faith. Perhaps their non-confrontational attitude was due to the recent expulsion from Rome (see Did You Know 1).
3. The kingdom of God and the things concerning Jesus (23)
- 4a. Paul explained, solemnly testified, and persuaded. We can see how earnest he was in winning souls. He was so diligent that he spoke from morning till evening (23).

6. Some were persuaded by Paul's words, but some disbelieved (24). As a result there was a great dispute among them (25,29). The gospel can create two extreme reactions and conflict (cf. Mt 10:34-36).
7. The Scriptures are the voice of God's Holy Spirit. Even though the words were spoken or written down by the men of God, they were the inspired words of God given through the Spirit of God (2Pet 1:21; 2Tim 3:16-17).
8. Paul pointed out that they were exactly like what the prophet Isaiah had predicted. They heard the truth, but did not understand nor perceive because their hearts were hardened.
9. Because the Jews did not accept the gospel, the gospel of salvation had been sent to the Gentiles (28).
- 10a. He was undeterred as usual, and continued to preach to those who were willing to listen.
- 10b. We shouldn't stop preaching just because some people reject the gospel. We also shouldn't be discouraged. We ought to continue to preach because there are many others who have not yet heard of the truth.
11. Paul's ministry at Rome was based in his own rented house (30) because he was under house arrest. Even though he could not go out to the people to preach to them as he used to do, he altered his approach and got the truth seekers to come to him at his house!
Paul said that although he is in chains the word of God is not chained (2Tim 2:9). Paul used all means to preach the gospel in every circumstance (1 Cor 9:19-23). He also preached in season and out of season (2Tim 4:2). He even preached in chains and made the gospel known to everyone who came into contact with him (cf. Php 1:12-14).
If we have a strong faith in God and a heart to fulfill the Lord's work, we can witness for the Lord even in the most difficult situations.
12. These words show how the gospel was victorious despite all the oppositions and hardships along the way. Paul the preacher was not defeated, but grew all the more confident because He trusted in God. With no one forbidding Paul preached to as many people as he possibly could.
At the conclusion of the book, the gospel had been brought from the Jewish city of Jerusalem in the east to the Gentile capitol city of the Roman empire in the west, and it was still being preached even as the book of Acts came to a close. This is how the Lord would continue to do what He had begun to do, until the end of the age. Just as the Lord had prophesied, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations before the end will come (Mt 24:14).

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