

ACTS of the APOSTLES

“In the beginning” - Part 1

1:1-11

1. In my former book (*“narrative, history, discourse”*), **Theophilus** (*He’d written the book of Luke for this same person or persons - See Lk 1:3*), **I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach until** [add, **“the day”**] **He was taken up [to heaven], after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen.** (*A note here - one could not aspire to apostleship; you couldn’t apply or “try out” for apostle. You had to be chosen.*)

a. After His suffering, He showed Himself to these men (*“to whom also”*) and gave many convincing proofs (*“a sign, certain proof”*) that He was alive. *He was (“having been”) seen and handled repeatedly by people. Alone, in pairs, in groups, indoors and out - e.g, Lk 24:39-43, Jn 20:27, 1 Cor 15:3-4, 1 Jn 1:1-4.*

b. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God
- On one occasion, while He was [eating] with them, He gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. (Lk 24:49)

* For John baptized with water,

* but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Mtt 3:11, Lk 3:16, Jn 1:33, 1 Cor 12:13, Eph 2:18. *One cannot be saved without this - Rom 8:9, Jn 14:18).*

c. So, when they met together, they asked Him, “Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel (*What should be our focus?*)?”

- He said to them, “It is not for you to know the times or dates that the Father has set by His own authority. (Mtt 24:36)

- But, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Lk 11:13 *Notice the results of the work of the Spirit - a witness for Jesus in our world.*)

d. After He had said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

- “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky?”

- This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.” (1 Tim 3:16, Mtt 16:27, Dan 7:13) *He is Lord!*

Some observations:

He gave them instructions for serving in His absence.

He reminded them that they need Spirit-empowering for ministry.

They/we have a job to do in the present.

ACTS

Key Verse: 1:8

Part 1 - Introduction (1:1-11) "In the Beginning"

Chapter 1

Part 2 - Jerusalem

Chapters 2-8:1

Part 3 - Judea and Samaria

Chapters 8:2-12:25

Part 4 - The World

Chapters 13-28

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“Jerusalem”- Part 2

Chapters 2-7

1. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.

- a. When they arrived they went upstairs to the room where they were staying.
- Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.
 - They all joined together [*“with one mind”*] constantly (*“persevering, continuing steadfast”*) in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
- b. In those days Peter stood up among the believers (*“brothers”*) (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said,
- “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as a guide for those who arrested Jesus - he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.” (Ps 41:9/Jn 13:18, Jn 18:2-3)
 - (With the reward that he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.
 - * Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)
 - * “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it.’
 - * and, ‘May another take his place of leadership (*“oversight”*).’ (Ps 109:8)
 - Therefore it is necessary (*“proper, inevitable”*) to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,
 - * beginning with John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us.
 - * For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” (Lk 24:48, Act 4:33, 1 Cor 15:1-5, Heb 2:4)
- c. So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.
- Then they prayed, “Lord, You know everyone’s heart (1 Sam 16:7, Jer 17:9-10). Show us which of these two You have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.”
 - Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

I. The Lord had returned to the Father and the apostles returned to Jerusalem to wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

- a. Together, their number was about 120.
- b. They were a mixed group. Men, women, apostles and disciples.
- c. They were united and steadfast in prayer.

II. A replacement was chosen to fill the gap left in the 12 by the defection and death of Judas.

- a. Two men were proposed - Joseph and Matthias. They had to have been:
 - With the disciples the whole time Jesus ministered beginning with His baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist until His ascension.
 - They were to become a witness of Jesus' resurrection.
 - They apparently felt that both men fulfilled the requirements and drew/cast the lot to see who was God's choice.

Some thoughts regarding this passage:

Notice that the believers were focused on prayer. They were actively seeking the Lord's will.

The criteria for apostleship:

- They had to be men chosen by the Lord.
- As far as can be seen from scripture, they were all Jews.
- They were eyewitnesses of Jesus' entire earthly ministry.
- They were called to be witnesses of Jesus resurrection (Which limits the field). There are groups today who claim the name "apostle" for their leaders. Biblically, that does not seem at all legitimate.
- Through all of this is the commitment of the early believers to seek the Lord, to know His will and to wait in obedience to His command.

ACTS of the APOSTLES

“Jerusalem”- Part 2 Continued

2. Pentecost - The Witness Begins - Part 1

- a. They were all together on the day of Pentecost, in obedience to Christ’s command (1:4).
- b. The filling of the Spirit (The witness)
 - There was a sound like a violent wind blowing.
 - What seemed to be tongues of fire separated and came to rest on each of them (The 12? The 120? - the text does not tell us).
 - All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.
- c. The target audience
 - Devout Jews and converts to Judaism from all over.
 - They heard the sound and gathered in bewilderment.
 - * Each one heard them speaking in their own language.
 - * It amazed and perplexed those who gathered.
 - * Some mocked and accused the speakers of intoxication.

So - what’s going on here? Look at Acts 1:5, 8; especially 1 Cor 14.

- a. Language is intended to be understood. One speaking in another language builds up the church only if there is understanding. The gifts of the Spirit are not for personal edification but for the common good - 1 Cor 12:7.
- b. Language is meant to be understood, to convey a message. (1 Cor 14:6-12)
 - Even in the case of musical instruments there has to be a distinction in the notes. Otherwise one is just making noise (“speaking into the air”).
 - If there is no communication, people are merely foreigners to one another.
- c. Believers are commanded to seek to exercise gifts that build up the church.
 - If you speak in another language, pray that you may interpret.
 - Keep your mind fruitful - pray and sing with spirit and mind engaged.
 - To pray or sing in a mindless manner prevents others from joining you in worship. Your thanksgiving doesn’t edify as God intended it to do.
- d. The gift of language has a definite focus:
 - Within the church language must be intelligible.
 - Be mature in your thinking: In the law it is written -
 - * God will speak to “this people” (Israel) through men of strange tongues and foreign lips (Is 28:11-12).
 - * Tongues are a sign for unbelievers (not for believers) - 1 Cor 14:22.
 - * Prophecy is for believers. Prophecy = “utterance under a spiritual influence.” It can also mean : “to praise God with great earnestness and devout affection, under the influence of the Spirit.” The word is used to describe public prayer and teaching, preaching and explaining the word of the Lord. The term prophet often means preacher. In 1 Chr 25:1-7 prophecy means praising and thanking God musically. And yes, at times it describes a

divinely inspired warning or prediction.

So, how are we to understand this passage?

1. The people in the upper room (Act 2) were filled with the Spirit and began to proclaim the wonders of God in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance. And the Jews and converts to Judaism who gathered heard them each in their own native language. So there are two miracles here - in the ears of the hearers and from the mouths of the speakers.

How are we to understand the gift of languages? What is it?

2. Look at 1 Cor 14 - the gift of languages is intended to edify and be understood.
 - Absent the communication of truth it is merely noise.
 - The gift of languages is an extant human language.
 - It is apparently focused on unbelieving Jews.
 - Its focus is not believers.
 - Believers are to sing and pray with both mind and spirit engaged.
3. We are not to seek gifts but rather, the Giver. Are you willing to seek God and make yourself available to serve?
4. Let scripture guide you and not the teachings of men.

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“Jerusalem”- Part 2 Continued

2. Pentecost - The Witness Begins - Part 2 Peter’s Sermon

Act 2:14-41

- a.** God had a message for the assembled crowd:
- These men are not drunk, God is fulfilling prophecy (Joel 2:28-32).
 - Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited to you by God (and they *knew it!*). Look at Mtt 11:4-5, Jn 4:11, 5:36, 10:38; Heb 2:4).
- b.** He was handed over to them by Divine design (See Is 53).
- They, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death. (The flock detested Him Zec 11:8b-13)
 - But God raised Him from the dead (Death could not hold Him), see Is 53.
 - * David testified about Him (Ps 16:8-11).
 - * David died.
 - * God promised on oath that David would have a descendant reign on his throne.
 - David spoke of the resurrection
 - * God raised Him and we (apostles) are witnesses (1:22).
 - * He is exalted to the right hand of God.
 - * He has received the promised Holy Spirit and poured Him out.
 - * He is Lord! (God incarnate now glorified - Phil 2:5-11, Ps 2, Jn 1, 1 Jn 1).
 - God has made this Jesus (whom they had crucified) both Lord and Christ.
 - * How many times had Jesus boldly declared His identity only to have people plot His death?
 - * No matter how hard people oppose God, His will is going to be fulfilled. Always! (Jn 14:6, Act 4:12, Phil 2:10-11).
- c.** Those who heard were cut to the heart and asked how to be made right. How are we reconciled to a holy God from Whom our sins have alienated us?
- Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of sin.
 - This is for you (Jews) and for all (Gentiles).
 - Peter warned them and pled with them to save themselves.
 - The first church was a mega church - 3,000 accepted the message and were baptized that day.

**ACTS
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“Jerusalem”- Part 2 Continued

2. Pentecost - The Witness Begins - Part 3 Faith in Action

Act 2:42-47

- a. They devoted (“*were steadfastly continuing*”) [themselves] to (“*in*”) the apostles’ teaching, and to the fellowship (*participation, sharing in, helping*), to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Heb 10:19-25).
- b. Everyone was filled with awe (“*fear, reverence*”), and many wonders (“*a portent, a marvel,*” *a supernatural event that left an impression on its witnesses*) and [miraculous] signs (“given to confirm or authenticate - see Act 2:22, Lk 7:11-16, Jn 7:31, 14:11) were done by the apostles. (Note also 4:33, 5:12-16, 2 Cor 12:12).
- c. All the believers (“*all having believed*”) were together and had everything in common.
- Selling their possessions and goods they gave (“*distributing*”) them to anyone as he had need (“*need, lack, necessity*”).
 - * There was need (Lk 6:22, Jn 7:13, 9:22, 34-35, 12:42, 16:2) as those who embraced Christ as their Messiah and Savior were cut off from their former associations.
 - * Note that the sharing was voluntary and seems unique to this place and time.
 - Every day they continued (“*steadfastly continuing*”) to meet in the temple courts. (Phil 2:1-11). *To love God and our neighbor is a biblical imperative. What are you, we known for?*
 - They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, (“*breaking bread*” seems to refer to more than communion, but sharing a meal, taking nourishment. *They rejoiced together in their salvation and shared time, eating together and rejoicing*).
 - * praising [*the*] God
 - * and enjoying the favor of all the people.
 - * And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

How does this happen? Look at Jn 13:34-35 - How will people know that we are Jesus’ disciples?

Look at Phil 2:1-11, 1 Jn 3:11-24 - What does this look like? Seeking to honor God and loving one another. This is no syrupy, empty sentimentality but commitment in action. And it builds great assurance in those who seek to obey Him in this.

How were people being daily added to the church? People saw in the lives and commitment of God’s people the truth of the gospel that they proclaimed and professed.

*People are searching
People are hungry
People need to see spiritual reality.
They need to see Jesus.*

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“Listen to Him!”

“Jerusalem”- Part 3 “He’s Back!” (or, just when you thought it was safe to go to the temple!)
In this passage we see recorded the first opposition rising against the infant church.

1. An inconvenient fact for the Jesus - deniers - A cripple healed in Jesus’ name. 3:1-26

a. A man crippled from birth *was being carried* to the temple at the time of prayer. The times of prayer (3 X daily) were 9 AM, noon and 3 PM. The event about to unfold would be very well witnessed. Moreover, he was over 40 yrs old (Act 4:22). (3:1-10)

- He had been in the habit of begging there from people entering the temple area. How many times had Jesus walked past him?
- He saw Peter and John about to enter and asked them for money. What he wanted, they did not have. What he needed and had no doubt written off, they had - Jesus! Remember what apostles were to be: Witnesses of the resurrection (Act 1:21-22)!
- Peter acknowledged that although he was broke, he had riches (Jesus!) to share:
 - * He commanded the man to walk and pulled him to his feet.
 - * God instantly healed the man. His feet and ankles became strong and he jumped up and began to walk.
 - * Imagine the scene as he accompanied Peter and John into the temple, walking, jumping and praising God. People recognized him and were blown away. Imagine the crowd that gathered!

b. Peter proclaimed the risen Christ. (3:11-16)

- He gives the credit to God and points the people to Jesus.
- He reminds them of their rejection of their Savior (3:13-15).
- He tells them of the resurrection (vs 15) and of he and John’s calling as witnesses.
- The power of Jesus name - by faith in Christ that has given complete and visible healing.

c. Peter calls the crowds to repentance (“change of mind”)
(3:17-26)

- Turn to God
 - * So that their sins may be wiped out (“obliterated, cancelled out, wiped away”).
 - * That times of refreshing may come from the Lord.
 - * “And that He might send the One having been appointed for you, Christ Jesus.” Well, as a child of God, you know Whose you are and where you are going (e.g, Phil 3:20, Phil 1:23).
- He is the Prophet promised by Moses (Dt 18:14-22). They were looking for Him - Jn 1:19-21). They could ignore Him at their peril (Jn 3:36).

d. Jesus’ coming and ministry was testified to by the prophets (Lk 24:25-27).

- Those who believe are the heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made to Abraham (Gal 3:6-9).
- God sent His Son first to the house of Israel and then to the nations.

I want to say something here about healing. The bible doesn't say that God no longer heals. And in no place does scripture state that healing as a spiritual gift no longer operates. Yet many either insist that God still heals through people whom He has gifted with healing (but as an at-will ministry, which has *never* been the case). Some insist quite the opposite - that God no longer does that anymore. Both extremes in my opinion blaspheme God. A lot of confusion exists because we fail to understand the nature of spiritual gifts. They are not now nor have they ever been ours to dispense as we please.

Consider Paul - he was used by God to heal many times. For an example look at Acts 14:8-10, and 19:11-12. Yet Paul was afflicted by a "thorn in the flesh," a term that was used to describe a physical affliction. When he besought the Lord to take it away God responded that His grace was sufficient. Paul, who healed others couldn't heal his co-worker Epaphroditus (See Phil 2), who had taken ill and almost died. He got well the "old fashioned " way.

Dear friends, the gifts are not ours to turn on and off at will. God works through His people according to His will. It always amuses me when churches call on people to come and be healed. It is certainly right and advisable to ask God for healing but we need to ask seeking His will. He heals some and tells others "wait," or "No." To assume that He wants all healed is presumption and many who teach this needlessly set people up for disappointment. And they hinder the spiritual well-being of these further by stating that if those seeking healing are not healed, that it is due to their lack of faith. So, if someone seeks healing but remains unhealed, now it becomes their fault. Think of the damage that this does!

If you have sought healing and God has chosen not to heal you need to remember that:

It isn't always His will to heal.

That some people's impairments are given them for the glory of God (See Jn 9:1-5)

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2. The Elephant in the Room - the implications of the risen Christ **4:1-22**

- a.** In chapter 3 the healing of the lame man is related.
- He was healed in the temple.
 - He’d been a fixture there for decades, begging at the gate.
 - He was known to all who frequented the temple. (Act 3:10-11)
 - His healing was an authentication of Peter and John’s apostleship and message (miracles always pointed to Christ, His message and messengers) Jn 3:1, 9:33, 10:38, 14:10; Act 2:22, 2 Cor 12:12, Heb 2:1-4).
 - The gospel was heard and believed. Five thousand now belonged to the faith.
- b.** Peter and John were “called on the carpet by the Sadducees* (The same governing body that sentenced the Lord to death).
- The Sadducees were upset (“*greatly troubled*”) that Peter and John were speaking to the people (look at Mtt 3:17, Lk 20:1, Jn 7:49 - These men taught without the sanction of the leaders, had no formal training or guidance. Just Jesus (Act 4:13). Today, what is needed? See 1 Tim 3, Tit 1, 1 Pet 5).
 - The fact that the apostles were teaching about the resurrection of Jesus really got to them. so they seized Peter and John and jailed them.
 - They brought them in and questioned them.
 - Peter, *filled with the Holy Spirit* answered them with boldness - and gave them the gospel.
 - * We cannot bear fruit for God when we act in our flesh. All we can do is a cheap counterfeit. (Gal 5:19-22 - look at the contrast of the fruit of the flesh and Spirit).
 - * Peter was dependent on God and yielded to the Spirit. (Rom 12:1, Eph 5:18. In Eph 5:18) the contrast is between being controlled by an outside source [e.g, wine] or yielding oneself to God. Peter lived out the promise of Lk 12:11. God guided him. We cannot presume to serve Him in our own strength, self-alienated from His Spirit.
 - The council was amazed (“*awestruck, astonished*”) at Peter and John’s courage and made the connection: they had been with Jesus (Jn 7:15). Would that the world would say that about us!
 - * They couldn’t say much - the healed man whom they knew only too well stood with the apostles right before them.
 - * They couldn’t deny the miracle but still wanted to muzzle the apostles.
 - * Peter and John answered boldly, that they needed to obey God not men and stated their intention to keep on speaking.
 - * They made threats and let them go.

*** a note regarding the Sadducees and Pharisees:**

Sadducees

Were “aristocrats/wealthy
Rulers, moved in those circles
Political - favored Rome
Controlled Priesthood/temple
Not popular
Adhered to the bible (to a point)
Denied God’s involvement in life
Denied resurrection of dead
(Mtt 22:23, Mk 12:18-27, Act 23:8)
Did not believe in angels or demons

Pharisees

Middle class, businessmen, tradesmen
In touch with common people
Nationalistic
Had to accept domination of priesthood
Popular
Accepted bible as God’s word
Believed God active in human life
Believed in resurrection of dead
Saw bible as equal in authority to traditions.
Believed in both angels and demons

OK, so there are several “take aways” from this passage:

1. When God works in a person’s life, it is evident (just as the counterfeit of the flesh is evident). It attracts attention. When God’s people seek Him their lives show it and people see the fruit (2 Cor 4:7, Gal 5:22-23).
2. The Sadducees just didn’t “get it.” They were looking at a potential challenge to their authority. The apostles want to proclaim Jesus and see souls saved. If you are determined to live for the Lord, do not expect people to understand you or your motives. You are speaking two different “languages.” The world will not have a clue (1 Pet 4:4 - the term “they think it strange,” means that godly acts and motives will surprise and bewilder them).
3. Peter and John were respectful but stood their ground gently (1 Pet 3:15). Responding with harshness or arrogance is a lousy testimony. See Eph 4:29, Col 4:6, 2 Tim 2:25. Be gracious.
4. We cannot glorify God if our heart is not right. Peter and John were Spirit - led and it showed. Human effort produces a human result. The Spirit produces godly fruit in us.

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3. On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

a. When they heard this they raised voices together in prayer to God. **1st Thing in adversity: Pray!** (Ps 50:15, Jas 5:13)

- “Sovereign Lord, “ they said, “You made heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.
- You spoke through the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Your servant, our father David:
 - * ‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?
 - * The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One.’ (Ps 2)
- Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, Whom You anointed.”
- They did what Your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. **2nd Thing in adversity: remember that God reigns and act accordingly.** (Gen 50:20, Act 2:22-23)
- “Now, Lord, enable Your servants to speak Your word with great boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” **3rd Thing in adversity: Ask God for help in serving Him. If He allows something, He has a purpose in it.** (Eph 6:19-20)

b. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. **Note the 1st result of their prayers: God answered and helped them to do His will.** (1 Cor 16:9) - *Don’t watch the waves, but the Lord.*

c. All the believers were one in heart and mind. **Finally, note the 2nd result was an enhanced witness.** *Look up Jn 13:34-35 - what tells the world that we serve the Lord?*

- No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.
- With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was on them all. (Act 2:43, 5:12, 2 Cor 12:12, Heb 2:1-4)
- There were no needy persons among them.
 - * For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.
- Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.

Application

So, from Acts 4:23-36 there are a few things to keep in mind:

1st Thing in adversity: Pray! (Ps 50:15, Jas 5:13) **Ask God for help in conforming to His will.**

2nd Thing in adversity: remember that God reigns and act accordingly. (Gen 50:20, Act 2:22-23). **There is a plan. What it comes down to is this: will we trust Him?**

3rd Thing in adversity: Ask God for help in serving Him. If He allows something, He has a purpose in it. (Eph 6:19-20, Jas 4:13-17)

1st Result of praying for help in doing His will: God answers. (Mtt 7:7-11, 1 Jn 5:13-15)

2nd result was an enhanced witness. E.g., Barnabas loved God and people and it showed. (1 Jn 13:34-35)

3rd (but unstated in this text) is great assurance in our faith (1 Jn 3:16-24) There's nothing like seeking to live out what we believe to give us great assurance (See also 2 Pet 1:3-11).

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APOSTLES
“Listen to Him!”**

“Jerusalem”- Part 3 “He’s Back!” (or, just when you thought it was safe to go to the temple!)
In this passage we see recorded the first opposition rising against the infant church. And, we see the witness of the church, the fruit of faith.

5. God shows Himself Holy

5:1-11

a. A couple sold a piece of property, kept some for themselves and gave the rest to the apostles to distribute to those in need. There is a problem - they represented the gift as the whole purchase price. The money was theirs to use as they liked. But they lied. (See Lev 10:1-3, Joshua 7:1-ff, Mtt 6:24, Rom 6:16). Sin is a hard master. We have been bought with a price

b. Peter confronted Ananias with his lie. He had not lied to men but to God. Here Peter refers to the attempted deception as lying to the Holy Spirit, who is God (Along with the Father and Son.)

- He asked, “How has Satan so filled your heart...” Believers should be watchful (Eph 6:11, 1 Pet 5:8, Heb 11:4, Jas 4:7, Jude 11). The distinction between relationship and mere religion is important.

- God struck Ananias dead. Like an offending ambassador, he was recalled by his King. God reserves the right to discipline His people. For examples look at Act 12:23, 1 Cor 5:5, 16-17; 1 Jn 5:16-17). The young men came in, carried Ananias’ body out and buried it.

- “Great fear” seized all who heard it. What is the message in Ananias’ death? Well might people fear. You cannot play God for a fool.

- A word about giving - if God puts it on your heart, do it. Do it without fanfare, keeping it between yourself and God as much as possible. Recognize that He is far more concerned about the state of your heart than He is about the amount. (Mtt 6:1, Lk 11:41, 1 Cor 16:1-4, 2 Cor 8:1-15, 9:6-11).

c. Sapphira came in three hours later and was given a chance to tell the truth.

- Questioned by Peter, she answers according to the lie she and her husband agreed upon.
- Peter announces God’s judgement and its reason.
- At that moment she fell down dead and the young men carried her out and buried her.
- Great fear seized the whole church (why?) and all who heard about it.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God and this text illustrates the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

God cannot be treated or approached in an unholy manner. And He disciplines those He loves (e.g., Heb 12:5-13).

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6. He will not be silenced!

Act 5:12-42

a. The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people (See Act 2:43, 4:33, 2 Cor 12:12, Heb 2:1-4 - *these signs authenticated their message It showed that their message was from God*). **vs 12-16**

- The church met together in Solomon’s Colonnade (*In the covered portico surrounding the temple courts*). *Right in the center of the devotional life of their nation.*

* No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.

* Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

- As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. (Act 19:12)

* Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tortured by evil spirits,

* and all of them were healed. (*Again, confirmation of their mission, message and Messiah. See Heb 2:1-4*).

b. Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy (*“an envious and contentious rivalry”* see - Mtt 27:18, Mk 15:9-10) **vs 17-21a**

- They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.

- but during the night an angel of the Lord opened the door of the jail and brought them out.

* “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.” (1 Cor 15:3-4).

* At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

c. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin - the full assembly of the elders of Israel - and sent to the jail for the apostles. **vs 21b-42**

- But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there so they went back and reported,

* “We found the jail securely locked, with guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.”

* On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were puzzled, wondering what would come of this.

- Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” (*“The message - God will not be silenced”*)

* At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles.

* They did not use force because they feared the people would stone them.

d. Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. **vs 27-32**

- *The high priest had two issues: First, he and his associates had ordered the apostles not to preach in the name of Jesus and second, he objected to being held accountable for Jesus' death.* (Mtt 27:25).

- Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

- The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead - whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.

- God exalted Him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

- We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Jn 10:38, 14:11).

e. Gamaliel reasoned with the council to wait and see, lest they find themselves fighting God. **vs 33-42**

- Putative leaders rose and fell and their efforts came to nothing.

- He urged that they leave the apostles alone. If they were acting on their own, they would fail. But, if they were God's servants, they would be unstoppable. (Prov 21:30-31)

- The council agreed and had the apostles flogged, again ordered them not to speak in Jesus' name and released them.

* The apostles rejoiced in that they had been counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' name.

* They didn't let up.

**Is our service to God a matter of conviction and priority or a matter of convenience?
If it costs us nothing is it worship?**

How should we respond to those who oppose us (Ex 23:1-9, Mtt 5:38-47, Lk 6:27-36)?

God wants us to stand our ground respectfully, firmly and with courage (1 Pet 3:15-16).

**ACTS
of the
APOSTLES
“Listen to Him!”**

“Jerusalem”- Part 3 “He’s Back!”

6. The Witness of Compassion

Act 6:1-7

God wants us to care for one another. It is the most powerful witness in our “toolbox.” If we live out His commands to love one another, it shows the world the truth of our profession. Look up Jn 13:34-35, Rom 12:10, Heb 13:1-3, Jn 10:11 / 1 Jn 3:11-24, 3:10, 4:20; 1 Pet 1:22-25. When our lives bear the fruit of faith and love, our testimony is powerful. When we preach Christ and live selfish lives....we are lying to the world and fooling ourselves. This passage seems to describe the choosing of the first deacons.

a. A problem arises - people needing care were falling through the “cracks.” vs 1

- “In those days...” The church was young and rapidly growing (See 5:14 - “multitudes”).

- The Grecian Jews complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

* Over the centuries prior to the birth of Jesus, many Jews lived outside Israel. They were originally scattered by the conquerors of their land, having been taken to exile. By the time of Jesus a large number lived in Europe, Asia and northern Africa. Many had returned to Israel. Native born Jews (“Hebraic”) had a fairly unfavorable opinion of the Grecian (“Hellenistic”) Jews.

* There was some friction between the factions. Here it seems that those from the Grecian community felt that their widows were not getting the same care from the church as those from the native-born community.

b. The 12 met and proposed a solution.

vs 2-4

- In order to focus on the ministry of the word and prayer, something needed to change for the apostles. (1 Tim 5:17-25 - they are to focus on their calling, not abandon it)

- The church was directed to choose 7 men who were known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. So, what does that look like? (1 Cor 13:4-6, Eph 5:9, 2 Pet 1:3-11). Are they solid, growing, worthy of respect? The text also said that those that they choose must be “well-attested.” This is seen also in 1 Tim 3:7. Not that such a one is perfect (not possible) but that their lives should generally reflect godly character.

- They apostles wanted to give their full attention to the ministry of the word and prayer (1 Tim 4:13).

c. The church responded with love and enthusiasm

vs 5-6

- They chose...seven men, all of whom had Greek names. The church seems to have gone the “extra mile” to accommodate their brothers and sisters from the Greek world.

- Those chosen were presented to the apostles, who prayed and laid hands on them (1 Tim 4:14, 5: 22; Act 13:3/14:26).

1 Tim 3:1-12, Tit 1:5-9, Act 14:23 etc.

When we care for one another, the world notices. God especially wants His church to look after widows. Look up Act 9:39, 1 Tim 5:1-16, Jas 1:27

**ACTS
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“Jerusalem”- Part 3 “He’s Back!”

7. Acts 6-7 The Battle Belongs to the Lord (Pt 1 - “Lord of Time”)

Act 6:8-15

- a.** Now Stephen, a man full (“*abounding*”) of God’s grace (“*goodwill, kindness*”) and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. God works in and through those who seek Him (See Jas 4:1-10)
- [Opposition] arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) - Jews of Cyrene, Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia.
 - * These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke.
 - * Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.”
- b.** So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law.
- They brought him before the Sanhedrin.
 - They produced false witnesses, who testified,
 - * “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.”
 - * For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”
- c.** All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Look up Jn 16:31-33 - our peace is in Him, not in the outward tranquillity of our lives. We need to remember always that He is the Lord of Time. Some things to consider:

Ps 75:2 *God is Master of time.*

Ecc 3:1-17 *In His plan, there is an appropriate time for all things.*

- *This can chafe us as we want control but it resides with Him (Dan 2:20-21).*
- *It certainly chafes the enemy, who wants control (Dan 7:23-25)*
- *Not knowing is not cool with us (Prv 25:2, Ecc 3:11)*
 - * *We are “hard wired” to try and figure things out (Ecc 3:9-14, Rom 11:33-36)*
 - * *Though we cannot know it all, we want to (e.g., Mk 13:33, Act 1:7)*

Is 49:8 God will fulfill His word at His chosen time.

Mk 1:15 - Jesus’ earthly ministry began at the right time.

Jn 7:6 - Jesus did things at the right time, not just at the whim of men.

Jn 12:23 - It was “go time,” for the cross and resurrection.

Act 3:21 - At the right time Jesus will return.

Gal 4:4 - In the fullness of time Jesus came.

Eph 1:10-14 - At the right time God will bring everything together under Jesus.

Eph 2:10 - God has a plan for you and I - good works.

1 Tim 2:1-8 - Because He has it all handled, go!

1Tim 6:15-16 - Jesus will not be early or late but will come at the right time.

Tit 1:3 - God brought His word to light at the appropriate time.

Do you see a pattern here?

Stephen is about to go through a hard time that will result in his death. Yet he would not be abandoned nor would God's plans be set back.

Is 27:1-6/Jer 23:1-7, Rom 8:28-39, 1 Cor 16:9, Eph 6:19-20: God has a plan and its fulfillment will be a blessing. Paul never seemed to back away from a battle. He knew Who was in control.

SO - Do you understand that God's timing and love are linked and can be trusted?

Are we willing therefore to seek Him in all things?

Will we pray to recognize and utilize all opportunities?

Read with me 2 Cor 4:1-18

**ACTS
of the
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“Listen to Him!”**

“Jerusalem”- Part 3 “He’s Back!”

7. Acts 6-7 The Battle Belongs to the Lord (Pt 2 - “Lord of Time”) Act 7:1-8:1)

- a.** The faith is orthodox (Stephen confesses his faith). LK 24:25-27, Rom 3:21, Eph 2:20
1-53

He’d been called to account for blasphemy and he is answering the charges

- Abraham and the Patriarchs - were called into a covenant relationship with God (Gen 12:1-3, 15:6, etc).
- Moses
 - * tried to be their deliverer but was rejected. Yet God called him to return to the scene of his failure. He does that often with us. (Ex 3-4)
 - * Led Israel out of Egypt with signs and wonders. (Ex 5-12)
 - * He led Israel for 40 years in the wilderness.
 - * He pointed to Jesus (The Prophet - Dt 18:14-16).

- b.** But Israel had refused to obey Moses (and thus, God).
 - They rejected him and returned to Egypt in their hearts (e.g., Num 11:5, 14:4).
 - They turned to idolatry and were disciplined by God for it, even enduring defeat and exile.
 - They had the tabernacle and used it until Solomon built the temple. Yet -
 - * God does not dwell in temples built by men.
 - * The Lord is Master of the universe - what house could we build for Him (See 2 Chr 6:18, Act 17:24-25).

- c.** Israel remains stiff necked and uncircumcised (*unholy, unclean, disobedient to God*. See Eph 2:11-13). As they had been all through their history - Ex 32:9, Dt 31:27, 2 Chr 30:8, Ne 9:16) - so they remained. *This is a direct rebuke to the leaders for their rejection of Jesus. Perhaps he was thinking of Deut. 10:16 or 30:6?*
 - They resist the Spirit (See Act 5:39) just like their fathers did (Rom 10:1-4).
 - Just as their ancestors killed the prophets who God sent to them; (some of them there he very ones who spoke of the coming of Christ), so they killed the Righteous One (Jesus).
 - They had received the Law that had been mediated by angels (Deut 33:2) and disobeyed it.

- d.** The council and his accusers had to be embarrassed by his obvious orthodoxy and by his rebuke. He was the one on trial yet he accused them of disobedience. The gnashed their teeth at him (See also 5:33). *Gnashing the teeth describes their fury at being cut to (“sawn”) through the heart -they were irritated, enraged, determined at all costs to silence him.*
 - Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit (*Are you understanding this? He was being led by God throughout this confrontation. It was no mistake.*), saw a vision of Christ standing at the right hand of God and he speaks of it to his accusers and the council.
 - They drug him out and stoned him to death.
 - * They left their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.
 - * Stephen prayed that God would receive his spirit.
 - * Stephen prayed for his opponents as he died.
 - * And Saul was there giving approval to his death. (Act 26:9-11, Is 29:13, Rom 10:1-4)

In this narrative several things are shown:

The faith and orthodoxy of the Church was opposed by the empty works of those who rejected their Messiah (See Rom 10:1-4). This is the difference between mere religion and a relationship with God. Human religion stands in opposition to genuine faith.

The sovereignty of God. He had told His apostles that they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and they had been. But now, propelled by persecution the faith would reach Judea, Samaria, Europe, Asia and Africa in fairly short order. He causes all things to ultimately work for good.

The Sanhedrin (Priests, Levites, Elders, teachers of the law (both Pharisees and Sadducees) are approached by zealous men who claim to have the “dirt” on a leader in the early church. They are from the synagogue of the Freedmen (“Libertines”) and are leading the charge in opposition to the church. Maybe having seven men from their own community serving as leaders in the church spurred them on to prove their loyalty to the rulers?). They accused Stephen of speaking words of blasphemy against Moses and God (Blasphemy is defined as speaking injuriously, abusively, with contempt of God).

Specifically they accused him of:

- Speaking against the law.
- Saying that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy “this place” (i.e., the temple) and change the oral traditions that they believed were handed down by Moses..

Stephen proved to be orthodox in his faith, which would have been an acute embarrassment to his accusers.

Stephen turned the tables on both his accusers and the rulers by linking them in their hostility to the gospel to their fathers who had persecuted and killed the Lord’s prophets in time past.

- The council and Stephen’s accusers were embarrassed and enraged by the whole situation.
 - * They had tried repeatedly to silence Christ and His followers to no avail.
 - * They were being held to account for their rejection and condemnation of Jesus (Act 2:22-24, 3:13-26, 4:8-12, 5:27-32) before a growing community of believers.
 - * The apostles steadfastly refused to yield and be silent (4:18-22, 5:29-32).
 - * Adding to their frustration, a large number of their peers had become believers (6:7).
- In their frustration they used the “ad hominem” argument - attacking their opponent.
- Yet even as Stephen died, he forgave his attackers and committed himself to the Lord.

**ACTS
of the
APOSTLES
“Listen to Him!”**

Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:25

1. The Seed is Scattered Part 1

8:2-25

a. Like the breaking of a dam, the pent - up frustration of the authorities in Jerusalem and of those from the Synagogue of the Freedmen erupted into a “great persecution” against the church in Jerusalem.

- The apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
- Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.
- But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house he dragged off men and women and put them in prison (See Act 29:13, 21; 26:9-11, Gal 1:13, 1 Tim 1:13).

b. Popularity in the eyes of men means quite little. Consider the state of the Jerusalem church during the persecution.

- They had formerly enjoyed the favor of the people (Act 2:46-47, 5:13, 6:7)
- Their numbers had been steadily growing (e.g., Act 4:4).
- If our Lord suffered rejection and opposition, shall His followers be exempt? See Mtt 5:10-12, Jn 16:1-4).

c. God uses all things for good (Rom 8:28-39, Eph 1:11-12)

- Remember Acts 1:7-8 - What was God going to do through the church?
- It is akin to what happened at Babel - Gen 9:7/11:1-9. Even through hard things God’s work will go forward.

d. Samaria

- Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.
- Philip went to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ.
 - * When the crowds heard him and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.
 - * With shrieks evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city (1 Tim 1:12-17).
 - * Why this outpouring in Samaria? The Jews and Samaritans were at odds. For a Jew calling another a Samaritan was an insult (e.g., Jn 8:48). Yet here God makes it plain that His salvation was for them too. Jesus had told them (Act 1:8).
- Simon, a sorcerer was converted.
 - * He’d once been a “big deal” in Samaria (Famous, focus of attention, had a large following).
 - * He believed God’s message through Philip and was baptized.
 - * He followed Philip and was amazed by the work of God.
- God gave the Samaritan believers the Holy Spirit through the apostles Peter and John.
 - * (*Merely my opinion*) - God wanted Jewish believers to accept their Samaritan brothers and sisters and He wanted the Samaritan believers to accept the authority of His apostles.
 - * Simon missed his old fame and life and offered the apostles money if he could be given the power to give the Spirit to those on whom he laid his hands.
 - * Peter rebuked him - the ministry is not about money. When it is, it is a bad sign (1 Tim 6:3-10).

Some things to take away from this narrative:

What we see from our limited vantage point is **not** what He sees. In Jn 12:24 Jesus makes the point that unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it isn't fruitful. We make our plans but God's will prevails. Left to ourselves, there is tremendous good that might not happen (Prov 19:21).

- To the dismay of His followers, Jesus was arrested (right on the heels of His triumphal entry), tried, beaten, whipped and executed.
- Adding to their confusion, He warned them in advance and was determined to see it through (Lk13:33, Jn 11:8-16).
- When our plans fall apart do we rage or look for opportunity (e.g., Gal 1:4, Eph 5:15-16, Col 4:5)?
- Do we truly believe that God works in all things for good?
- How much faith and trust do we place in human agency or promises (Ps 146:3, Prov 16:25, Jer 17:5-10)? Or even in our own plans?

**ACTS
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Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:25

1. The Seed is Scattered Part 2

8:26-40

a. Now an angel of the Lord said to Phillip, "Go south to the road -the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."

b. So he started out, and on his way met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official ("ruler") in charge of the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. *The term "eunuch" once meant a man who oversaw the harem of a ruler. They were often castrated males. By this time however it was a term that often merely described a high official.*

- This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. *He was the treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. Ethiopia is likely the same region also spoken of as Cush, the upper Nile valley to the south of Egypt. Candace was a dynastic name (like Pharaoh was for the kings of Egypt). He was an important man. And he may have been a Jew. (Jer 38:7, 39:16-17; Zep 3:10)*

- The Spirit told Phillip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." *Such a high official would have traveled with an escort to provide security. God's command was counter - intuitive. Approaching such a person could get you hurt or killed. Yet Phillip obeyed. **Do we only obey God when we think it is "safe?"***

c. Then Phillip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet.

- "Do you understand what you are reading?" Phillip asked.

- "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" (1 Cor 2:14-16)

* So he invited Phillip to come up and sit with him.

* The eunuch was reading from this passage of scripture (Is 53:7-8)

* The eunuch asked Phillip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?"

- Then Phillip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. ***The word, both Old and New Testaments point to Jesus!***

d. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

- And he gave orders to stop the chariot.

- The both Phillip and the eunuch went down into the water and Phillip baptized him.

- When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Phillip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

- Phillip however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. ***The word is living and powerful - Heb 4:12***

Phillip was open already to God's love for all people (See 8:4-8). But there was a social and theological barrier between Jews and others (See Act 10:27-29, 11:1-3). And if the Ethiopian was a traditional eunuch, there were other barriers (Dt 23:1). God sent Phillip and he didn't question Him, he simply obeyed. Do we get to choose who comes? See 1 Tim 1:15-17

**ACTS
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Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:25

1. The Seed is Scattered Part 3 (Paul)

9:1-19

a. Saul never let up. He was determined to do all he could to silence the church (Act 26:9-11).

- He was making threats against the disciples.
 - * He went to the high priest for authorization to arrest believers in Damascus and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial (Also 26:12)
 - * This was not the first time that he had done this - See Act 26:9-11.
- As he approached Damascus several things happened:
 - * Suddenly/unexpectedly a light from heaven flashed around/enveloped him. (Act 26:13 - “*brighter than the sun*”). This happened about midday (Act 26:13, 1 Tim 6:16).
 - * He fell to the ground, along with his companions (Act 26:14).
 - * He heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (His companions saw the light and heard, but did not understand the voice Act 22:8-9) *His conscience and the Holy Spirit must have been talking to him* - See also Act 26:14 “*Why do you pursue/ aggressively chase” Me?* (Mtt 25:40)
 - * He discovered who was confronting him: The Lord Jesus. (Act 26:15-18)
 - * He received instruction from the Lord: Get up and go to the city (Damascus) and you will receive further instructions.
- Act 26 gives us some additional details from his meeting with the Lord. He was told:
 - * Stand up.
 - * Jesus had appointed him as a servant and witness of what he had seen of Jesus and would be shown.
 - * Jesus would rescue him from Jew and Gentile.
 - * He was being sent to them to open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, turn them from the power of Satan to God (So they could receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those sanctified by faith in Jesus). Salvation!

b. So, Saul obeyed but got up blind. The powerful, up-and-coming enforcer for the Jerusalem elite had to be led like a child by the hand into the city.

- He was blind for three days and fasted (He was processing a huge change in his life/plans.
- God sent a local disciple named Ananias to lay hands on Saul and restore his sight. God had already prepared Saul by showing him in a vision that Ananias was coming.
- Ananias was nervous about obeying: He had heard about Saul and his reputation. Yet God told him:
 - * “Go!” Saul was His chosen instrument to carry His name before the Gentiles, even their kings. (Rom 12:1-8, 1 Cor 12, Eph 2:8-10).
 - * He was also to carry His name before Israel.
 - * By the time Saul’s work was over, he’d be amazed by what he was willing to endure for his Lord.

c. Ananias obeyed

- He began by calling Saul “brother,” and reminding him that he had been sent to Saul by the Lord who had appeared to him on the road.
- He had been sent to Saul by God to give him back his sight and to be filled with the Holy

Spirit.

- * Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he could see.
- * He got up, was baptized and ate. He still had a decision to make (Act 26:19-21).

Saul -

- * Born in Tarsus but raised in Jerusalem (Act 22:3)
- * A Pharisee (Act 26:4-5)
- * Thoroughly trained by Gamaliel (Act 22:3)
- * Zealous for the law (Act 22:3)
- * A persecutor (Act 22:4-5)
- * Tried to destroy the church (Gal 1:13)
- * A blasphemer, persecutor and a violent man (1 Tim 1:13)
- * A proud man (Phil 3:3-5)
- * He trusted in a works righteousness (2 Cor 5:16, Phil 3:1-11)
- * He voted to have people killed (Act 26:10)
- * He considered himself the least of the apostles (1Cor 15:9)

1 Tim 1:15-16 - Jesus died for sinners, including Paul. Including us! (Matt 9:13, Mk 2:17).

- * **No one is beyond the reach of God's grace. That is Paul's point in 1 Tim 1:15-16. Look at 1 Cor 6:7-11.**
- * **Jesus died for sinners. That would be us (Ecc 7:20).**
- * **Jesus changes lives. (2 Cor 5:17).**
- * **He looks at us differently than the world does (Ps 147:10-11).**

**ACTS
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Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:25

1. The Seed is Scattered Part 4 (Paul - a changed man)

9:20-31

a. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. *What isn't clear in this narrative is the timeline. From Gal 1:11-24 it seems that he went immediately after his conversion to Arabia where he was taught by Jesus. Then he returned to Damascus and began preaching. There is some debate on the chain of events but the basic facts are this: He was changed by faith in Christ and began to proclaim the faith he once tried to destroy.*

- He preached the gospel in the synagogues and amazed those who heard him.
- He grew increasingly more effective and threw his opponents into confusion by showing them conclusively from the scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah. (Lk 24:25-27, 44, act 13:27).
- That does not mean that they repented - far from it. They plotted his death. (2 Cor 7:10)
 - * Saul learned of their plan.
 - * His disciples (pupils) let him down from the wall in a basket. (2 Cor 11:32-33)

The greatest testimony is a changed life.

b. He then went to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples. *People can wish to outrun their past, relocate and start fresh in a new place. Yet consider Lk 8:39. How much better the testimony of a changed, new life!*

- They were afraid of him and did not trust his conversion. *Why? His recent history did not give them a lot of reason for trust.*
- “But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.” *What did Barnabas see in Saul? He obviously believed that his faith was genuine. Remember his nickname (Act 4:36-37)?*
 - * He told (“*related in full*”) the apostles about Saul’s conversion and ministry in Damascus.
 - * So Saul stayed with them and moved about the city speaking boldly (*He didn’t hedge or hold back in his preaching*) in the name of the Lord.
 - * He went to his own community (Grecian/Hellenistic Jews). (Rom 9:1-5, 10:1-4, Act 13:46, Act 1:8). The very ones who instigated the first persecution (Act 6:8-14).
 - * His life was in danger and the brothers took him down to the coast and sent him home (Tarsus). A journey of approx. 356 miles.

Bloom where you are planted (1 Cor 7:17, 20, 24)

- c.** Then the church throughout the region enjoyed a time of peace. It was:
- Strengthened and encouraged by the holy Spirit.
 - It grew in numbers living in the fear of the Lord.

Will you serve Him where you are?

**ACTS
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Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:25

1. The Seed is Scattered Part 5 (Peter in Judea)

9:31-43

- a. Peter was traveling around the [country] - (“*all*”) and went [*down*] to visit the saints in Lydda. Believers were already in existence there. (*About 30 mi from Jerusalem*)
- He found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and bedridden (8 years).
 - * Peter was prompted to tell him that Jesus was healing him and to get up and take care of his mat. *His words were given as a command.* Similar to Act 3:6.
 - * He immediately got up. (*He had a choice. As he obeyed, he was healed.*) See Rev 2:5 - *If we wait to obey until we feel like it, is it obedience?*
 - * All those living in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. See Jn 5:36, 10:38, 14:11 - *God never works miracles for show, there is always a purpose (See Ex 7:5, 14:4).*
- b. In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (or Dorcas, what means “Gazelle”).
- She was always (“*abounding in, full of,*” *given to*) doing good and helping (“*giving/donating to*”) the poor. (Rom 12:13, Gal 2:10, 1 Tim 6:18, Heb 13:16)
 - About this time she became sick and died - prior to her funeral she was laid out in an upper room.
 - * The local believers heard that Peter was in the area and they sent two men to urge him to come (*a distance of about 13 miles*).
 - * Peter went with them, entered the room where the mourners were (widows mourning). *They stood weeping and showing the shirts and other garments Tabitha had made for them.*
 - * He sent them all out and he prayed and called (“*commanded*”) to Tabitha [“the body”] to get up.
 - * She opened her eyes, saw Peter and sat up.
 - * He took her by the hand and helped her up, and presented her to the church alive (“*living*”).
 - This became known throughout Joppa and many people believed on the Lord. Jn 12:11, Acts 3:12, 19:17-18,
 - Peter stayed in that town for some time with a tanner named Simon.

God makes His power and presence known in a variety of ways. His miracles are never ours to demand but are His alone to dispense. And people tend to look for Him in all the wrong places and for the wrong reasons (Jn 11/Lk 7/Jn 10). To the word!

God made His presence known to His people and to unbelievers.

Jesus’ command to the apostles that they would be his witnesses was being fulfilled. They had borne witness in Jerusalem, Samaria and now in Judea, but just to fellow Jews. The wider world was coming next.

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Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:25

2. The Seed is Scattered Part 6 (Peter in Judea)

10:1-48

a. Cornelius (Day 1) 10:1-8

- A centurion (officer) in the Italian Regiment (Cohort - a tenth part of a legion).
- Devout and God-fearing along with his family. (See also Lk 7:5)
- Generous and gave to the needy.
- Prayed regularly.
- Had a vision around 3 PM
 - * Saw (“*looked intently*” at) a man in shining clothes (Act 10:30)
 - * Was given a message: God had heard his prayers and noticed his works. He was to send men to Joppa to find Peter who was staying with Simon the tanner by the sea (39 mi).
- He called two of his servants and a devout soldier, told them everything and sent them off.

b. Peter (Day 2) 10:9-23

- Peter was praying on Simon’s roof as the men from Cornelius approached around noon.
- He was (very) hungry and apparently had asked for food. While it was being prepared he fell into a trance.
 - * He saw the heavens/sky open and something like a large sheet/sail lowered full of all kinds of creatures.
 - * He heard a voice telling him to get up, kill and eat.
 - * He protested that he kept kosher.
 - * God told him not to call anything unclean that God had made clean. This happened 3X.
- While Peter was thinking (“*perplexed*”) about this and wondering what it meant the men Cornelius sent arrived and God gave him instructions:
 - * The Spirit told him that 3 men were looking for him and that God had sent them. Peter was not to hesitate to go with them.
- Peter went downstairs and asked the men why they had come. Look how they describe their boss.
 - * Cornelius the centurion, righteous, God-fearing, respected by the Jews.
 - * A holy angel had commanded him to have Peter come so Cornelius could hear his msg.
 - * Peter invited them in to the house as his guests.

c. Peter (Day 3) 10:23b Accompanied the men and was joined by some of the brothers from Joppa.

d. At the house (Day 4) 10:24-48

- Cornelius was expecting them and had gathered his family and friends. *How important to us is it that our friends and family hear the gospel?*
- He learned that Peter was a man like himself - God alone was to be worshipped (Act 14:15, Rev 19:10).
- Peter bore witness to that which God had shown him (not to call any man unclean/impure). That is why he had come without argument.
- Peter asked why they had sent for him.
- Cornelius related his vision:
 - * He had obeyed and immediately sent for Peter.
 - * Whatever God had to tell him through Peter, he was ready to listen.
- Peter shared what God had just taught him. God accepts everyone who fears and serve Him.
- Peter proclaimed the gospel.
 - * He appealed to their knowledge of what had recently happened in Israel re: Jesus.
 - * He spoke of Jesus' ministry and message.
 - * He bore witness to it and to the death and resurrection of Christ (Act 1, 1 Cor 15:3-ff)
 - * He declared his commission to preach and testify that Jesus is the One appointed by God to judge the living and the dead (Jn 5:19-30).
 - * He claimed that the prophets testified that whoever believes in Jesus would receive forgiveness of sins in His name.
- While Peter was preaching the Spirit came on those listening (They spoke in other languages). Tongues are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers (1 Cor 14:22). Specifically for unbelieving Jews. In this case God showed Peter that He had indeed accepted Gentiles, even Romans.
 - * Peter had them all baptized into the name of Jesus Christ.
 - * The new believers asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Some things to think about from this narrative:

God plays no favorites - none are beyond His grace. Are there people we have "written off?" Do we pray for them, seek opportunities?

God orchestrates timing/events. How do we react when things do not go "our way?" Eph 5:14-18 Do we believe that He has things under control?

God is not confined to our "box."

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Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:25

3. An issue arises - “The Gospel” - earned of ours by grace/faith?

11:1-18

- a.** Peter was criticized by some Jewish believers 1-3
- He had gone into the house of uncircumcised men (Gentiles) and ate with them (See Act 10:28, Gal 2:12).
 - Obeying God (See Act 10:9-23) can place you on the wrong side of some people. Will we do the “safe” thing or step out in obedience?
- b.** Peter testified to God’s gospel call to *all* people. 4-17
- He told about his vision and God’s message (He related it “*in order*”).
 - * Not to call anything impure that God has made clean.
 - * The Spirit had told him to go with Cornelius’ men.
 - Six brothers (Jewish believers from Joppa) also accompanied him.
 - * They entered Cornelius’ house.
 - * Cornelius told of his angelic encounter and message from God.
 - God obviously wanted them saved (vs 14). See 2 Pet 3:9, Act 2:21, Rom 10:13
 - Peter described God’s acceptance of the Gentiles.
 - * He had worked in them just as He had in the apostles (who were Jews). God made no distinction (See Act 15:9, Gal 3:28).
 - * Who was he to think that he could oppose God?
- c.** Peter’s critics praised God and accepted His will for the Gentiles. 18
- There was peace for the moment (Gal 1:6-9, 2:11-21, 3:1-9) - but it wasn’t enough for those who had trusted in works for a right standing with God. (But - that cannot be: Rom 10:1-4).
 - This would be a recurring issue (Act 15:1, 5; Gal 5:1, Col 2:20-23).
 - * Parents - understand the nature and freedom of the gospel (Act 15:19-21, 15:24-29, Gal 2:15-21, 6:15-16).
 - * ***Dads and moms - can you explain the gospel, and speak/live it before your kids?***
 - * ***What do we teach through our words and actions to our kids, grandkids? Will you memorize these references and verses: 1 Cor 15:3-5, Rom 3:23, Rom 6:23, Jn 3:16, Rom 5:8, Act 16:31? And teach them to your children?***

**ACTS
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Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:25

4. The Church Expands - Men obeyed God and evangelized their gentile neighbors.

11:19-30

a. Those scattered by the persecution traveled and spread the message of Jesus (What had He commanded them? Act 1:8). Us - (1 Pet 3:15-16)? Are we silent or do we reach out?

- Some went only to the Jews.
- Others however, went to Antioch and spoke to the Greeks (In the sense of this passage, non- Jews). Men of Cyprus and Cyrene.

* They spoke the message of Jesus.

* The Lord’s hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. Note - one can believe and not turn to the Lord. If Jesus is Lord, it demands a response (See for example, Act 26:19-20, Jas 2:19).

b. News of this reached the church in Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas to check it out.

- When he arrived he saw evidence of the grace of God (Spiritual fruit). Compare this with James 2: 14-18). It isn’t those who claim to follow Christ that are saved, but those who do.

* This made Barnabas happy (He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith)

* A great number of people were brought to the Lord.

c. Barnabas saw a need. New believers needed to be established in their faith so they in turn might reach others. And, he knew of someone qualified who lived in the “neighborhood.”

Saul lived in Tarsus and it was under 100 miles (86) - over 200 miles closer than Jerusalem.

- He went to Tarsus to seek out Saul. *Barnabas knew Saul was qualified and hoped he was willing. Are we willing to reach out and encourage others?*

- When he found him he brought him to Antioch and they met with the church and taught great numbers of people.

- The disciples were first called “Christians” in Antioch. A name probably given them in mockery would soon become a name highly honored among them.

d. During this time, some prophets came down from Jerusalem.

- One of them, Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world (Which happened during Claudius’ reign circa 45 a.d.).

- The disciples, each according to his ability decided to provide help for the Church in Judea. This they did and sent it to the elders with Barnabas and Saul.

* “Koinonia,” joint partaking, fellowship; they were offering to aid their brothers and sisters in Christ during the coming famine. Would the home church accept it? To do so would be to acknowledge their partnership in the faith; to accept them as family.

So, do we look for opportunities to speak and act for Christ?

Do we see new believers as family?

Are we concerned to see new believers become established in their faith?

Are the needs of other believers important to us? We are family after all.

Does God speak today? Yes but presumption is not an option (Jer 23:9-40)

**ACTS
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Section 3: Judea and Samaria

8:2-12:24

5. Kingdoms in Collision (Part 1)

12:1-19

Jesus said to Peter that he was “Peter,” (a stone), and upon this rock (Peter’s statement that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God), He would build His church (See Eph 2:20). And, the gates of Hell would not overcome it (Mtt 16:13-20). Death is the reality of all humanity, without exception. But those who enter the church of God are immortal, even though their bodies die (e.g., Jn 11:25). Ultimately the kingdoms of this world will be superseded by the kingdom of Jesus. That’s the message of Daniel 2, 7, Revelation (e.g, Rev 11:15). The world in relation to God’s program may be an ice cap - God owns a massive ice breaker - Jesus. And His will, not man’s, will prevail. Every single time.

Saul of Tarsus was, along with Barnabas a teacher in the church in Antioch. About this time:

- a. Men made their plans** - King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church.
- He intended to mistreat them (NIV - “persecute,” but the word describes “ill treatment”).
 - He had James, the brother of John executed.
 - He seems to have been trying to score points with the priests and leaders that opposed the faith (vs 3).
 - When he saw that his actions pleased them, he arrested Peter and jailed him (during the feast of unleavened bread).
 - * He intended to place Peter on trial publicly when Passover was over.
 - * He had Peter under guard by 16 soldiers. *Peter must have thought that Jesus’ words in Jn 21:17b-19 were about to be fulfilled. But God was about to show that events are in His hands (Ps 33:10, Prov 16:1, 9; 19:21, Is 14:27, 46:10).*
- b. The Church Intervenes** Peter was in prison and the church was in earnest prayer to God for him.
- *I get weary of the phrase that “thoughts and prayers” are with or directed to someone. For the record, God commands us to ask the Father for the needs we and others have. We ask in Jesus’ name - that is, our basis for asking is our relationship with God through Jesus. And we are commanded to pray “in the Spirit.” I understand that to mean to pray seeking God’s will. In the “realm of the Spirit,” that is, yielded and dependent on Him. Nice thoughts are, well, nice thoughts. Prayer to our Father by those who are His children are powerful (Ps 66:18, Mtt 6:8, 7:7-12, Lk 11:5-13, Eph 6:18, 1 Jn 5:13-15).*
 - Earnest, strenuous, prayer - how much mental effort do we devote to prayer?

- Peter, the night before his upcoming trial, was...sleeping.
- c. God asserts His will** “Suddenly” (See Lk 2:9, Act 5:19-20) - an angel was present.
 - light shone in the cell.
 - He smacked Peter to wake him up.
 - Peter’s chains fell off of his wrists.
 - The angel gave Peter instructions:
 - * “Get dressed.”
 - * “Put on your coat.”
 - * “Follow me”
 - Peter obeyed
 - * He followed the angel out of the prison - but he thought it was a dream.
 - *
 - They passed the guards and went out the gate into the city (which opened for them by itself).
 - When they had gone the length of the street, the angel suddenly left Peter.
 - * Peter finally understood what God had done in rescuing him.
 - * He went to a house (of Mary, the mother of John Mark) where people were praying.
 - * It took Peter a bit to convince those inside praying that he was really free. *Why do we pray and then become amazed when God answers?*
 - He told them what the Lord had done and left for another (*presumably secret*) place.
- d. Proverbs 19:3 QED** - Herod in his anger and embarrassment “shoots the messengers.”
 - In the morning there was no small commotion in the jail.
 - * *Can you imagine the two guards who had been chained on either side to Peter waking upon and finding him gone?*
 - * Herod ordered a thorough search and came up...empty.
 - * He closely examined the guards and had them “led out” (to execution).
- e. The last word** - Even in judgment, God shows mercy.
 - Herod went to Caesarea (Roman administrative center for Judea) to stay.
 - He met with representatives from Tyre and Sidon with whom he had a quarrel (Lit. - been “furiously angry” with them).
 - * He held all the cards (his country was their food supply) and they asked to make peace.
 - * The king’s personal servant (“chamberlain” meaning, someone in charge of the king’s quarters, it could also describe a treasurer, chief of household etc.). Anyway, the people secured this man’s support as he was trusted by the king.
 - Herod on an appointed day, with the pomp and fuss of high government, spoke publicly to the people.
 - * They acclaimed him as a god.
 - * God struck him down (For he had not only opposed God, persecuting His church but also claimed worship that belongs only to God. He was “eaten of worms” and died. Note: as an observant Jew, Herod knew better. God alone is to be worshipped!
 - **But** the word of God continued to increase and spread. (IS 55:6-11).

**ACTS
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“Listen to Him!”**

Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

Starting at this point in Acts, the narrative turns primarily to God’s work through Saul (Paul) as an apostle to the Gentiles (See Gal 2:6-10, Eph 3:1-6). When the people of Israel largely rejected the gospel, the Gentiles were not “plan B.” It had always been God’s plan to bring all people together under the Lordship of Christ (Jn 10:14-18, 11:52, Jn 1:12, Eph 2:13).

1. Set apart by God for His work:

13:1-4

- a.** The prophets and teachers (Saul and Barnabas among them) of the church in Antioch were meeting for worship, fasting and prayer.
- b.** God made them aware that He had a special mission for two of them - Saul and Barnabas.
 - They were to be set apart for the work to which God had called them.
 - * To be set apart is to be devoted to/for something.
 - * How hard do we seek after God’s will as individuals and leaders?
 - So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.
 - * 1 Tim 5:22 The laying on of hands by the leaders implies approval, partnership; an endorsement. For a year Saul had been one of their number, and Barnabas for longer. These men knew them and recognized God’s calling and equipping in their lives.
 - * Laying on of hands implies a human recognition of what God has ordered.
 - A short look at the laying on of hands:
 - * Nu 8:10, 27:18; Dt 34:9, Act 6:6, 1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6 (commission/gifting/calling).
 - * Elsewhere in scripture it is a sign of consecration of an offering (Lev 1:4, 3:2, 4:15,v 16:21) , of ordination (Nu 8:10, 27:18; Dt 34:9, Act 6:6, etc.involvement (healing), blessing (Gen 48:14, Mtt 19:15, Mk 10:16), and used in healing (Mk 6:5, 7:32; Lk 4:40, 13:13, Act 28:8).

Those appointed to leadership within the church should:

- Sense their calling.
- Be recognized by others within and without the church as so called and equipped (e.g., 1 Tim 3:1-6, Tit 1:5-9, 1 Pet 4:7-11).

We participate in their ministry.

2. The Dam Breaks → intentional ministry to all nations 13:5-12

- a. Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, they sailed for Cyprus
- Mark accompanied them (We read about his mom, Mary in 12:120).
 - * He had returned with Barnabas and Saul when they came back from Jerusalem.
 - * He was related to Barnabas (Col 4:10)
 - * Faithful (Col 4:10, 2Tim 4:11).
 - * He was to be their helper.
- b. They travelled through the island and came to Paphos (Roman admin. center).
- Met Elymas ("Bar Jesus") - a false prophet and "sorcerer" (they are around. Always. Mtt 7:15, Act 8:9). This man apparently was riding the Jesus "wave," trying to cash in on the name. God is *nobody's* tool.
 - * He tried to keep the proconsul (The governor of a senatorial province) from the faith.
 - * God regulated Elymas - Saul, filled with the Spirit pronounced God's judgment on him.
 - Two kingdoms collided, Satan's lost.
 - * Apostles carried authority (2 Cor 12:12/Rom 15:19, 2 Cor 13:1-10; Rev 2:2)
 - * They were: chosen by Christ, apparently all Jewish men, had been with Him from His baptism by John in the Jordan until He was taken up from them and was to be a witness of His resurrection (Act 1). They were chosen eyewitnesses (.e.g, Paul appeals to this in 1 Cor 9:1)**
 - The proconsul was amazed by this and believed.

From this time on Paul no longer went only to the Jews (e.g., 13:5) but to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. Paul will be found to have a special call to evangelize non-Jews (Gal 2:6-10).

Do we reach out to and pray for our "kind" only?

Is the spiritual welfare of others important to us? It is to Jesus (Mtt 9:36, Jn 4:34).

Will you ask God to give you opportunities?

** Why is this important? It goes on today.

- There are and have always been people claiming apostolic authority. Paul dealt with them in detail in 2 Cor. In 2 Cor 11 we learn a bit about them:
 - * In Corinth they called themselves "Super Apostles" (11:5, 12:11).
 - * They appear to have been trained speakers (11:6).
 - * They claimed to be Jews (11:22).
 - * They claimed to be eyewitnesses of the Lord and His works (1 Cor 9:1, Acts 1:21-22).
 - * They profited financially from the ministry (11:7-12).
 - * They used the word to control others and enrich themselves (11:16-21).
 - * They were religious imposters, actually serving Satan (11:13-15).
 - * They claimed equality with genuine apostles (11:12).
 - * They often preach a false gospel.
- False teachers were certain to rise up within the church then as they do now - Act 20:25-31, 1 Jn 4:1-2. Some today even claim the title "apostle."

**ACTS
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"To the Nations"
Acts 13:13-52**

Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

1. Paul and Barnabas visit Pisidian Antioch and are invited to address their fellow Jews in the synagogue. 13-1-43

- a. They proclaimed an orthodox faith (vs 13-20a) Pt 1.
- God chose Israel (as His instrument of salvation).
 - He prospered them in Egypt.
 - He led them out of their bondage with mighty power.
 - He endured their conduct for 40 years in the desert.
 - He overthrew 7 nations in Canaan and gave Israel their land.
 - All this took about 450 years.

- b. They proclaimed an orthodox faith (vs 20b-25) Pt 2.
- God gave Israel judges (leaders) until the time of Samuel.
 - The people asked for a king.
 - * God gave them Saul for 40 years.
 - * God then gave them David (A man after His own heart).
 - From David's descendants God brought Jesus to Israel.
 - * He sent John the Baptist to prepare the way.
 - * Jesus is greater than John (*far* more than a prophet).

Christianity is the fulfillment of judaism, not something entirely new.

- c. *They proclaimed the gospel (vs 26-41)*
- The people of Jerusalem and their leaders rejected Jesus (Jn 1:10-13)
 - * In doing so they fulfilled the words of their prophets (e.g., Is 53) that they read every Sabbath.
 - * God raised Him from the dead and caused Him to be seen (e.g., Mtt 28:17, Lk 24, Jn 20, 21; Acts 1:20-22, 1 Cor 15:3-8).
 - What God promised their fathers He had fulfilled by raising Jesus (Ps 2:7, Is 55:3, Ps 16:10).
 - * He did not see decay.
 - * Through (faith in) Jesus sins are forgiven and sinners justified (declared righteous).
 - * Be careful how you respond! (See Heb 1:5)
 - They were invited to come back and speak again.
 - Many Jews and converts to judaism followed Paul and Barnabas (who urged them to continue in the grace of God).
 - * People make a profession of faith - how does one know if it is genuine? Look at the fruit.

**ACTS
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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

2. What a difference a week makes! (or, “People are fickle”)

Act 13: 44-52

- a. The following Sabbath a large crowd (Jew and Gentile) came to hear the message 44-46
- Those from the synagogue who did not believe became abusive and spoke against the gospel. We need to speak up but also to respect the wishes of those who do not want to hear the message (Mtt 7:6). If the Jews wouldn't listen, he would turn to those who would.
 - Paul and Barnabas answered their opponents:
 - * “We had to speak to you 1st” (Act 3:36, Rom 1:16, Gal 4:21-31) - Scripture records that it was the apostles' habit to go to the Jews 1st. Jesus did the same (Mtt 15:21-28). But though the priority was “to the Jew 1st,” the message was/is for all people.
 - * “Since you do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.” This was God's command (Paul cited Is 49:5-7. See also Mtt 22:34-46 and Lk 7:29-30 - by their rejection of God's messenger/message those who refused to believe condemned themselves.
 - The Gentiles heard the message and were glad. All who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word “appointed” comes from the GK “tasso” - to arrange, order, set. It does not necessarily mean that they were chosen but can also mean that they set themselves by their faith in Christ for eternal life. The language is middle voice/passive and can indicate that their choice determined their destiny.
 - * *Scripture presents us here with a mystery. God is sovereign and chooses (elects) to salvation those whom He will. Yet, scripture is also very clear that we have a will and are responsible for the choices that we make. From our limited, human perspective, the two truths are irreconcilable. Does God choose or do we? The answer satisfies almost no one. The answer is, “Yes.”*
 - * *Know that your choices matter and that God is not pleased with the damnation of anyone (e.g., 2 Pet 3:9) but desires all men to be saved (e.g, Ezk 18:23, 32; Jn 3:16-18).*
 - * *And finally, remember that Theology has its limitations. For one, the Subject is vast beyond our ability to fully comprehend. And theology's practitioners are limited. We can only know what He has revealed.*
- b. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region 47-52
- Persecution ensued and Paul and Barnabas were expelled from the region.
 - But, the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

3. Lycaonian Ministry Pt 1 (14:1-20)

Acts 14:1-28

a. Iconium

Acts 14:1-7

- Paul and Barnabas started at the Jewish synagogue.
 - * Their message was effective and a large number of Jews and Gentiles believed.
 - * Those Jews who did not believe (“refused” - *to disobey, rebel*) made trouble for them, stirring up the Gentiles and poisoning their minds against the brothers (apostles and new believers). See Jn 3:36. *But...It isn't over until it's over. Many reject the message of Jesus due to their will, not unbelief. You can marshal every argument, present evidence etc. and still get nowhere with certain people. Remember - you are a messenger. None of us can obey or believe for anyone else. Trust God to use the message as He will and in His time.*
- So, Paul spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord (Who confirmed the message of His grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders (See Jn 3:2, Act 2:22, 4:10 - The Jews who heard the message had no excuse - 1 Cor 1:22).
 - * Paul didn't run (see also 1 Cor 16:8-9), he and Barnabas stayed and doubled down.
 - * The citizens were divided and after a while some plotted to harm them so Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area and kept preaching.

b. Lystra

Acts 14:8-20

- God healed a man crippled from birth who had never walked (More than one miracle here! A lot like the healing in Acts 3).
- The crowd was astonished and supposed Paul and Barnabas to be divine.
- The apostles engaged the crowd and asserted that God alone was worthy of worship. *Ministry is about Him, not us.*
- The apostles rebuked the idolatry of the crowds and proclaimed Christ.
 - * They were only men bringing them good news.
 - * Turn from “worthless idols” to the Living God.
 - + He made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them. (See Act 17:22-31).
 - + In the past He let all nations go their own way.
 - + He has not left Himself without a testimony: He shows grace.
- Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived, won over the crowd and stoned Paul and dragged him out outside the city, leaving him for dead. Paul's opponents caused him a lot of trouble over the years. Obedience is seldom convenient (See 2 Cor 11:16-33, 1 These 2:14, 2 Tim 3:11).
- Paul got up, and went back into town, leaving the next day for Derbe.

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

3. Lycaonian Ministry Pt 2 (14:21-28)

Acts 14:1-28

- a. They preached the good news in that city (Derbe) and won (“*made*”) a large number of disciples (e.g., Act 20:4).
- b. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch:
- Strengthening the disciples (See Lk 22:32 and Matt 28:19 - *Christians are not called to make converts but disciples.*)
 - Encouraging them to remain true to the faith (“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” - Jn 16:33, Phil 3:10).
 - * *We are called to know and follow Christ through life, the “good, bad and ugly.”*
 - * *Those who only follow Christ when things are easy should beware - See Matt 13:21-22.*
 - Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord on Whom they had placed their trust.
 - * *There is a God-ordained structure and mission for the church (1 Tim 3:1-13, Tit 1:5-9).*
 - * *Leaders must be prayerfully and carefully selected. Placing the wrong person in leadership could have harmed the infant congregations.*
- c. After going through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia, and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. *They returned the way that they came.*
- d. From Attalia they went back to Antioch, where they had been committed to God for the work they had now completed.
- On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door to faith to the Gentiles.
 - * *Paul and Barnabas are a model for missions. They were accountable to the church family that sent them out and supported them. This is why our supported missionaries return to visit, report and maintain their relationship with our church. Accountability is a good thing.*
 - * *Partnership in ministry is a healthy thing (See Phil 1:3, Act 18:5, 2 Cor 11:5-9).*
 - And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. *The interval between the 1st and 2nd missionary journey could have been several years. What did Paul and Barnabas do in that time? They likely continued in their former ministry in the church at Antioch (See Act 11:25, 13:1).*

Some thoughts:

Are we “fair weather Christians” or genuine?

What do we do to further the reach of the kingdom? Pray, give, serve? And if not, why not?

How interested are we in staying in contact with our supported missionaries? Do we seek to encourage them, stay abreast of their needs and deeds?

How important is it to us to seek to build up ourselves and others in the faith?

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4. The Jerusalem Council (or - *How are we saved, by works or by grace?*) 15:1-35

- a. Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching heresy:** “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”
- There is only one gospel (See Gal 1:6-9). How clear are you in your understanding of it?
 - Paul and Barnabas confronted their error head on in a sharp dispute/debate. (Gal 2).
- b.** The church appointed Paul, Barnabas and some other believers to go to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders and settle the issue.
- They sent them on their way.
 - As they traveled toward Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas told what God had done in bringing the Gentiles to faith.
 - * This made all the brothers very glad.
 - * They arrived in Jerusalem and reported everything God had done to the apostles, elders and church.
- c.** Some believers who were also Pharisees stood up and demanded that Gentile believers be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses. (See Col 2:13-23)
- The apostles and elders met to consider the issue and give a judgment.
 - Peter testified that God accepted the Gentiles exactly the same as He did the Jews - He purified their hearts by faith and showed it by His gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - Peter demanded to know why the Pharisees wanted to impose a yoke (*slavery*) in the necks of the disciples that neither his fellow Jews nor their fathers had been able to bear?
 - * Salvation is by grace through faith.
 - * It has always been thus - e.g, Gen 15:6, Gal 5:1
 - * Not by law/human effort but grace. Those who rejected grace rejected salvation by insisting on doing it “their way.” (Rom 10:1-4).
 - Peter held firm in the face of the disapproval of his peers. *I find Peter’s courage and humility inspiring. He had compromised in Antioch and had been rebuked by Paul (Gal 2:10-ff). Yet here we find him repentant and upholding the truth - Prv 9:8, 13:1, 19:25).*
 - Barnabas and Paul related to the church the miraculous work of God in the salvation of the Gentiles.
- d.** James renders his judgment (He was the pastor of the Jerusalem church)
- There was precedent for this! God had already shown His grace to Gentiles (Act 10-11).
 - This had always been God’s plan (Is 49:6, 56:1-8, Am 9:11-12).
 - James decided, and the leaders and church concurred, that the Gentile believers were to abstain from:
 - * food offered to idols.
 - * sexual immorality.
 - * the meat of strangled animals
 - * blood
 - One thing further was asked - that they continue to remember the poor (Gal 2:10, Act 11:27-30).

- And the church sent a letter with representatives from the church to confirm their message.
The critical issue of the controversy is this: How are we reconciled to God? By our own works in complying with the Law? Or by God's grace made available to us in Christ by faith? It cannot be both ways.

- ***Paul and Barnabas were right to stand up and defend the truth. A lot was at stake for the church and for those who had rejected grace (Gal 1:6-9).***

- ***Peter set aside his pride, accepted correction and stood up for the truth. Would that we all could be that humble and gracious when confronted (and wrong).***

* ***Are we teachable?***

* ***Are we willing to "go there" when we are faced with serious departure from the gospel? Jude 3***

- ***The gospel must be upheld (Jude 3). Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. Jew and Gentile are heirs together of salvation (See Eph 3:6).***

* ***Both are saved the same way.***

* ***We are one body, family, church.***

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5. The second missionary journey

Act 15:36-18:28

Part 1 - Conflict and Commencement

Reading the Acts of the Apostles one can be tempted to see Paul and other apostles and leaders as “super saints,” striding from triumph to triumph and immune from human ills and struggles. This cannot be farther from the truth. They loved and sought to serve Christ, but did so as sinners saved by grace.

- a. Paul and Barnabas in conflict (*God truly does cause all things to work together for good...*)
- Sometime later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.”
 - Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, but Paul did not think it wise (“Fit, worthy, realistic”) to take him because he had deserted (“withdrew from”) them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.”
 - * They had such a sharp disagreement (“provocation, angry dispute”) that they parted company.
 - * Barnabas took (“called, chose”) Mark and sailed for Cyprus.
 - * Paul took Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. *It seems from the text that the church in Antioch supported them and sent them off.*
- b. He (*Paul*) went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Consider Mark:

He had originally come with Paul and Barnabas to help (Act 12:25). Something didn't sit well with him and he bailed out (Act 13:13).

As far as Paul was concerned he was untrustworthy and a bad risk as a companion (15:38) Yet in Col 4:10 and 2 Tim 4:11 Paul includes Mark in his greetings/instructions as “useful,” and describes him as a fellow worker. So apparently he had changed his mind about him.

Maybe Mark had proved himself, maybe Paul reconsidered? Or...both.

Don't write people off - yesterday's “loser” is all of us (1 Cor 1:18-2:5, Eph 2:1-10).

Barnabas was determined to come alongside Mark, and minister to him. It wasn't for nothing that the apostles called him “Son of Encouragement.”

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Act 15:36-18:28

Part 2 - Galatia

- a.** He came to Derbe and Lystra, where a disciple (“*a learner, pupil, follower*”) named Timothy lived.
- His mother was a Jewess and a believer (1 Tim 5:22, 2 Tim 1:3-7)
 - Whose father was a Greek.
 - Who was well-spoken-of by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium (Act 10:22, 1 Tim 3:1-7).
- b.** Paul wanted to take him along on the journey so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek (1 Cor 9:22).
- As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.
 - So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.
- c.** Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.
- When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.
 - So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.
 - * During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”
 - * After Paul had seen the vision, we “got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” *This is the first instance in the book of Acts of the use of the 1st Person plural.*

What do we know about Luke?

He was a Gentile (Col 4:10-15)

He was educated

He was faithful (2 Tim 4:9-13).

He had an intimate knowledge of the OT (God Fearer?)

He was thought to be from Antioch in Syria.

He was a close associate/disciple of eyewitnesses (Lk 1:1-4)

What do we know about Timothy?

He was a disciple

He was faithful (Phil 2:20)

He had a good testimony

He was a fellow worker (Rom 16:21)

God leads in ways that can frustrate our designs/plans (See vs 6-7) - Will we seek Him in the ashes of our plans/dreams? Think of Joseph, Moses, Ruth, Daniel, Esther, Amos, Paul. Success and blessing came not from getting their way but from seeking God in all that they were led to do.

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5. The second missionary journey

Act 15:36-18:28

Pt 3, Macedonia

- a.** Arrival at Philippi vs 11-12 Act 16:11-40
- A Roman colony
 - The leading city of the district.
 - They stayed there several days.
- b.** To the Jew 1st vs 13-15
- They sought a place of prayer
 - They spoke to the women they found gathered there.
 - Lydia believed.
 - * She was a dealer in purple cloth. (*An expensive commodity*)
 - * She was from Thyatira.
 - * She was a worshipper of God. (*Probably a Gentile convert to Judaism*)
 - * Her heart was opened to Paul’s message (*The work of the Holy Spirit*).
 - * Her family also believed and were baptized.
 - * She immediately wanted to participate in Paul’s ministry.
- c.** God sent them to the Gentiles vs 16-40
- The team was hounded by a demon-possessed slave girl for many days.
 - Paul confronted the enemy (*We do have an enemy - Eph 3:10, 1 Pet 5:8*) and cast the demon out of her. Jesus rejected the testimony of demons (Mk 1:24) and Paul was troubled by it as well.
 - The girl’s owners pressed charges. (*The said Paul and Silas “exceedingly disturbed” the people of the city.*)
 - * The crowd joined in.
 - * The magistrates ordered Paul and Silas stripped, beaten and incarcerated (2 Cor 11:25, 1 Thes 2:2).
 - Their situation was actually an opportunity. *Do we look for opportunity in adversity?*
 - * Around midnight a severe earthquake occurred while Paul and Silas were worshipping.
 - * As the building flexed and shook, cel doors opened, chains were loosened etc. The jailer almost killed himself
 - * When the jailer realized that everyone was still there, he asked P & S how to be saved.
 - * P & S preached to the jailer and his household.
 - * The jailer and his family tended to Paul Silas’ injuries and then were baptized and fed (They were joyful).
 - God used P & S’s hardship for blessing.
 - * The authorities ordered their release.
 - * Paul played his “ace in the hole” - He and Silas were Roman citizens. Their trial and punishment were illegal and the authorities were in trouble.
 - * The magistrates themselves came and escorted them out of the jail (and asked them to leave). The new church was safe (they had the “goods” on the magistrates).
 - * Paul and Silas went to Lydia’s home, ate with the brethren, encouraged them and left.

Something began in this tough time in the ministry: Act 18:1-6, 2 Cor 11:7-12, Phil 1:3-6, 4:14-19. Do you look for opportunity in adversity? Will you trust God in uncertainty?

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Part 3, Macedonia (continued)

Chapters 13-28

Act 15:36 -18:28

Act 17:1-15

- a. Thessalonica (roughly 70 mi from Philippi) vs 1-9
- Paul and his companions passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia.
 - There was a synagogue in the city and as was his custom, Paul went there first, and reasoned from the scriptures with the congregation for three weeks (Act 8:35, 1 Cor 15:3). Note that he taught *from the scriptures*. Not philosophy, not human literature but the word. Lk 24:25-27, 2 Tim 3:14-17. He proclaimed the crucified and risen Christ. See also Eph 6:17 and 1 Tim 4:13. It's almost akin to Amos 8:11 these days.
 - * Some were persuaded (or, "obedient") (Jews, God-fearing Greeks and "not a few" prominent women. And...many Gentiles (1 Thess 1:4-10).
 - * Some were not (Jn 3:36 - neutrality is not an option).
 - Opposition arose (See Act 13:45-46, 49; 14:2-5, 19; 16:19-24)
 - * The Jews were jealous ("envious, angry and jealous").
 - * They formed a mob and started a riot (*Calculated "outrage" is nothing new*).
 - * They rushed to the place where Paul was staying and didn't find him.
 - + They dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials.
 - + They accused them of harboring men who were causing trouble ("disturbing") all over the world, defying Caesar's decrees etc.
 - * The crowd and city officials were thrown into turmoil.
 - * They made Jason and Co. post bond ("security") and released them.
- c. Berea vs 10-15
- Paul and Silas were sent on their way by the brothers in Thessalonica to Berea.
 - Paul and Silas went to the synagogue and had a much different reception:
 - * The Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians:
 - + They received the word with great eagerness.
 - + They examined the scriptures daily to check out what Paul was preaching (1 Thes 5:19-22, 2 Tim 2:15). We should be watchful - 1 Cor 15:33
 - * Many of the Jews believed as did a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.
 - The Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching at Berea and came to oppose him.
 - * They agitated the crowds and stirred them up.
 - * The brothers there immediately sent Paul and Silas to the coast and had them escorted to Athens.
 - * Silas and Timothy remained behind. Why? Discipleship. (e.g., 1 Cor 4:17, Phil 2:19-24, 1 Tim 3:5-6, Tit 1:5).
 - * And when Paul arrived at Athens he sent word for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

Where do you stand with the Lord? Neutrality is not an option.

Are you in the word? Would you know falsehood if you heard it?

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5. The second missionary journey

Part 4 Achaia

Chapters 13-28

Act 15:36 -18:28

Act 17:16-18:28

a. Paul arrives in Athens and begins to reach out

- He was disturbed by the signs of a pervasive idolatry in the city.

- He reasoned in the synagogue and in the marketplace (ie., to Jews, “God Fearers” and Gentiles).
 - * Some Stoic and Epicurean philosophers debated with him. They ridiculed him, calling him a “babblers” (Lit - “*seed picker*.” One like a bird hunting seeds in the dirt, plucks little bits of knowledge here and there and offers it up as original thought.).
 - * They brought Paul to a meeting of the Aeropagus to hear him out.

b. Paul declares the gospel to people with no background in the scriptures. Notice that he assumes no *a priori* biblical knowledge on the part of his hearers.

- First he commented on the misdirected religious piety of the Athenians:
 - * They had tried to cover all the bases in their idolatry.
 - * Paul was prepared to declare to them that God is know-able. (Comp. with Dan 2:10-11).

- The God who made the world. Not a god out of many. Paul proclaims the unique identity of God.
 - * Lord of heaven and earth.
 - * Does not dwell in man made houses/temples (1 King 8:27, Act 7:48).
 - * He is not served by humans (*as if He needed anything*). He is the Creator/Sustainer/ Provider (e.g, Psalm 50).
 - * He made all (“*every*”) nation(s) of men from one man, determining the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. *Not an equality of citizens, as the Greeks would have understood such, but of humanity, civilized or barbarian.* Paul does not “pick seeds” from philosophy or hold back truth.
 - * God did this to confront humanity with His reality as revealed in creation, the word and Christ. So that people might seek (“*grope about*”) and find Him (“*God*”). Creation and God’s working points men to the reality of God (e.g., Ps 19:1-6/Rom 10:18, Rom 1:16-17).
 - * In Him we live, move and *exist* (Even as some Gk poets had concluded).

- Therefore, since we are His offspring, we need to understand Him rightly!
 - * Idols do not, *cannot* point us to God. They are simply a *very* inadequate human effort.
 - * Although God had not directly confronted the idolatry of the nations in the past, He now commands all men to repent, for all are under judgment. And Jesus is the Judge (e.g., Jn 5:22-27, 12:48).
 - * God has given proof of this to all by raising Jesus from the dead.

c. At this, the mocking began. Yet some believed and followed. Our duty is to be clear in our witness. The results are God’s business (See 2 Cor 4).

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Part 4 Achaia

Chapters 13-28

Act 15:36 -18:28

Act 17:16-18:28

d. Paul left Athens and arrived in Corinth (about a 50 mile journey).

- He met a fellow Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus who had recently come from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. (*The emperor Claudius had evicted Jews from Rome*).
- * Paul went to see them, and because he was also in their trade (tentmaker), stayed and worked with them.
- * It is interesting to note that this was the beginning of a long association with this couple. They believed and became both friends and fellow workers with Paul (Act 18:18-19, 26; Rom 16:3, 1 Cor 16:19, 2 Tim 4:19).
- * God uses “everyday meetings” to redirect lives. There is a plan (Eph 1:11, Ro 8:28).

e. Paul preached in Corinth

- He started out preaching in the synagogue every sabbath, “trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.
- Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, allowing Paul to devote himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.
- * The Macedonian churches partnered with Paul in his ministry (When necessary, Paul supported himself in the ministry. Yet these churches also partnered with him - Act 20:34, 2 Cor 11:7-12, Phil 1:3-11, 4:14-19).
- * What are we/you doing to advance the message of Jesus?
- The Jews opposed Paul and became abusive so Paul shook out his clothes in protest and said: “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” See Acts 13:46-47, Rom 1:16-18).
- Paul left the synagogue and went to meet next door in the house of a fellow believer.
- We cannot believe for others or drag them into the kingdom against their will. Get the message out as clear as you can. After that it is between them and God.
- * Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord.
- * And many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.
- Paul had been severely beaten and jailed in Philippi, ran out of Thessalonica and Berea (*And that was just on this trip! On the first missionary trip he’d been stoned and left for dead.*) Athens doesn’t seem to have been an outwardly successful ministry. Paul must have felt a measure of anxiety for his safety in Corinth. He was a joyful man but had a tough life at times (2 Cor 11).
- God spoke to Paul one night in a vision to encourage him. *He wasn’t “superman.” He was just like us. Jesus told him:*
- * Not be afraid*, keep on speaking. Do not be silent.
- * Jesus was with him and he wouldn’t be harmed.
- * He (Jesus) had many people in that city. *Paul’s work here would be fruitful.*
- So Paul stayed there for a year and a half, teaching the word of God.

Some things to take away from this passage:

- Athens seemed to be a bust as far as a mass response to the gospel message. It was the cultural center of Greece, a reminder of its glorious past, center of worship, education, etc. Yet it was in Corinth where God opened the door for a great harvest.

* We are called to be faithful. God is the One who grants fruit.

* We can strategize and plan, but He is Lord of the harvest. Be willing and available and trust Him.

- God leads people into our lives through the most ordinary circumstances (in this case, a trade relationship) that can be a huge influence. Focus on seeking Him in daily life. To quote RC Sproul, "Right now counts forever."

- The Macedonian churches partnered with Paul in reaching the churches in southern Greece.

* What are we doing as a church to further the gospel?

* Do you know who our supported missionaries are?

* Have you ever thought of communicating with them? Giving toward projects they have, toward their support?

* Housing them when they are home?

* Going to work with them short term in their field of service? Long term?

How are you/we partnering with our supported missionaries? In new opportunities for outreach?

* A word about fear. All through scripture we read about people exhorted to not fear. We can think of people like Abraham, Paul, Joshua etc. as bold and powerful. But they were ordinary people just like us. They feared God (holding him in honor and awe). They trusted Him. In Rom 8 and Gal 4 we read that we have not been given a spirit of fear in our relationship with God but a Spirit of adoption. We have a close relationship with our Abba ("daddy"). As a son or daughter with a loving father we have that closeness with our King. Paul may have struggled with fear of men, but he knew where he stood with his Abba.

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5. The second missionary journey

Part 4 Achaia (Continued)

Chapters 13-28

Act 15:36 -18:28

Act 17:16- 18:28

f. Jesus had appeared to Paul in vs 9-10 and encouraged Paul to press on in his ministry in Corinth. But there was opposition.

- The Jews (local leadership) made a united attack on Paul and accused him in court before the proconsul (the governor of the colony).

* They charged him with “persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.” *Rome accorded the Jewish faith legal status. Jews were free to practice their faith. But here the Jewish opponents of Paul apparently believed that freedom to worship also included government regulation of doctrine.*

* Paul was reaching Jews and Gentiles with the gospel and they opposed his message and the results of his ministry (1 Cor 16:9).

* They asked a secular court to intervene in a doctrinal matter.

* The proconsul refused to hear the case and had them ejected from the court.

* The text in the original can be taken two ways: *Either the Jews who came with the synagogue ruler (Sosthenes) had been talked into it by him and in their embarrassment turned on him or...the assembled Romans and Greeks vented their irritation at their temerity in trying to subvert the purpose of their courts and thrashed him.* Either way, the proconsul let things take their course without intervening.

People meant to harm Paul but God turned it back on themselves. Ps 33:10, Prv 16:9, 19:11; Is 14:27, Is 46:10. His purpose will prevail.

g. Paul wrapped up his time in Corinth and made a quick trip to Judea and his sending churching Antioch before returning to missionary work in Asia.

- He took Priscilla and Aquila with him and left them in Ephesus.

- He made a visit to the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews, promising to return if God willed it. (Jas 4:14)

- He traveled to Jerusalem and Antioch and headed back, visiting throughout Galatia and Phrygia strengthening “all the disciples.” *This had to have taken significant time. Perhaps many months as Paul visited and sought to strengthen churches.*

f. In the meantime back in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila carried on ministry.

- They taught Apollos the gospel “more adequately” (“*accurately*”)

* He had a thorough knowledge (“*mighty*”) of the scriptures but didn’t quite understand the gospel. He knew only the baptism of John.

* He had been speaking in the synagogue and Priscilla and Aquila took an interest in him.

- When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and sent a letter of reference to the disciples there.

* He proved a big help to the church there.

* He vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate and proclaimed Jesus as the Christ.

Discipleship is everyone’s ministry (Heb 10:19-25).

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Chapters 13-28

6. Paul’s third missionary journey (Asia)

Acts 19:1-41

a. While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus.

- He had spent considerable time traveling throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia in ministry to the churches there.
- He met some (12) disciples in Ephesus and asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed.
 - * They had no idea there even was a Holy Spirit.
 - * They had only received John’s baptism (for repentance - to prepare them for the ministry of Jesus). John pointed the Messiah out to Israel (Jn 1:19-28, Mk 3:1-12). So these men knew that Jesus was the Messiah but little else. He was also God and man, Savior etc.
- They immediately believed and were baptized into the name of Jesus.
- When Paul laid hands on them they spoke in other languages and prophesied.* In this there are similarities to Acts 8:14-17, 10:44-46. God revealed to the apostle Peter that He had accepted the Samaritans and the Gentiles, and showed His authority through His apostles to the new believers.

b. Paul entered the synagogue (to the Jew 1st! Rom 1:16-18) and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

- But, some became obstinate and refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way.
- So, Paul left with the disciples and had discussions daily in a lecture hall in town (2 Yrs). So all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

c. Apostolic ministry (2 Cor 12:12) pointed Jew and Gentile alike to the Lord.

- God did extraordinary miracles through Paul (Similar to Act 2:43, 4:33, 5:12 where God worked miracles through the Apostles in the infant church).
 - * Articles of clothing that had touched Paul were taken to sick and possessed people who were healed and set free.
 - * Some Jewish exorcists tried to cash in on the “Jesus wave” using His name in their “ministry.”
 - * It didn’t end well for them - they received a lesson in angelology. We dare not deal with our all-too-real enemy in our own strength and wisdom.
- People learned of this and took note - that Jesus is holy, He cannot be used for our own ends, and it He is powerful.
 - * Those living in the area were seized with fear when they learned of this and honored the name of Jesus highly.
 - * Many people believed repented of their former occult practices, burning their scrolls (clean break).
 - * People heard of this and took notice. The gospel spread! Nothing commands the attention of the world like a changed life. A changed life arrests attention far more than mere words. But a changed life and a gospel testimony is powerful (e.g., Mtt 5:16, Phil 2:14-15, Jas 3:13, 1 Pet 2:11-12).

* It wasn't a normative thing even for Peter (Act 11:15). Some believers make the mistake of having had an experience and believing that it must therefore be normative for all believers - which has never been the case. And its opposite is also true. Read 1 Cor 14:

- The gift of languages is not for believers (vs 22) and are a sign for unbelieving Jews in particular (vs 20-21, Is 28:11-12).
- They are a known human language (vs 6-12). What a person does alone in prayer is between them and God, but there is no biblical evidence for a prayer language.
- We are to pray and sing with both mind and spirit engaged (vs 13-17).

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Chapters 13-28

6. Paul’s third missionary journey (Asia)

Acts 19:1-41

d. Upheaval in Ephesus

Act 19:22-41

- Paul prepared to travel to Jerusalem (via Macedonia and Achaia), after which he planned (“*Settled in his mind/purposed in his spirit*”) to visit Rome (Rom 1:8-15, 15:23-29).

* He must have believed that the Ephesian church was well established and healthy and that it was time to move to another field.

* He sent two of his coworkers on ahead (Timothy and Erastus).

* While they went ahead, Paul remained a while longer in the city.

- “About this time” a great (“*not small*”) disturbance arose about the Way (*A name at that time for the faith*).

* A silversmith named Demetrius (who made silver shrines, Lit, “temples”, of Artemis) brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen. The religious devotion to Artemis and tourism consumed souvenirs, mementos, etc. and the silversmiths were quite happy to profit from it. Almost like the hats one used to see that read, “I’ve been to Trees of Mystery” etc.

* He called the other silversmiths and people in related trades together and laid out his concerns.

+ He was upset that Paul was successfully persuading “*a great number of*” people in both the city and province that man-made gods were no gods at all (Act 17:29). It was cutting into their profits! *Does this world profit from false spirituality? Would that the Spirit of God would so permeate our world that peddling vice would just not pay anymore. That will only happen when God’s people seek Him and live as salt and light.*

+ He saw Paul and the gospel as an existential threat to the worship of the goddess and through that, to their trade and the reputation of idolatry (1 Thess 1:9-10).

* The assembled crowd began crying out loud the greatness of the city’s patron goddess.

* They rushed into the theater and their racket alarmed and confused the whole city.

* They dragged two of Paul’s companions into the theater with them (Paul’s friends kept him from going. Even some community leaders begged him not to go).

* No one really knew what was happening. Kind of like a high school fight. A crowd almost instantly gathers, everyone yelling and half of them have no idea what’s happening.

* They did not want to hear from any monotheists (vs 33)!

* They kept on shouting for about 2 hours.

* The city clerk calmed them down, chewed them out and sent them home.

The world resists and rejects the message of the cross. (1 Cor 1:18)

The gospel is more often rejected due to will and self interest rather than intellectual objection (Mt 13:57, Jn 9:18, Act 14:2, 19:9)

The world and the kingdom of God are in conflict - friction will happen! Don’t look for it but don’t let it surprise you. Matt 10:34, Lk 12:51, Jn 15:18 - If we trust and follow Christ, He comes first. This loyalty is a wedge between us and the god of this world. Hang on!

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

7. Paul’s tour through the churches of Europe and west Asia.

Act 20:1-38

a. When the uproar (In Ephesus) had ended, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, said goods bye and set out for Macedonia.

- He had decided to leave and summoned (“*sent for*”) the disciples.
- If you know that your time was short, what would you try to communicate to those you had come to love? (See 20:38, also Deut). What is truly important? (Act 20:20-21)

b. He traveled through that area (Macedonia), speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece (Achaia) where he stayed three months.

- As he did on Macedonia, in Greece (Achaia) he likely went from church to church encouraging, teaching, preparing them. And maybe releasing them to God.
- For every parent, a time comes when your advice, counsel direction may or may not be asked for. In a church plant (or any congregation really), leaders need to do their best and trust God for the fruit. AWANA leaders, bible study leaders, elders, deacons, deaconesses, VBS workers etc. - this applies to us all! Do your best and trust God. You cannot produce fruit in others.

c. Because the Jews made a plot against (“*planned against*”) him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. *This doesn’t mean all Jews. Many were part of the church. But there were those who had rejected the gospel and worked against the church.*

- He was accompanied by Sopater son Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.
- These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. *Some commentators think that these were church representatives accompanying an offering for the church in Judea. The context does not make this plain. They may have come with Paul as protection from enemies. Or they may have come as friends.*
- But **we** sailed from Philippi after the feast of Unleavened Bread and 5 days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed 7 days.

d. On the 1st day of the week we came together to break bread (1 Cor 16:2, Rev 1:10).

- Paul spoke to the people and because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. *Any time might be your last. Live with eternity in mind.*
- There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting (*It was warm*).
 - * Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on.
 - * When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the 3rd story and was picked up dead.
 - * Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him.
 - + “Don’t be alarmed,” he said, “He’s alive!”
 - + Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate.
- After talking until daylight, he left.
- The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted. They had been instructed by an apostle and had seen God confirm His presence.

Some things to take away from this narrative:

Discipleship is a lifetime activity. Believers are to admonish and encourage one another.

We are to seek our own growth. This is much more than mere faithful church attendance.

- Are we in the word on a consistent basis?
- Do we pray?
- Are we faithfully seeking to participate in a congregation of believers?
- Are we serving?

At some point the people God has placed in your “orbit” will exit your “sphere of influence.”

They might be your kids, grandkids, Sunday School class, AWANA group, bible study etc.

If you knew that you would not see a child, a student, a friend a mate again, what final words would you say?

What do you consider essential by way of spiritual instruction?

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

7. Paul's tour through the churches of Europe and west Asia.

Acts 20:1-38

Continued:

e. Paul sent for and met with the elders of the church in Ephesus

- He sent for them from Miletus (about 50 miles from Ephesus) so as not to get bogged down in the province of Asia.
- He wanted to arrive in Jerusalem on or before Pentecost.
- He used this meeting to say goodbye and charge them to be watchful and faithful.
 - * He appealed to them to follow his example (serving gently/humbly and with care) See 1 Pet 5:1-4.
 - * To stand strong (as he had when opposed by his own people).
 - * To preach the word faithfully ("*w/o hesitation/shrinking back*"), without regard to other's opinions (Jer 15:19-21), as he had both publicly and "in homes".
 - * To preach the gospel to all: People must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.
- He was compelled ("*bound*") by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, with no idea what awaited him.
 - * "Only" that the Holy Spirit was warning ("*solemnly testifying*") him in every town that prison ("*chains*") and hardship were in his future.
 - * For Paul's part, it was all good so long as he could complete the task that God had given him - preaching the gospel (Act 9:15, 22:14, 26:15-23, 2 Tim 4:7).
 - * Everything besides his calling was of no account (Phil 3:12).
- He declared that he was innocent of the blood of all men because he had not hesitated to proclaim ("*announce*") the whole ("*all*") will ("*counsel/decrees*") of God.
- He charged the elders to keep watch over themselves and all the flock of which the Spirit had made them overseers (1 Tim 4:9-16, Tit 1:5-9, 1 Pet 5:1-5).
- They were to be shepherds of (to "*tend*") the church of God which He bought with his own blood.
 - * As shepherds we are called to value the flock the way He does.
 - * There are predators lurking and the shepherds need to be vigilant. Division and heresy can come through ego, false teaching, or both (2 Tim 4:1-5).
 - * He told them, "Remember, you have been warned."
- Finally, he committed them to God and the word of His grace which can build up and give us an inheritance among the sanctified.
 - * He had not coveted their money or goods.
 - * His own hands had earned what he and his companions needed.
 - * He wanted to lead by example to show in his own life what Jesus said, "that it is more blessed to give than to receive." Then they prayed and said goodbye.

Some things to take away from this text:

1. It is a good idea to examine our life and priorities.

- a. What are we all about (What do we worship)?
- b. What has God given us to do and are we faithful to that?

2. God's leading will not always correspond to human conventional wisdom.

- a. That doesn't mean that we are on the wrong track.
- b. Determine your God given-priorities and make everything else subservient to them.

3. Watch yourself! (See also 1 Tim 4:16)

- a. Your life.
- b. Your faith.
- c. Be watchful - be faithful in His flock and watch - there are predators.

4. Give! It isn't what we get but what we give that will most change and shape us. (2 Cor 9:6-12). What does our example of giving show others?

- a. Yes, this can refer to resources, but also to:
- b. Abilities.
- c. Availability.
- d. Diligence.

Once again, as we saw in the text last week, Paul was communicating those things that were most important in his last meeting with people he had evangelized, mentored and lived among. These were dear friends. He was leaving them with an exhortation to be faithful to what was most important. What would you tell your friends, family, fellow believers today if you knew it was the last time you'd be together? Apply this to yourself and do it.

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

7. Paul’s tour through the churches of Europe and west Asia.

Acts 20:1-21:16

Continued:

f. The stop in Tyre (Seven days)

- The disciples there seemed to have been made aware by the Holy Spirit that Paul was facing hard times when he arrived in Jerusalem.

- They warned / urged Paul not to continue the trip.
 - * Yet their warnings and pleading likely confirmed to Paul that he was doing the right thing.
 - * When their time was up, they prayed with Paul and Co. and the journey resumed.

g. Ptolemais (One day)

h. Caesarea (A “number of days”)

- They stayed with Philip the evangelist (“*one who announces the good news of the gospel*”) See Eph 4:11-13, 2 Tim 4:4-5) for examples).
- Philip was one of the seven (Act 6:1-6) and a missionary (Act 8:4-13, 26-40).
- Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.
 - * “Prophesied” can mean “to speak forth,” (teaching/preaching).
 - * It can also mean the giving of a predictive message.
 - * It can describe thanksgiving and/or praise, or to break out in worship.
 - * It also has the sense of admonition, rebuke etc.
- Agabus, a prophet from Judea came and confirmed to Paul, the message that God had been giving him from the start of his journey. Prov 11:14, 15:22 - all along the way God was preparing Paul for what was about to happen.
 - * Paul’s companions and other disciples tried to dissuade Paul from continuing his journey.
 - * God doesn’t have “Plan B.” He is consistent and faithful. Paul stayed his course.

Does God only call His people to do what is easy and a “sure thing?” Of course not!

He reveals Himself to us through the triumphs and hardships of life. Seek Him in and through all things.

- ***There is no easy road (Act 14:22)***
- ***God works in all things for His purposes and our good (Jn 14:27, 16:33; Rom 8:28-37, 2 Cor 6:1-10). But in no place does He promise an easy road.***

God will often give us His counsel through the guidance of godly people around us. Beware continually seeking counsel until you find someone who agrees with you. Beware also of depending on the counsel of others when you are not seeking God yourself. There is no substitute for a close walk with the Lord. God’s message is consistent - don’t let doubt/desire change it (1 King 13).

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

8. Jerusalem

Acts 21:1-23:35

a. An undeserved reputation (are you ready to be misunderstood?).

- The Messianic believers were zealous for the law. Can someone be zealous for their particular slant on theology and be off track? Can one be “christianly” religious and unsaved? Yes!
- They’d been misinformed about Paul and his ministry. What *did* Paul teach (1 Cor 7:17-19, Rom 2:25-29, Gal 3:28, 5:6, 6:15; Col 3:11).
- Paul was asked to go “the extra mile.” See 1 Cor 9:19-23. He wasn’t a spineless “chameleon.” He was very clear with his views. But he avoided giving needless offense.

b. Paul was advised to pay the expenses of four men who had made a vow (Nazarite?).

The intent was to show through this that Paul was not hostile to the law and revered it himself (1 Tim 1:8).

- The Gentiles were not obligated to keep the Law (Act 15:20) and the leaders re-affirmed their earlier decision.
- So Paul complied with their request and seven days later was to go to the temple to complete the vow.
- When the time was almost up some Jews from Asia saw him and jumped to a conclusion.
 - * They made a false accusation and riled up the crowds.
 - * Paul was taken out of the temple and its doors were shut after he exited.
 - * The crowd attempted to kill him and the uproar alerted the Roman garrison.

c. Paul was in God’s hands (Act 20:22-24, 21:4, 10-14) - God had warned him and it was coming to pass.

- When the crowd saw that the army was intervening, they stopped beating Paul.
- Paul asked the commander for permission to speak and it was granted.
 - * Paul spoke to the in Aramaic and the crowd quieted down.
 - * And the commander, who very much wanted to know what was going on still had no clue.

We need to be gracious to all, even those who oppose or misunderstand us.

We are in God’s hands and can trust His direction (Rom 5:1-5, Jas 1:2-8).

- We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 2:11-22).
- We can have confidence that God will use whatever He allows for our good and His glory.

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**Section 4: To the World
8. Jerusalem (continued)**

**Chapters 13-28
Acts 21:1-23:35**

d. Paul’s Defense

22:1-30

- He spoke in Aramaic (A dialect very similar to Hebrew. It was the language of Babylon which became their language during the captivity of Israel). Hearing their own native language the crowd became very still.
- He related his history: A Jew from Tarsus who was raised in Jerusalem.
- He’d been taught under Gamaliel (A renown teacher of the law and Pharisee in his time). See Act 5:34.
- He was zealous for God, even persecuting the church unto death and imprisonment (To which the Jewish leaders could testify). See for example, Act 8:3, 9:1 and 1 Tim 1:13.
- He had even obtained letters from the Jerusalem authorities to the authorities in Damascus to arrest believers there and take them in chains to Jerusalem for punishment. Look at Phil 3:4b-6.
- Jesus met Paul on the way:
 - * At about noon as he approached the city of Damascus, a bright light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground.
 - * He heard a voice from God: “Saul*, Saul*, why do you persecute Me?”
 - * He asked who it was who was speaking to him and got an answer he surely expected and dreaded - it was Jesus. And He had a message and an assignment for Saul.
 - * Saul’s companions saw the light but could not understand the voice.
 - * Saul was to get up, go into the city where he would be given instructions.
 - * The proud Pharisee, the “enforcer” of the temple authorities and leaders, who had come to Syria to “take names” and regulate, had to be led into the city by the hand like a small child. He was blind. God resists the proud... (Prv 3:34, Jas 4:6, 1 Pet 5:5)

e. God’s Message for Paul (See also Act 26:16, 1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1, Eph 1:1, Col 1:1)

- The God of our ancestors as chosen (“*committed to a purpose/work*”) you to:
 - * Know His will (Phil 3:12, Jn 15:8, 1 Thess 4:3/1 Pet 4:4, 1 Thes 5:18 etc.).
 - * See the Righteous One (See also 1 Cor 9:1).
 - * Hear words from His mouth.
 - * You will be His witness to all people of what you have seen and heard.
 - * Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name (1 Pet 3:21, Jn 3:5).
- And so Paul was saved and identified with Christ.

f. God’s Plan: Jesus sent Paul away (to Tarsus) commissioned to reach Gentiles.

- Even when people know the “old” you and see the change, they will not always accept it.
- Paul protested to the Lord that the people knew, had to know, what He had done in his earlier life.
- Our Lord sent him far away. To the Gentiles. Paul said the “G” word and the crowd erupted again. *How they hated the message to Jesus to all men (1 Thes 2:16).*
- The commander was *still* in the dark and decided to have Paul flogged and interrogated.
- Paul played his “trump card,” claiming his citizenship.

* Paul was also known by his Jewish name, Saul (Act 13:9).

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

8. Jerusalem (Continued)

Acts 21:1-23:35

g. God didn't need Paul's help (nor does He need ours!)

Acts 22:30-23:11

- The Roman commander ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to convene (22:30).

* He desired (“*was determined, resolved*”) to know exactly why the Jews had rioted and wanted Paul dead. He was holding a prisoner who was yet uncharged and who was a Roman citizen, whose rights he was bound by law to uphold. He had to get to the facts.

* He had Paul brought before them.

- Paul faced (“*stared*”) his former allies and superiors of years before and made a bold statement: He had “fulfilled” his duty to God “in a; good conscience” (“*as a citizen*,” i.e., *fulfilling my duty*) to the present day.” To those who viewed him as a traitor it must have been provocative.

* The high priest ordered those standing near him to hit him.

* Paul responded in anger, calling the high priest Ananias a whitewashed (“*plastered over*”) wall. Ananias presumed to judge others yet violated the law himself by ordering Paul punished before he could make his case. “God” would strike him, Paul cried. Within two years the high priest would be assassinated.

* Bystanders objected to Paul's outburst as being disrespectful to Ananias and Paul apologized, citing Ex 22:28.

- Paul decides to “divide and conquer.” Pharisees believed in life after death, resurrection, etc. and Sadducees did not (e.g. Mtt 22:23, Mk 12:18). Sensing an opening, he tries to play one side against the other.

* Chaos ensued. But...a united council was out of the question.

* A great conflict between Sadducee and Pharisee. All of them doubtless speaking in Aramaic. Once more the commander had to rescue Paul and he *still* had no clue what was going on!

h. The following night the Lord stood near Paul and exhorted him:

- “Take courage!

- As you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

- God doesn't guarantee that we will know ahead of time what He plans to do in our lives. In this case He made His will plain. Paul would testify for Him even in Rome (See Acts 9:15-16, 21:11-14, 22:14-15).

* Everything was going wrong from a human perspective.

* God had everything under control (Gen 15/Israel in and out of Egypt).

* What often seems to our observation to be disastrous may actually be essential to future blessing. Think of Joseph (Gen 50:19-20).

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

8. Jerusalem (Continued)

Acts 21:1-23:35

i. God’s protection in the midst of trial

Acts 23:12-23

- Having failed to kill or muzzle Paul, the Jewish leaders plot an ambush.
 - * 40 men took an oath (“*placed themselves under a solemn curse*” if they failed to do what they vowed) not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. This was done to insure that they acted right away.
 - * They plotted to kill Paul by having the Sanhedrin ask the commander to bring Paul back to answer questions and ambush him on the way.
 - * Paul’s nephew heard about it and informed Paul.
 - * Paul called one of the officers and asked him to take his nephew to the commander with the information.

- The commander organized a detachment to provide security and had Paul transferred to the governor that night.

- The commander sent a (self serving) letter to the governor explaining his action.

- So Paul arrived safely in Caesarea.
 - * The governor (Felix) read the letter and asked Paul about where he was from.
 - * He ordered Paul be kept under guard while they waited for his accusers to arrive.

The enemies of the gospel can plot and plan, but God’s will is not going to be thwarted (Prv 19:21, 21:30; Act 5:38, 16:6-7).

When our will and God’s collide, we have a choice.

- * *Fight and lose.*
- * *Seek His will. That means repenting of our frustration and anger and accepting His direction. This is the truth behind the beatitude “Blessed are the meek...” (Mtt 5:5, Ps 37:8-10).*

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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

9. To Rome

Act 24-28

a. Holding Pattern - God often commends His people for waiting on Him. This sounds nice in theory but it can be hard to do. Paul is finally being sent for judgment and a hopeful resolution to his case. And he will sit for two years with no change!

- Paul is charged before the governor (Felix). The high priest, some elders and a lawyer came to Caesarea and made their accusation:
 - * Paul was a troublemaker (“*pest, disease*”); stirring up riots (“*insurrection*”) among the Jews all over the world. Well, the riots occurred but at the instigation of those who opposed the gospel in Thessalonica, Berea, Ephesus).
 - * He was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. True enough!
 - * He had tried to desecrate the temple (This was given as the reason for their attack on Paul).

- The elders and High Priest joined in asserting the charges were true.

- Paul made his defense:
 - * His recent arrival in Jerusalem could be easily verified (No more than 12 days).
 - * He had gone up to Jerusalem to worship (Hardly a troublemaker).
 - * His accusers had not found him arguing in the temple, stirring upon a crowd either there or in the synagogues or city.
 - * They could not prove their charges.
 - * He was a worshipper of the God (that both he and his accusers worshipped) as a follower of the Way.
 - + He believed everything that agreed with the law and prophets.
 - + He had the same hope in God as his accusers (resurrection of the dead).
 - + He strove to keep a clear conscience before God and men.
 - + After an absence of several years he had returned to bring his people gifts for the poor and to worship.
 - + He’d been ceremonially clean when his enemies found him in the temple.
 - + He’d not been involved in any disturbance or part of a crowd.
 - + But, some Jews from the province of Asia ought to be in court if they had anything against him (Act 21:27).
 - + Those present should state what crime they saw in him for his belief in the resurrection.

- Felix, who was well-acquainted with the faith (“way”) adjourned the court.
 - * He delayed judgment until the commander from Jerusalem arrived.
 - * He kept Paul under guard and allowed him some freedom.
 - * He sent for him often and spoke with him (hoping for a bribe. All he got was the gospel!).

- After the passing of two years Felix was succeeded as governor by Festus.
 - * He left Paul incarcerated as a favor to the Jewish leaders with his case still undecided.
 - * So Paul sat. Waiting.

Why does God make us wait? Timing? Changing us? Changing the world? Maybe all of these. In Lk 18:1 we are exhorted to always pray and never give up. Ps 27 Anticipation.

**ACTS
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Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

9. To Rome (Continued)

Act 24-28

b. The appeal to Caesar

Act 25:1-12

- Festus took up his duties immediately after arriving.

- He went up to Jerusalem where the chief priests and leaders presented charges against Paul.
 - * When Jesus said, “Love your enemies,” He assumed that you’d have some (Mtt 5:44, Lk 6:27-36).
 - * Paul went out of His way to bring the message to them (Rom 9:1-5, Acts 21:37-22:21). He longed for their salvation.
 - * God wants us to overcome evil with good, not to “fight fire with fire.” See Rom 12:17-21. As far as it depends on us, we are to strive to live at peace with all. We do not fight as the world fights (2 Cor 10:1-6).

- Paul’s enemies were still trying to kill him and asked the new governor to transfer Paul’s trial to Jerusalem so they could try to kill him en route.
 - * The governor stood firm and told them to come to Caesarea to press their case “if” he had done anything wrong.
 - * In Caesarea he convened the court and charges were brought against Paul.
 - * Paul gave his defense and denied the charges.
 - * Festus, trying to placate the Jewish leadership asked Paul if he would consent to a change of venue (Jerusalem).
 - * Paul asserted his right to be tried as a Roman citizen in a Roman court and appealed to be held over for the emperor’s judgement.

- Festus conferred with his legal advisers (Assessors, councilors skilled in the law. It was customary for Roman governors etc. to have some on staff.).
 - * So, Paul was about to get an all expense - paid journey to Rome courtesy of the govt.
 - * As he had testified before men wherever he could, he also testified before the mighty. And now even the emperor would hear his case (Act 9:15-16).

c. The governor has a problem.

- He is sending a prisoner on to Rome for judgment but he hasn’t any clear charge to level against him. Also, his predecessor had not acted in good faith and had violated the law by holding Paul for two years. Paul’s rights as a citizen had not been upheld.
- The governor brought up Paul’s case before the King of Judea (Herod Agrippa) when the king made a courtesy visit to the new governor.
 - * He confessed his bewilderment at getting at the truth of the situation (See 25:26-27).
 - * The king expressed a desire to hear Paul and the matter was arranged for the next day.

How do you react toward those who are opposed to you? Hostile toward you?

Humanity’s way or God’s?

Do you pray for them? Seek ways to minister to them?

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9. To Rome (Continued)

Act 24-28

c. Paul before the king of his people. *Agrippa II was the great grandson of Herod the great. His father Agrippa was the one mentioned in Acts 12 who was stuck down by the Lord.*

He and his sister Bernice entered with all the trappings of human power and pretension.

Ex 19:24-25, Ex 3:4-5, Jos 5:13-15 - Human pomp and rank mean nothing to God, except to bring those who use it into accountability (See Ps 82).

d. At Festus' command, Paul was brought in.

- “You see this man!” Festus began.
- * The whole Jewish community in Judea and Caesarea want him dead.
- * I found him innocent of anything deserving death.
- * He made his appeal to the emperor and I need something to write re: his case. *Both Felix and Festus tried to placate the local authorities by holding Paul. As a Roman citizen, Paul had certain rights that had not been respected. He appealed to the emperor and the governor was in a spot.*

e. Paul laid out his case knowing Agrippa was well acquainted with things.

- He described his former life in Judaism:
 - * Raised a Pharisee.
 - * On trial due to his hope in God's promise to their fathers.
 - + The same promise made to their fathers and to the nation that they hope to see fulfilled as they serve God. Life after death.
 - + His accusation was rooted in that same thing - “Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?” (Job 19:23-27, Ps 16:7, Is 26:19, Act 2:27, 4:2, 13:35)
- He described his former opposition to the Jesus.
 - * With the authority of the chief priests he had jailed many of the believers in Jerusalem.
 - * He'd voted to have them killed (*He'd had to have been a member of the Sanhedrin*).
 - * He'd gone from synagogue to synagogue trying to force them to blaspheme (*That is, to deny the Lord Jesus*).
 - * *In his obsession (in his “rage”) against them he'd even gone to foreign cities after them.*
- He described his meeting with the Lord when he'd been on one such journey (Damascus).
 - * He'd come with authority and a commission from the Chief Priests.
 - * As he neared the city a light shone around he and his companions (brighter than the sun).
 - + All fell to the ground.
 - + Jesus spoke (in Aramaic) to Paul by name - “why are you persecuting Me?” “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks (*“goad, sting, prick”*).” *Like an ox kicking against an ox goad and incurring a deeper wound, Saul was resisting the Spirit and deepening his misery. And now he knew that the Lord was Jesus, whom he'd been fighting.*
- He described the instructions that the Lord Jesus gave him:
 - * He was to stand up.
 - * He'd been appointed to be a servant and witness of what he had seen and would see of Jesus (See 1 Cor 11:23, 15:1-7; Gal 1:11-12).
 - * Jesus would rescue him from his own people and the Gentiles.

- * He was being sent to open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God so that they might receive forgiveness of sin and a place with the sanctified through faith in Jesus.
- He was not disobedient to the vision. He had a choice.
 - * First to those in Damascus, the in Jerusalem/Judea and to the Gentiles Paul had preached repentance - turn to God and prove repentance by deeds.
 - * That was why he had been seized and why his enemies tried to kill him.
- Yet, he'd had God's help the whole time and here he was, testifying before the king.
- He was saying nothing beyond what was written in Moses and the prophets.
 - * The Christ would suffer and rise from the dead (the 1st!).
 - * Christ would proclaim light to His own people and to the Gentiles.

f. Festus couldn't take it in - Paul was speaking directly to the Jewish king.

- Paul described his message as true and reasonable (to anyone familiar with the law and prophets).
- He appealed to the king's familiarity with the word.
 - * "You do believe the prophets?"
 - * Agrippa accused Paul of trying to convert him (Duh!).
 - * Paul agreed and expressed the wish that all could be as he was (minus his manacles).
- The king stood, ending the interview.
 - * He, his sister and the governor exited the audience hall.
 - * His conclusion was that Paul was not guilty.

God brought Paul before small and great alike (In fulfillment of His word).

Paul tried to use every situation to lay out the gospel.

- *He did his best and trusted God (See Mt 10:17-19, Mk 13:11, Lk 21:12-19).*
- *If God is sovereign, then we need to trust that He knows what He is about and look for opportunity in all situations. "Buying out the opportunity" (Eph 5:15-18).*
- *Trust God to give you what you need when you need it.*

**The Acts
of the
APOSTLES
“To the Nations”**

Section 4: To the World

Chapters 13-28

9. To Rome (Continued)

Act 24-28

d. "In His Hands" (The voyage to Rome)

Acts 27:1-28:10

- Paul and his companions sailed for Asia.
 - * The narrative becomes 1st person (“we”) again. At least Paul, Luke and Aristarchus.
 - * Paul was shown consideration (In light of the sketchy charges against him?).
- They changed ships at Myra (To one bound for Italy)
 - * They made slow progress against adverse winds and got behind schedule (see vs 9).
 - * They sailed south of Crete and ended up at a port called “Fair Havens” where Paul warned them against going on.

e. Caught up in a storm (See also Jonah 1:14, Ps 107:23-24 - Who controls the weather?).

- The ship was driven by the wind. A violent North East wind came up.
- The ship’s gear/tackle had to be altered (to shorten sail and leave them with some control).
 - * The crew feared running aground on sand bars (Syrtis = “shoals,” sand banks/bars) off the Libyan coast.
 - * They had to let the ship be driven by the wind.

f. Paul offered encouragement - We are all safe, just the ship will be lost.

- He was human after all and couldn’t resist saying “I told you.”
- He had a message for his fellow travelers: Paul would stand before Caesar and all on board would be saved. And, they would run aground on an island.
 - * Here Paul is communicating a message from the Lord. I am sure that his fellow travelers were anxious to see if Paul’s prediction was true.
 - * God uses all things for His own purposes (See Gen 45:5-7).

g. Ashore on Malta - And God had a plan.

- The ship was driven onto the shore of an Island (Malta).
 - * Paul intervened against sailors who tried to abandon them all (And the soldiers listened).
 - * On the 14th day before sunrise, Paul urged them all to eat, promising that God would deliver them all alive. He bore witness even in their trouble.
- They ran aground just offshore and swam for it. No one was lost, in accordance with God’s promise.
- The islanders showed them kindness and God revealed His messenger (28:1-10)
 - * God authenticated Paul as His apostle (See Lk 10:19).
 - * The people responded. God reveals Himself that people might know the truth about Him and know Him (e.g., Ex 14:4, 18; Act 2:22-24, Act 4:8-14).

This narrative illustrates several things:

God is in control and uses things that we think hurtful for ultimate good.

God reveals Himself in hard times (If things only and always went our way...would we ever grow?)

God doesn’t perform to impress. He reveals Himself that He will be known.

**ACTS
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**Section 4: To the World
9. To Rome (Continued)**

**Chapters 13-28
Act 24-28**

- h.** A journey resumed 28:11-16
- They continued on to Italy.
 - * They found brethren and were allowed to spend a week with them (Paul was shown great consideration).
 - * The brothers in Rome had received word of Paul’s approach and came to meet him.
 - * After two years of waiting Paul thanked God and was encouraged.
- i.** Life in Rome
- Paul was allowed to live by himself in a rented house (see vs 30).
 - He was guarded by a soldier (See Phil 1:12-14, 4:21-22). *And used the situation for advantage.*
 - He witnessed to his people - the Jews (For whom he was a deeply concerned - see Rom 9:1-5, 10:1-4, 11:1, 11-16). He seldom missed an opportunity to proclaim the gospel to them).
 - * He explained his case.
 - * He shared then gospel.
 - * He had a mixed reception - some believed, some did not.
 - * He let those who rejected the message know that he would now turn to the Gentiles.
 - Paul spent two years in Rome before his trial.
 - * He welcomed all who came to see him.
 - * He boldly and without hindrance preached and taught the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus.

The book could be better called, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

(Very) ordinary people trusted and followed God - and He changed the world.

Think of who they were: Tentmakers, commercial fishermen, tax collectors, a physician etc. God saved them, directed them, worked through them. What made them special? Nothing more than what makes any believer special.

- *They believed.*
- *They continually sought Him (He wasn’t an “event” in their life, He was their life (Col 3:4).*
- *Because they sought Him, they were sensitive to His leading. (2 Pet 1:3-11).*
- *They depended on Him (Phil 2:12-18).*
- *And God changed the world, one life at a time.*

We tend to look for the big, dramatic, sensational - God works that way (at times), but more often through daily life. He works through countless “little” acts of obedience as His people dare to trust Him where they are.