

NOTES ON ACTS – PAUL AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION TWO: Acts 12:25-28:31

PART ONE: Missionary Journey One (Acts 12:25 – 14:28)

A. Antioch/Syria to Cyprus (12:25:13:12)

Acts 12:25-13:5 - I have included verse 25 with the first few verses of chapter 13 because they represent one subject. One of the important truths of God's word is that everyone who has a spiritual gift has some type of ministry within that spiritual gift. For example, two people might have the spiritual gift of teaching. One individual's ministry might be teaching God's word to children while the other might teach adults. Another example would be the spiritual gift of giving. One person's ministry might be one who is always finding someone in need in the church and giving aid to them. Another person with the gift of giving might have a ministry of giving extra to the church for missions. In this case in verse 25, Paul/Saul and Barnabas had completed their ministry or service to the believers in Judea by overseeing the distribution of the money to the elders of the various local churches because of the famine prophesied in Acts 11:27-30. Like the example of Paul and Barnabas and God's command to Timothy in 2 Tim. 4:5, we are to fulfill or complete our ministry. Because they had been faithful in this ministry, God was about to call them to an even bigger ministry. Paul and Barnabas obviously returned to Antioch where they were among several prophets who were serving the Lord Jesus Christ and fasting. This tells us that some believers have multiple spiritual gifts. In addition to the spiritual gift of prophecy, Paul and Barnabas had the spiritual gift of Apostle (Acts 14:14). Barnabas also had the spiritual gift of encouragement or exhortation (Acts 4:36; 11:23). 1 Timothy 2:7 shows us that Paul also had the spiritual gift of teaching (1 Tim. 2:7). These prophets were actively serving Christ and in this context, the Holy Spirit spoke to each of them to set apart Paul and Barnabas to do the work for which He had called them. One of the ways that God shows us His will is the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit. Remember, this deals with what God wants us to do on an individual basis. This leading is apart from scripture but always consistent with scripture. For example, the Holy Spirit would not lead any of us to steal (Eph. 4:28). However, Jane Smith is not going to find a specific verse that tells her that her spiritual gift is helps and that her ministry is working in a soup kitchen. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is God, what He prompts us to do is going to be consistent just like God's word is consistent. The key concepts in this passage remind us: (1) Take care of all the duties of our ministry, (2) Know and use your spiritual gift(s), and (3) Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

There was evidently more praying and fasting about the Holy Spirit's revelation. This reminds us that prayer is a vital part of receiving the guidance of the Holy Spirit and also of responding to His guidance. Fasting is also a helpful component. The laying on of hands by the other prophets did not impart any spiritual gift or enablement to Paul and Barnabas (Num. 27:18-23). It simply recognized that they had been set apart by the Holy Spirit for special service which was to function as missionaries who would go to other locations and take the gospel to Jews and Gentiles and then do follow-up instruction with them. The next thing that the church at Antioch did was to send Paul and Barnabas away (verse 3). In the work of missions, we see

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those who go themselves. Not every believer is called to go to the mission field. However, we as believers are all involved in sending them out according to Rom. 10:15. We see in verse four that Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Holy Spirit. This reminds us that the Holy Spirit works through the church in sending out missionaries. We also see the church and the Holy Spirit are fellow-laborers in this matter of sending out missionaries (1 Cor. 3:9). The first point of contact on the mission field was at Salamis on the island of Cyprus where Paul and Barnabas preached God's word to the Jews. It is important to note that it was not a concert or any gimmick. It was the simple preaching of God's word. Barnabas' nephew, John Mark (Col. 4:10), was assisting Paul and Barnabas. It would appear that they were mentoring him and training him to be able to work as a missionary. 2 Tim. 2:2 reminds us of the need to train faithful men who will in turn be able to teach others. The keys points in this second paragraph are: the need for prayer and fasting in our decisions as believers and as a church, going as a missionary or involvement in sending missionaries, seeing ourselves as co-workers with God, using God's word to bring the unsaved to Christ and finally either being involved or encouraging the leadership of the local church to train faithful men as leaders and teachers.

Acts 13:6-12 - We see this man "Bar-Jesus" (=son of Jesus) was a magician or sorcerer. This meant that he used demonic power for his own personal goals and influence of other people. He was also identified as a false prophet which is Satan's counterfeit for genuine prophecy. His name would indicate that he was a counterfeit Jesus (cp. 2 Cor. 11:4 with Mt. 24:24). He was obviously very influential with the proconsul Sergius Paulus. This tells us that it is not just ignorant nobodies who are ensnared by the occult because it states that Sergius was an intelligent man and was a man of authority. Sergius was wanting to hear God's word which shows that people under occult influence have a spiritual hunger that the occult cannot satisfy. We also see that those who promote the occult oppose those who speak God's word (John 8:47; 18:37; 1 John 4:5-6) and try to keep their followers from trusting Christ. We also see some excellent guidance for dealing with someone from the occult when they are trying to keep someone from hearing the gospel and trusting Christ as savior. We see the importance of being filled by the Holy Spirit. We are to face and resist the occult person (James 4:7) remembering that the real struggle is not with flesh and blood but with Satan and his demons (Eph. 6:10-12). Notice how he exposed the character of the promoter of the occult. People who are in the occult are thoroughly deceitful and fraudulent. They are a child of Satan and not a child of God and in this case certainly not a child of Jesus. They are to be exposed as an enemy of all righteousness (that which conforms to God's standards). They pervert God's ways (Isa. 5:20). Notice that verse 11 shows us that the promoter of the occult must be left to God's power and not our own (Eph. 6:10-11; 1 John 4:4). We must remember that as God displays His power that it is the word of God ("teaching of the Lord") that brings the unsaved to Christ.

B. Antioch/Pisidia (13:13-52)

Acts 13:13-19 - The first item that we notice is that John Mark left them (the word "deserted" is used in Acts 15:38). We do not know why he left or deserted. All of us as Christians have at one time or another failed to persevere, and we will see that John Mark reversed his course and

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became a valuable man of God. If we are the one experiencing failure, we are not to think all is lost, but to confess any sin to God (1 John 1:9), forsake it after confessing it (Prov. 28:13) and move forward in our Christian life forgetting what lies behind (Phil. 3:13). As fellow-believers, we must not give up on one another but uphold fellow-believers when they fail. Also, we must not give up our work for Christ because fellow-laborers desert for one reason or another. We see that Paul and Barnabas continued on their journey. Since the model for evangelism for Paul was the Jew first (Rom. 1:16), he and Barnabas went to the synagogue where they were offered an opportunity to bring a word of encouragement. This was the Holy Spirit's way of opening up to them a chance to present the gospel. The message was addressed to fellow-Jews and to Gentiles who took God seriously. A critical starting point in God's plan to bring a savior into the world was God's choice of the ancestors, i.e. patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The people of Israel as God's people were subjected to testing by being in slavery in Egypt. In spite of very bad circumstances, God helped them to multiply and grow strong. Just as God allowed His people Israel to go through severe trials in Egypt, God can use severe trials to bring forth His purposes in our lives (Job 23:10). As believers, we serve the same God who can help us multiply through sharing the gospel with unsaved people and grow strong in faith and maturity. God used His power to get the people out of slavery. In the same way, the gospel is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16) and delivers us from slavery to sin (Rom. 6:17-18). Just as God used trials to purify and help His people grow, God uses trials in our lives for the same purpose (1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:2-4). We see God's patience in the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. God very patiently puts up with us as believers and disciplines us for our good and growth just as He did Israel (Deut. 8:2-3, 16). Finally, God helped them experience victory over their more powerful enemies just as God gives us victory over Satan (James 4:7). Even though Satan is more powerful than we are, we have God's promise in 1 John 4:4 that "Greater is He that is in us than He who is in the world."

Acts 13:20-23 - The time of bondage in Egypt was 400 years + 40 years in the wilderness + the conquest and dividing up of the land which would have taken 10 years to make 450 years. The point of Paul's message was that Israel was God's vehicle to bring Jesus the Messiah, who would be the promised savior. In order for the people to have some order and organization before the kings, God gave the people of Israel judges to rule over them until the time of Samuel. The judges were a gift of God to provide a means for God to rule over them (Judges 8:23). The people in demanding a king were rejecting the rule of God over them according to 1 Sam. 8:7. King Saul was a gift of God to the people who was given to them in His wrath (Hos. 13:11) and removed by that same wrath. God then chose David, who was a man after God's own heart. His heart was so in tune with God that He did everything that God wanted Him to do. This brought Paul to the main point of this part of His message. That point was that God brought the promised Savior to Israel from the descendants of David which is a point of the gospel according to 2 Tim. 2:8. From this passage we learn that God works through individuals, groups, family lines and nations to accomplish His purposes. Secondly, we continue to see Jesus Christ as the central figure of God's word to which both the Old and New Testaments point (John 5:39). Finally, we see in David an imperfect picture of Christ in being a man after

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God's own heart and generally although not perfectly doing everything God wanted. This is the model life that God wants for each one of us who have placed our faith in Christ.

Acts 13:24-26 - This passage continues Paul's sermon to the Jewish people in Antioch Pisidia (different city than Antioch in Syria from where they had come). In verses 20-23, Paul had shown how the time in the land including the time of the conquest, the time of the judges and the time of the kings was preparing Israel for the Messiah Jesus to come from the line of David. He then moved to the next step in God's preparation for the presentation of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to the people of Israel. That step involved the ministry of John the Baptist. John proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. This repentance literally means a "change of mind". Acts 19:4 clearly states that John's message regarding this baptism of repentance was that the hearers were to believe on Him (= Jesus Christ) who would come after him (i.e. John, the Baptist). In trusting this Christ, they were to turn to Christ from their sinful lives (1 Thes. 1:9) or whatever was keeping them from trusting Christ such as their works (Phil. 3:4-6). John made it very clear that he was not the Christ/Messiah (John 1:20). John was very humble in pointing out his own unworthiness to even untie the sandals of Jesus. His role was to minimize his own importance and magnify the importance and centrality of Christ (John 3:30). Finally, Paul made it clear that this message was not only for his fellow-Jews but for non-Jews who fear God, i.e. take God seriously. Like John the Baptist our role is to introduce people to the Lord Jesus Christ so that they are prepared for Christ's second coming, to magnify His importance in our lives and reduce our own importance.

Acts 13:27-31 - Paul pointed out two problems that the people of Jerusalem and especially the Jewish rulers had in regard to Jesus Christ. First of all, they did not know Him in a saving way (John 17:3). This is to say that they did not place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:36). Secondly, they did not really know the voices of the prophets because these prophets testified of Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44). Unwittingly, these rulers fulfilled the very words of the prophets by condemning the Lord Jesus Christ. They were not really able to find any cause for the death penalty (Acts 14:56-59) so they prevailed upon Pilate to put him to death as a traitor against Rome (John 19:12-16). When the rulers had fulfilled what was written concerning Christ's especially from Psalm 22 and Isa. 53, his dead body was laid in a tomb after being taken down from the cross. However, in contrast to other dead leaders of various movements purporting to be from God, Jesus was bodily raised from the dead. The proof of Jesus' resurrection was that He was seen over a period of many days – 40 days to be exact according to Acts 1:3 - by those who had come up with Him to Jerusalem from Galilee. These people were witnesses to the rest of the Jewish people. The rejection of Christ rested on the fact that these Jewish leaders had so misunderstood their scriptures that they were looking only for a political Messiah and not recognizing the scriptures pointing to His suffering, death and resurrection. They rejected Christ's resurrection despite all of the witnesses (up to 500 – 1 Cor. 15:3-6) to the fact. Those of us who have trusted Christ must be careful that we always look at all the scriptural testimony concerning His person and His work. If we fail to do so, we may find ourselves following another Jesus as Paul mentioned in 2 Cor. 11:3-4. If we do so, we will be able to give a defense of the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).

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Acts 13:32-37 - Since his audience was very familiar with the Old Testament scriptures, Paul spoke of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as a promise made to their Jewish ancestors. The first proof of this is Psalm 2:7 which refers to Jesus as being begotten by the Father. Rev. 1:5 clarifies this where it tells us that Jesus is the first begotten from the dead. There were people raised from the dead prior to the resurrection of Jesus, but these people after being raised from the dead lived for some time and then died. In the case of Jesus, He was raised from the dead not to die any more (Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:18). Christ was referred to as “begotten” in John 3:16 when being sent into the world, so this begetting in Rev. 1:5 and Psalm 2:7 has to do with the new life He had after laying down His life as a sacrifice for our sins (1 Pet. 3:18). Paul emphasized that Jesus was raised from the dead so that He would never undergo decay by citing Psalm 16:10 which predicted that Jesus’ body would not see decay. He pointed out that David was not the subject of the prophecy because he died and his body decayed so the prophecy had to refer to the Messiah, i.e. Christ. By contrast, Jesus’ body never underwent decay because he still had his wounds and scars (John 20:25-28). An additional note of interest in this sermon was that David served God’s purpose in his generation. This forms an example for us so that we should seek to serve God’s purpose for our lives as he sets it forth in His word and leads us by the Holy Spirit. Also as we tell others about how salvation is provided, it is important to make sure that people understand that Jesus’ resurrection is what makes His death different or unique.

Acts 13:38-39 - Paul had spoken of the provision for salvation in the preceding verses of Christ’s death and bodily resurrection. Here, Paul explains how this provision is received. The individual is responsible to believe in (place their trust in) the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes the forgiveness of sins. We are forgiven all sins when we trust Christ for salvation (Acts 10:43; Col. 2:13). This forgives us in the sense of removing all condemnation from the one who trusts Christ as Savior (John 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 8:1). Forgiveness for the purpose of fellowship with a holy God after we have trusted Christ for salvation involves the confession of our sins to God (1 John 1:7-9; Psalm 32:5). In addition, we are justified from all things. The Law of Moses could only cover sins but the sacrifice of Christ takes away sins (John 1:29; Heb. 10:4) something which the Law of Moses could not do (Heb. 10:11). The first translation of the word “justified” is present tense in the Greek and denotes continuing action. This means that the believer continues to be justified by God on the basis of Christ’s sacrificial death and His resurrection. The second use of the word “justified” is an aorist tense which denotes the idea that one could never at any point of time be justified from all sins. Justification has two aspects. It not only takes away or subtracts our sins but it also imputes or credits righteousness to the one who believes in Christ (Rom. 4:3-5, 22-24). This imputation or crediting of righteousness is the positive side or plus side of justification. It is important that we communicate to lost people the facts of Christ’s death and resurrection and the need to receive the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

Acts 13:40-43 - Paul concluded his message with a warning. He cited Hab. 1:5 in which the Jews were warned about God’s judgment on the nation of Judah through the Babylonians. Some of

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these people where Paul was speaking were like the people of Judah prior to God's judgment through the Babylonians. The warning Paul gave is failing to believe in what God is doing (in this case through Christ). There were those in the audience who would not place their faith in Christ even if all His person and work were described. However, there were a substantial number of people who wanted to hear more about the things of Christ on the next Sabbath. We note that many of the Jewish and Jewish proselyte audience followed Paul and Barnabas. This would show us that they probably trusted Christ since Paul and Barnabas were urging them to continue in the grace of God which would show us that they had already received this grace by faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 5:2). The word for "urging" is better translated "kept persuading" them to continue in the grace of God. This denotes two things for new believers. The Christian life was received by grace through faith and it is lived by grace through faith on a day-to-day basis (1 Cor. 15:10 and Col. 2:6). Grace also denotes a new rule of life as opposed to the Old Testament law according to John 1:17. It is the grace that God makes available for Christian living if we come to Him in prayer in time of need (Heb. 4:16) and if we humble ourselves before Him (James 4:6). It is that grace that is sufficient for our most intense trials and suffering (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

Acts 13:44-47 - Word of Paul's message spread so that almost the whole town came to hear God's word. Notice that the draw was not a Christian clown, war hero or Christian musical group. The draw was the word of God. This would be a good lesson for modern churches to take to heart. The Jews who had not trusted Christ were jealous because of the fact that so many people were willing to listen to what Paul had to say from God's word. They openly opposed and insulted Paul. Luke 6:22 mentions that being insulted for Christ was one of the forms of lesser persecution. The fact that most of the Jewish people were rejecting their Messiah was confronted by both Paul and Barnabas. They pointed out that the message of God's word had been spoken to them first. However, since they as a group had rejected Christ, Paul and Barnabas were turning to the Gentiles. When people reject Christ, they are said to consider (better "judge") themselves unworthy of eternal life. Verse 47 notes that Christ, the servant of God, was to be a light to the Gentiles according to Isa. 49:6. By turning to the Gentiles, they were obeying the command of God implied by His plan for the Messiah, Jesus Christ. As believers, we are to hold forth the light of the glorious gospel of God (Phil. 2:16; 2 Cor. 4:4). Eph. 5:8 reminds us that we are light in this world and for that reason, to live as children of light.

Acts 13:48-52 - The Gentiles (non-Jews) were elated that God had made a way for them to be saved and glorified God's word. This simply means that they received the word of God as God's word and not as the word or opinion of man (1 Thes. 2:13). The next phrase in v. 48 is confusing to many. Keep in mind that it does not say that these people were appointed to believe in Christ. They were appointed to eternal life which is one of the benefits of believing in Christ. Within a group of people hearing God's word (of how to be saved), usually not all of them respond in faith on hearing it for the first or second time. Usually, individuals will respond at different times as they hear God's word being presented at several intervals. However, everyone in this group who was going to believe responded on this occasion. Keep in mind that

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man's will decides whether to believe or not believe (Rev. 22:17; John 5:40). However the benefits of that faith in Christ are given by God's will (e.g. becoming a child of God and being born of God in John 1:12-13). The people who had trusted Christ spread the word of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the region around the city. However, the Jews who did not trust Christ and who were opposed to the gospel managed to use their influence to win the devout women of the city with the result that the chief men of the city raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas. We are not told whether this persecution was minor (Luke 6:22) or if perhaps physical violence was used (2 Cor. 11:23-25). The result was expulsion from the region. However, Paul and Barnabas shook off the dust of their feet which simply meant that they had sounded the warning in obedience to God and that any responsibility for God's judgment falling on the area would be that of the persecutors and rejecters (Ezek. 33:1-5). Jesus had instructed his followers when they encountered rejection in one place, they were to move on to another place (Mt. 10:14, 23). In the same way, we as believers are to move on to someone else when we encounter rejection in sharing the gospel with a lost person. Notice that the result of those who did receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior in the area of Antioch in Pisidia was joy. Joy is a supernatural accompaniment of salvation (Acts 8:39; 16:34). While we cannot lose our salvation after trusting Christ (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29), we can lose the joy of it by unconfessed sin (Ps. 51:12). Finally, Paul and Barnabas had followed up with these new believers so that they were filled by the Holy Spirit which enabled them to be used mightily by God. In summary, we as believers must expect opposition and resistance, but share the gospel with those who will give us a hearing. In addition we are to demonstrate the joy of the Lord and the filling of the Holy Spirit - being reminded that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not us having more of the Holy Spirit but letting the Holy Spirit have all of us.

C. Iconium (14:1-5)

Acts 14:1-5 - In their missionary work, Paul and Barnabas went to the synagogue to go the Jew first and then to the Gentiles next. This was their pattern (Rom. 1:16). The result of their speaking was that a large number of Jews and Greeks placed their trust in Christ. Once again, we see that the Jews who did not place their faith in Christ were able to stir up the minds of the Gentiles to be embittered against the believers. However, Paul and Barnabas were able to spend a considerable amount of time with the new believers in a follow-up relationship after their salvation. They were bold in what they spoke about God's word. However, they did not do this in their own strength but in reliance upon Christ (Phil. 4:13). Christ was also continually testifying to the word of His grace. The word of His grace would include the entire New Testament revelation (Acts 20:32; John 1:17) and not just the gospel itself. This testimony by Christ that supplemented and strengthened Paul's and Barnabas' message, was confirmed by signs and wonders. Signs are miracles that show God's message while wonders are miracles that show God's greatness. Notice that these signs and miracles given by Christ were done by the hands of Paul and Barnabas who were both Apostles (Acts 14:14). We have noted before that almost all of the miracles in the book of Acts were done by men with the spiritual gift of Apostle or when these men were present. However, the people of the city were divided with some favoring and some opposing the Apostles. We must not be amazed at this because Jesus

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Himself said that He would be a divider of people (Mt. 10:34-36) up to and including families. The opposition so intensified that the Apostles had attempts by the Gentiles, Jews and their rulers to mistreat and stone them. For this reason, they fled the city. This establishes the principle that God often uses circumstances to guide and direct the geographical ministry, location or setting of His people.

D. Lystra and Derbe (14:6-20)

Acts 14:6-10 - Barnabas and Paul fled the city of Iconium because they were facing persecution up to and including stoning. It is practicing the wisdom of God to leave an area when there is physical danger. The loss of opportunity in Iconium only served to give opportunity elsewhere to present the gospel. Fortunately, Paul and Barnabas had done enough follow-up in Iconium for the work to continue through the believers who were already there. However, Paul and Barnabas did not let the threats and persecution in Iconium keep them from continuing to share the gospel with lost people. At Lystra they ran into a man who had a problem. He lacked strength in his feet and had never walked. Paul saw that this man had faith to be made well and commanded him to stand upright. He leaped up and began to walk. The features of this particular miracle were: (1) the presence of at least one Apostle, (2) God did the miracle through the agency of an apostle (3) it did not involve laying on of hands but simply the spoken word, (4) The recipient of this miracle had faith that Christ could heal him. The healing illustrates the changes that come over a life touched by the saving power of Christ. We are helpless to save ourselves (Rom. 5:6). Secondly, the remedy (the gospel –v. 7) has to be communicated to the helpless individual. Thirdly, the remedy is received by faith (v.9). Fourth, once the remedy is received by faith, there is a visible change in their lives (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 3:9, 14). As believers, our responsibility is to communicate the remedy to those who have not placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 16:15).

Acts 14:11-18 - The people completely misunderstood what had brought about the stunning miracle that enabled the lifelong cripple to walk. Paul spoke and the man was healed so instead of attributing this miracle to Jesus Christ whom Paul and Barnabas had preached when they shared the gospel in v. 7, they assumed that Paul and Barnabas were gods. Even the idolatrous priest of the temple of Zeus was leading the way to bring sacrifices with the crowd. Paul and Barnabas tore their robes because of their sorrow over the wrong assumption by this crowd. We see that there are people who follow the crowd to do evil (Ex. 23:2) falsely assuming that so many people could not be wrong. They explained some other information that these people would need in order to repent (change their minds or thinking) and to trust Christ for salvation. They explained that they were men with the same nature or design that these people themselves had and that they were not some god or supermen. They included some new information in their presentation of the gospel. For people who do not believe in the God of the Bible, this clarification was absolutely necessary. These people were instructed to turn from these worthless things (belief in sacrificial system to false gods). In their place they were to turn to the true and living God who made the universe and the earth including the sea and everything within these entities. They pointed out that God had permitted the nations in past

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generations to do their own thing. At the same time, God left them witness of His reality and existence by His goodness and had given them rain, fruitful seasons, food and gladness. After giving them this information to more fully understand who God was, they were barely able to convince crowds not to offer sacrifice to them. We learn from this that the gospel includes not only the fact that Jesus was of David's lineage, crucified for our sins, bodily raised and would be judging the world in the future (2 Tim. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Rom. 2:16), but it also includes the fact of God the creator of the universe who has provided for people's needs (Acts 14:15-17). This last item has historically been left off of many gospel presentations because so many people were familiar with that truth especially in nations with some type of Christian heritage. This reminds us to know where the person is coming from in relation to his or her belief system when you share the gospel.

Acts 14:19-20 - Despite the esteem that Paul and Barnabas had initially enjoyed at Lystra, they had been wise enough to calm the misguided enthusiasm of the people. Enemies from the Jews came and misrepresented the message and mission of Paul and Barnabas. As believers, we are going to have enemies. 2 Tim. 3:12 reminds us that every believer who wants to live a godly life will suffer persecution in one form or another – be it mild or severe. These opponents of the message and mission of Christ like so many opponents were smooth talkers (Rom. 16:18). As a result, they won the crowds over to their falsehoods. They were able to convince them to stone Paul and actually thought he was dead. So they drug his body out of the city. Whether Paul was feigning death or whether he was knocked unconscious is not known. There has been much speculation concerning this episode including those who believe that he received the special revelation from God regarding heaven in 2 Cor. 12:1-4. However, one clear truth stands out. The people of Lystra were impulsive. We can learn from the rest of God's word to avoid the sin of impulsivity. Proverbs 19:2 warns that being quick to act on incomplete or inaccurate information leads to sin. It is noteworthy that the disciples did not abandon Paul but surrounded him. As believers connected to one another in Christ, we are commanded to share the sufferings of one another in 1 Cor. 12:26. Obviously, this act of standing with Paul encouraged him and strengthened him. We are commanded to do this in 1 Thes. 5:11. Sometimes, encouragement is not so much our words as it is our presence. Finally, Paul and Barnabas realized that God had shown them through events and circumstances that their work in Lystra was finished for the time being. Keep in mind that God often uses the circumstances of our life to show us His will for us at the time. He and Barnabas went on to the city of Derbe to continue sharing the message and mission of Christ. We are reminded that we are not to become weary in well-doing because we will reap a harvest in due time if do not give up (Gal. 6:9). This harvest may speak of souls won to Christ in this life and the lives of people transformed by the Holy Spirit, or it may refer also to rewards at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10 cp. 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

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E. Follow-up in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch Pisidia (14:21-25)

Acts 14:21-25 - Paul and Barnabas were successful in bringing people to Christ in Derbe so we see how the persecution in Lystra had brought them to a place where many trusted Christ for salvation. In the meantime, Paul and Barnabas returned to the cities where they had previously presented the gospel including the place where Paul was stoned (Lystra) and Iconium (where they were strongly threatened). They used this time to strengthen the believers and encourage them to continue in the faith. The faith is synonymous with the teachings of the New Testament and obviously includes more than the gospel (1 Tim. 4:1-5; Tit. 1:12-13). The New Testament truth at this point in church history was the teaching of the Apostles. These believers (and by extension believers today) are reminded that there is a lot of suffering that we are going to experience before we enter the visible manifestation of the kingdom of God (in heaven by death if Christ does not come first – 2 Tim. 4:18), the 1000 year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6 cp. 5:9-10) followed by the eternal state (Isa. 9:6-7 cp. Rev. 22:5). They saw that leaders called elders were put in place in each church. We will discuss this issue in the next paragraph with regard to the elders and their due appointment. It is important that churches have duly appointed leaders in order to function properly. The rest of their itinerary is briefly presented explaining that they preached the word in Perga but with no indication of results or problems. In conclusion we see the need for follow-up with new converts to help them grow stronger, to encourage them to keep obeying the teachings of the New Testament (the faith), be prepared for the suffering of hardships and to have properly functioning organized churches in which to participate. This is a good summary of the final responsibility of the Great Commission which is to teach them to obey everything that Christ commanded (Mt. 28:20).

Terminology used for the word elder:

Scripture References	Greek words		
	Presbuteros	Episcopos	Poimen
Acts 20:17, 28	Elders in v. 17	Overseers or oversight in v. 28	Shepherd or feed in v. 28
1 Peter 5:1-2	Elders in v. 1	Overseers in v. 2	Shepherd or feed in v. 2
Titus 1:5, 7	Elders in v. 5	Overseer or bishop in v. 7
Ephesians 4:11	Pastors
Philippians 1:1	Overseers or bishops

Note: The term pastor and elder mean the same but in most churches, the pastor serves as the paid elder (1 Timothy 5:17-18) since he is full time whereas the others on the elder board are usually working men.

It is noteworthy that the elders were said to be appointed. The Greek word for appointed is “cheirotoneo” which simply means to select by the raising of hands. This word was used for voting in the assembly of Athens. This would indicate that they were appointed by Paul and

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Barnabas with congregational approval. Notice that there was a plurality of elders in every local church (Acts 20:17, 28; James 5:14). Since Paul and Barnabas would not be there, they were turned over to the care of the Lord. Acts 20:32 expresses the same thought where they are turned over to God and the word of His grace. Notice that this turning over of the elders to God's care is done with prayer and fasting. After the passing of the Apostles or without the presence of the Apostles, each local church was to be governed by the elders with congregational approval. The issue of leadership is important to any local church. Those in leadership and those in the congregation aside from the leadership need to take seriously the due appointment of scripturally qualified leaders.

F. Antioch/Syria (14:26-28)

Acts 14:26-28 - One of the functions of the church-gathered is receiving reports from missionaries. Over the years, I have often heard people say that they were not coming to church tonight because it will just be a visiting missionary reporting on their work. However, our responsibility of being part of a sending congregation is to gather together to see what God has been accomplishing through the missionary person. On the other hand, the missionary needs to report in a way that stimulates congregational interest and commitment to missions. A missionary's report should focus on what God has done with them while on the mission field whether this was done through normal means or supernatural means. The missionary should keep the emphasis on the activity of God in opening the door of faith for those who had not previously trusted Christ. This faith not only enters them into the Christian life, but is the very way they are to live it after entering it (Col. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20). Following their report and return, Paul and Barnabas spent a lot of time with the disciples in Antioch of Syria. Building into the lives of other believers involves spending time with them. This calls on us to rest in the promise of God in 1 Cor. 15:58 that our labor is not in vain.

PART TWO: Meeting at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35)

A. The debate (15:1-5)

Acts 15:1-5 - This passage shows that there are those in the church who are either people who profess Christ without genuine faith or misled teachers who are genuine believers. These people often are guilty of presenting a false gospel. In v. 1, they were teaching that one had to trust Christ as Savior and then be circumcised in order to receive the salvation provided by Christ's death and resurrection. When works are added to the gospel, it is no longer of grace (Rom. 11:6). Paul and Barnabas taught that the gospel was appropriated or received by faith alone (Rom. 1:16; 3:27-28 cp. Eph. 2:8-9). There was dissension among the believers regarding this issue and there was debate as well. The church made a decision to send Paul and Barnabas and other believers to consult with the elders and Apostles in Jerusalem. Keep in mind that the authority of the Apostles was needed at this point because the New Testament had not yet been completed (Mt. 18:18). When Paul and Barnabas passed through Phoenicia and Samaria

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on their way, they testified about the conversion of the Gentiles which brought great joy to all the believers. Contrast their joy with the disapproval of the scribes and Pharisees in Luke 15:1-10. The news of people trusting Christ as Savior brings great joy in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10). How much more should it bring great joy to believers on earth! Paul and Barnabas reported to the apostles and elders all the great things God had done with them. However, there was opposition in this meeting. Some of the Pharisees who were believers stood up and declared that these Gentile converts had to be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. In the next paragraph, we will see that this position was refuted by the council of Jerusalem. God's word teaches that believers are not saved or kept saved by law keeping (Rom. 3:20, 27-28) but by faith alone. We also see that if believers are led by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:18) that they are not under the Old Testament law as their rule of life. This was hard for people who had grown up in the teachings and traditions of the Old Testament to understand that salvation was a free gift received by faith alone and that the New Covenant (Testament) had replaced the Old Covenant (Testament) as is taught in Heb. 8:13. Paul said in 1 Cor. 9:20-21, he was not under the law (the Old Testament) but under the law of Christ (New Testament). This conference in Jerusalem almost exclusively dealt with how we are saved from sin's punishment. We will see how this was supported by the testimony of Peter, Paul and Barnabas and James' citation of the Old Testament and his ruling on the question.

B. The deliberation (15:6-17)

Acts 15:6-12 - The conference was being held with regard to the matter or question of how the Gentiles as well as the Jews were saved. The debate went back and forth for some time. Finally, Peter spoke concerning the issue. He pointed out how God had made the decision for the Gentiles to hear the gospel from the mouth of Peter, himself, and to believe. He explained that God had given the Gentile believers the Holy Spirit just as He had given the Holy Spirit to the Jewish believers. We saw this in previously when we discussed Acts 10:44 and 11:15-17. In the giving of the Holy Spirit, God made no distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles. With both groups of people, their hearts were cleansed by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice that it was not faith + works nor was it faith + baptism. It was faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter emphasized in v. 11 that salvation both Jew and Gentiles was by God's grace. If salvation was by grace, then it could not have any works involved according to Rom. 11:6. For this reason, salvation has to be by faith alone so that it is by grace (Rom. 4:15). Peter declared that the law had no part in salvation in v. 10. He asked those Jewish believers why they wanted to impose the law on the Gentiles when it had proved to be an unbearable yoke for previous and present generations of Jews. Christ's law is a bearable and easy yoke according to Mt. 11:29-30 (cp. 1 John 5:3) because the Holy Spirit is the helper of the believer for obeying the commandments of Christ (John 14:15-16). The scribes and teachers of the law had added manmade rules on top of this unbearable burden of the Old Testament law and offered no help to the people in obeying it (Mt. 23:4). After Peter spoke Paul and Barnabas gave additional verification to the matter of salvation by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. They explained that God had confirmed (Heb. 2:3-4) their message with multiple signs (miracles showing God's message) and wonders (miracles showing God's greatness). The case

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for salvation by faith now had 3 distinguished and credible witnesses in Peter, Paul and Barnabas. In the next paragraph, we will see James use the scripture to support their position and to begin finalizing a decision.

Acts 15:13-17 - We see the case that James is now making for his decision. He mentions “Simeon” which is another Greek spelling for “Simon” referring to Peter (John 1:40-42). James is noting how the planned activity of God in Amos 9:11-12 which he quotes lines up with the information that Peter had shared. Peter had noted that God is in the present age taking a people for His name out from among the Gentiles (non-Jews). James omitted the words from Amos 9:11-12 “In that day.” The first 7 words (which I underlined) of the quote above are not from Amos 9:11-12 but are words added by James to connect Peter’s statement to the quote from Amos 9:11-12. In doing this James is showing those present at the conference that God’s plan for the present age is to call out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. After this outcalling of the Gentiles (referenced by Jesus as the times of the Gentiles in Luke 21:24), the Lord Jesus Christ will return and reestablish the house of David for His 1000 year kingdom in which He will rule from David’s throne (Rev. 20:4-6; Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:31-33). This will be done so that the rest of the people including the Gentiles may seek the Lord. James’ quote from 9:11-12 follows the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (called the Septuagint). However, it is different from the Hebrew which uses the word “Edom” for “mankind”. Keep in mind 800 A.D. is the most current manuscript of the Hebrew Old Testament that we have while the Septuagint was done in 180 B.C. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls has shown that the Septuagint was far more accurate than previously thought. If the Septuagint had not been accurate, James would have been shouted down. Interestingly, no one challenged James on these points in regard to the translation of the verse or his conclusions.

C. The decision (15:18-29)

Acts 15:18-22 - James concluded the quote from Amos 9:11-12 pointing out that God had made known His interest in saving the Gentiles from long ago. God’s blessings on Israel were never meant to exclude the Gentiles from His plan of salvation (Gen. 12:3 cp. Gal. 3:8-9). James then proceeded to render his decision that the Gentiles not be burdened with the requirements of the Old Testament Law of Moses for salvation or for Christian living. We know that the Old Testament Law or any other law was unable to save anyone according to Rom. 3:20 and Gal. 3:21. Furthermore, we know that the New Testament believer is not under the Old Testament law as a rule of life (1 Cor. 9:20-21). However, to maintain unity and harmony between Jewish and Gentile believers, four requirements were given here in the New Testament. These pertain to Christian living and not salvation. They were to abstain from eating things offered to idols. They were to abstain from sexual immorality/fornication. Fornication involved pre-marital sex (1 Cor. 6:18 cp. 1 Thes. 4:3) and even included adultery (Rev. 2:21-22). Since this was already prohibited by Christ (Mark 7:21), many Bible scholars believe that the reference to sexual immorality/fornication was extended to include incestuous marriages as outlined in Lev. 18:1-18 which were also considered sexual immorality/fornication by the Jews. There were two dietary restrictions which included not eating meat where the animal was strangled and not

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eating meat in which the blood had not been drained. Fortunately, in our American culture, these dietary restrictions are not a real problem since the meat is drained of excess blood and has not been killed by strangling. To insure that believers in Antioch of Syria understood the decision made by the Apostles and elders was in accord with what Paul and Barnabas had been teaching, they sent two of their leaders Barsabbas and Silas to go with Paul and Barnabas. As believers, we see the importance of the fact that we are saved by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not under the Old Testament law, and we are to avoid causing disunity or causing anyone to sin by the freedom that we have.

Acts 15:23-29 - The council at Jerusalem sent a letter with Judas and Silas to make it very clear to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia what had been decided by the council. This would give them the witness of a written letter, Judas and Silas, and Paul and Barnabas. The letter mentioned that certain people went out from among the believers on their own and had brought their unbiblical teaching to new Gentile believers that was telling them that they had to do something in addition to trusting the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. This had given these new Gentile believers cause for worry and inner turmoil. The letter along with the testimony of Judas and Silas plus Paul and Barnabas was written to expose and halt this false teaching. They pointed out that Paul and Barnabas had literally risked their lives to promote a correct understanding for the name of Christ in opposition to this teaching. This would add credibility to the testimony of Paul and Barnabas. Finally, the letter made it very clear in v. 28 that the Holy Spirit had led and guided in this decision. We previously saw the four commandments given for Christian living to the Gentiles, which would help maintain unity and harmony between the Jewish and Gentile believers. Next, we will discuss the believer's relationship to the Old Testament Law of Moses because many believers reading this study may not be clear on what the scripture means when it states that we are not under the Old Testament law.

The purpose of this paragraph is to explain the believer's relationship to the Old Testament as it pertains to the Christian life after we trust Christ for salvation. Romans 7:1-7 clearly states that we are released from the law and includes the Ten Commandments as Rom. 7:7 gives coveting as an example. However, 9 of the 10 commandments are repeated in the New Testament with the Sabbath command being the only one not repeated (Col. 2:16-17; Rom. 14:5-6). However, all scripture including the Old Testament is profitable even if it is not directly applicable (2 Tim. 3:16). Three facets of the Sabbath command are repeated in the New Testament: God's people meeting together at regular times (Lev. 23:2 cp. Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7), the principles of work and rest (Ex. 20:8-11 cp. 1 Thes. 4:11-12 cp. Mk. 6:31), the principle of the Sabbath as a way of life to please God and not self (Isa. 58:13-14 cp. Heb. 4:9-11). The best illustration that I have found is that of moving from one country to another. If one grew up in China, he would be under the law code of China. However, if he moves to the United States and becomes a citizen, he would be under the law code of the United States. Those law codes would have similarities (prohibition of murder, robbery, assault and kidnapping) and the law codes would have differences. In China he could get in trouble for criticizing the government or deciding to move from one location to another without government permission, but in the United States he would be free to criticize the government and move from one location to another. In the

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same way there are Old Testament commandments that are repeated in the New Testament (Ex. 20:14, 17 cp. Eph. 5:3). Also some of the Old Testament commands clarify the meaning of some of the New Testament commands (Gal. 5:20 cp. Deut. 18:10-11 – e.g. sorcery/witchcraft). However, some Old Testament commands are not repeated in the New Testament (Deut. 22:9) and in some cases even repealed by the New Testament (Ps. 31:6; 119:113; 139:21-22 cp. Mt. 5:43-48). The present value of the Old Testament to the believer living under the New Testament can be summarized as follows: (1) 2 Timothy 3:16 – All scripture is profitable although not directly applicable. (2) Romans 15:4 – To encourage us so we will have hope. (3) 1 Corinthians 10:11 – To instruct us as examples. (4) 1 Timothy 1:8-11 – To show the lost person their sinfulness. (5) John 5:39; Luke 24:44-46 – To testify of Christ.

D. The delivery of the decision (15:30-35)

Acts 15:30-35 - The letter, which reflects the truth of God's word about the believer's relationship to the Old Testament law and the nature of the gospel, proved to encourage the assembled believers. When God's word is presented to believers when they meet, one of the effects that it is to have is to provide encouragement. This encouragement from God's word promoted joy in these believers as it should in us as well (cp. John 15:11). Judas and Silas were prophets and also delivered a message of encouragement. Prophets in the New Testament were used to give information which later became part of the written New Testament. These verses should help us to value being regular in church to hear God's word and receive the encouragement that it offers. Silas and Judas were to be sent back to Jerusalem. However, verse 34 (which is not supported by the oldest Greek manuscripts and the majority of Greek manuscripts) indicates that Silas chose to remain in Antioch of Syria. Despite the manuscript evidence, the fact that Paul chose him to accompany him on his missionary journey after he and Barnabas decided to have separate missionary teams, would seem to suggest that Silas did remain there. Notice that Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. We also observe that this was done with many others also preaching and teaching God's word. This helped this church to be well-grounded in the word of God and help bring more unsaved people to salvation. Modern churches do well to remember that as they present God's word that it must have a two-way thrust so that the unsaved are helped to trust the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and that the saved are helped to grow. This guides us on our role as believers and in choosing the best local church to do this.

PART THREE: Missionary Journey Two (Acts 15:36-18:23)

A. Division based on strategy (15:36-41)

Acts 15:36-41 - Notice the plan that Paul and Barnabas were discussing. They wanted to follow up with some of the converts that they had made. This accords with Mt. 28:20. Because of intense persecution, they had not had the opportunity to follow up with some of these new Christians and felt a responsibility to do so. In addition, there would be a need to train

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leaders/teachers who could teach others to become leaders/teachers in accord with 2 Tim. 2:2. However, Paul and Barnabas had a strong difference of opinion on the matter of taking Barnabas' cousin John Mark (Col. 4:10) with them. Paul's thinking was that Mark should not be taken because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had proved himself unreliable. However, Barnabas, who was a great encourager (Acts 4:36 cp. 11:23) wanted to give Mark an opportunity to prove that he had grown in the Lord. However, their disagreement was so strong that Paul and Barnabas decided to go separate ways. This is an example of separation because of strategic or practical reasons rather than doctrinal reasons. However, God was able to bring good out of all of this. Instead of one missionary team going out, two teams would go out. Barnabas and Mark formed one team, and Paul and Silas formed the other team. Paul's opinion of Mark evidently changed for he urged the Colossians in Col. 4:10 to welcome Mark, and he requested that Timothy bring Mark with him because Mark would be useful to Paul for service (2 Tim. 4:11). One must not overlook that v. 40 suggests that the church may have sided with Paul and Silas in this dispute. These believers entrusted Paul to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to help them in their mission. God's grace is critical in empowering our service (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul used his travels through Syria and Cilicia to strengthen the churches. This would involve instruction and being sure that everything was being done in a proper and orderly manner. Each of us as believers are to be using our spiritual gifts to strengthen other believers in our local church (1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Cor. 14:26).

B. Derbe and Lystra – Timothy recruited (16:1-5)

Acts 16:1-5 - We notice that Timothy and his mother were believers. It stated that Timothy was well spoken of by the brethren, which simply means that he had a good reputation among the believers. Titus 2:6-7 commands young men to be an example of honorable actions and to be worthy of respect. The purpose of circumcising Timothy had nothing to do with salvation or being spiritual. It was done – since he was part Jewish – to make him more acceptable to unbelieving Jews who were considering the claims of Christ. The point in Acts 16:3 was avoiding anything that might hinder Jews from trusting Christ. This is in keeping with 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:33. Titus who was Gentile was not circumcised so as not to confuse the Gentiles (Gal. 2:3). There are expectations that we as believers meet which are not commanded nor forbidden by scripture so that we do not set up any barriers to unbelievers trusting Christ for salvation. The missionary journey continued to churches previously visited to give them the Holy Spirit-directed decision that came out of the Jerusalem council. Today, with the completed New Testament, our job would be to deliver the portions of God's word that address any issues of confusion or error that exist in those churches so that they would obey them. As a result, the churches were strengthened in the faith (=standards and ways of the New Testament doctrine and living). In addition, their telling others about how to trust Jesus for salvation was effective as their numbers increased daily. The next paragraph will discuss how the word "faith" is used in the New Testament.

We now will focus on the use of the word "faith" in the New Testament. The most familiar usage that we encounter on the word "faith" or "believe" is saving faith as in John 3:16, 18, 36;

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Rom. 3:27-28; 4:3-5; 9:32. Another concept of faith is the faith by which we live the Christian life (eggs. 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:6; Mt. 14:31). Yet another concept of faith is asking in faith when we pray which is really part of the previous concept (Mk. 11:24; James 1:6-7). Still another use of the word faith relates to the spiritual gift of “faith” mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:9 and illustrated in 1 Cor. 13:2. This spiritual gift is seen in the prayer warriors in the church. There is false faith which is not genuine which is informational as in James 2:19 and Luke 8:13 rather than an actual trust and conviction as in 2 Tim. 1:5. Finally, we see the words “the faith” as in Jude 1:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; Tit. 1:12-13. This refers to the whole body of New Testament truth. Some have mistakenly stated that it only refers exclusively to the gospel, but the last two references cited here show that it deals with the whole of New Testament truth. The example in 1 Tim. 4:1-3 gives the example of those who forbid marriage and require abstaining from certain foods which have nothing to do with our salvation from the penalty of sin but everything to do with our Christian life. Likewise Titus 1:12-13 gives the examples of lying and gluttony which have to do with Christian living and not salvation from sin’s penalty. This helps us see that it was the developing body of New Testament truth that is being referred to when it states in Acts 16:5 that these believers were being strengthened in the faith. When we speak of faith in a teaching situation (either as the teacher or as a class member sharing with the class), our hearers need to understand which aspect is being spoken of, otherwise people do not have a clear view of what is being said in a specific scripture.

C. Vision for Europe (16:6-10)

Acts 16:6-10 - When it comes to presenting the gospel, we see that it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to open the door of opportunity. It is important to pray for missionaries that the door of opportunity will be opened by God to declare the gospel (Col. 4:3). However, we see that there are times when the Holy Spirit will not allow us to proclaim the gospel. This is why it is important for us to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and to be filled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18) so that we will have the benefit of His guidance. This happened twice. It would be easy to wonder what God was doing in closing doors. However, we see that God used a vision to guide Paul, Timothy and Silas in their next step. Proverbs 16:9 reminds us that we plan our way but God guides our steps. This vision came in the form of a Macedonian man appearing to Paul during the night urging them to help the Macedonians. This helped the group to conclude that God had called them to go to Macedonia in Northern Greece to preach the gospel to them. It is helpful to notice that Luke evidently joined Paul, Silas and Timothy at Troas as indicated by the word “we” in v.10. When God calls us to do something whether through scripture or the working of the Holy Spirit, we see the importance of prompt obedience by the words “at once” (Ps. 119:60). The familiar hymn, “Send the Light” speaks of hearing “the Macedonia call today” which was a call to tell others about how to be saved by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ either as an individual Christian or as a missionary.

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D. Philippi (16:11-40)

1. Lydia's conversion (16:11-15)

Acts 16:11-15 - This is the beginning of the account of how the church at Philippi got its start. After several days, Paul and his companions found an open door as there was a place where people were in the habit of going for the purpose of prayer. This provided a forum for Paul and his companions to share the gospel. Several years ago when my father-in-law was in the hospital in ICU, several of us with loved ones in ICU would have joint prayer in the ICU waiting room which provided an opportunity to share the gospel. We notice in the example of Paul and his companions that there were several women who were interested in the gospel message that Paul was presenting and were willing to listen. One of them, Lydia, obviously placed her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Notice that she was a business woman, a seller of purple. This shows us that God's word does not forbid women from engaging in employment. She was a worshipper of God but obviously unsaved. She heard Paul speak God's word. It is the hearing of God's word that produces faith (Rom. 10:17). We are told that the Lord opened her heart. John 7:17 reminds us that if we are willing to do God's will or what God wants, that God will give us the needed illumination in order to believe which he obviously did for Lydia. Evidently, her family or household also believed in the Lord Jesus Christ because they were all baptized. The last statement of Lydia could be better rendered, "Since you consider me a believer in the Lord". On the basis of the fact that she was a fellow-believer, she encouraged and persuaded Paul and his companions to stay at her house. This represents the teaching of Heb. 13:1-2 and 3 John 1:5-8 in which hospitality in the form of lodging and food was extended to those had been strangers but were taking the word of God to unbelievers for the purpose of bringing them to a saving knowledge of Christ (Rom. 1:16) and then teaching them all that Christ commanded (Mt. 28:20). We note that water baptism followed trusting Christ very promptly and was a way that people showed that they were serious about their faith and trust in Christ. It is interesting to notice how saving faith changes the mind of the unsaved person and results in changed behavior and a love for fellow-believers (1 John 3:14).

2. Demon-possessed slave (16:16-18)

Acts 16:16-18 - This passage deals with the occult and contributes to the teaching of God's word as to how to exorcise a demon. This girl was demon-possessed which enabled her to do divination. Divination is Satan's counterfeit for prophecy as it pertains to predicting the future. Demons are able with greater accuracy than human beings to predict the future. However, they are not 100% accurate. This girl was obviously a slave whose gift of predicting the future was bringing her owners substantial financial gain. This girl kept following Paul around. What she said about Paul and his associates was mostly true in that they were bond-servants of the most high God proclaiming a way of salvation. However, notice how Satan mixes truth and error to deceive people. He said that they were proclaiming a way (implying one of several ways) of salvation rather than the (exclusive and only) way of salvation. Even though almost every translation states that she said "the way of salvation," the translation side bar note in the

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NASB reads “a way.” This distorts the teaching of Jesus Christ (John 10:1, 9; 14:6). After doing this for several days, Paul commanded the demon (=angel of Satan) to come out of her which it did immediately. True demon possession is rare. The late Charles Ryrie (THD, PHD former Sunday School Teacher at First Baptist Church in Dallas and Professor at Dallas Theological Seminary) defines demon possession as “a demon residing in a person, exerting direct control and influence over that person, with certain derangement of mind and/or body.” A key point in demon possession is that a demon will acknowledge the name of Jesus Christ if confronted – even where Christ is not known (e.g. Mark 1:22-25; Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16). Otherwise, the issue is demon influence. The chart below explains the issue of exorcism of demons.

Exorcism of demons

A. Be sure the person is demon- possessed. Review the above definition.

B. Steps to be taken:

1. Acts 16:16-18 – Observe the person more than once or twice.
2. Acts 16:18 cp. Mark 9:25 – In Jesus’ name, command the demon to leave the person and never to return.
3. If the demon does not leave after this Mark 9:29 tells us we must pray and some Greek manuscripts add the requirement of fasting to prayer.
Note: The believer is fully authorized to use the name of Jesus Christ in prayer (John 16:24) and in fact can do any activity for God in Christ’s name (Colossians 3:17) so long as we are in obedience to His word.

Many people confuse mental illness and/or demon influence or oppression with demon possession. By keeping the above information in mind, much confusion can be eliminated.

3. Jailor and his family converted (16:19-34)

Acts 16:19-24 - After the demon was cast out of the girl, with a spirit of divination (Satanic counterfeit of prophecy), she was no longer able to foretell the future which destroyed the monetary gain of her owners. Rather than recognizing the superior supernatural power of the Christ that Paul and Silas were preaching and teaching, they brought exaggerated charges against Paul and his associates. They used the pretext that these men were seriously disturbing the city when in fact, the real reason was that the owners of the girl were out of business. They used the ethnicity of Paul and Silas (“Jews”) to inflame the authorities and the people and charged them with promoting customs forbidden by Roman law. They incited a mob to attack Paul and Silas. The authorities ordered Paul and Silas to be beaten with rods. 2 Cor. 11:25 mentions that Paul was beaten with rods three times which is more severe persecution. In addition both he and Silas were imprisoned and put in the stocks which is another severe form of persecution according to Rev. 2:10. While these men intended these actions for evil, God intended them for good (Gen. 50:20). This gave Paul and Silas an audience that they would not have otherwise had. From all appearances, they were helpless, but the word of God which cannot be imprisoned (2 Tim. 2:9) would now be available to the prisoners and the jailor himself. We see how God gives a real victory only to let a seeming defeat follow it. This is why we must walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

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Acts 16:25-31 - Paul and Barnabas could have spent the night feeling sorry for themselves. However, they viewed their loss of opportunity in the setting outside of prison as an opportunity to share the word of God with the other prisoners and even the main guard. Paul explained how this worked out in his own life in Phil. 1:12-13 when he was imprisoned in Rome but had the opportunity to share the gospel so that it spread throughout the imperial palace and among the Praetorian Guard. He and Silas prayed aloud and sang hymns to God. As a result, the prisoners were listening to them and obviously those who were guarding them. God intervened in a miraculous way by causing such a strong earthquake that it opened the prison doors and everyone's chains came loose. God is able to work in any number of ways to help believers when they are persecuted by imprisonment. This was the only time that God did something spectacular for Paul in his imprisonments. Cori Ten Boom, a strong Christian, was in a concentration camp for helping persecuted Jews. She was released because of a clerical error and avoided being among a group of ladies who were put to death shortly after that time. The jailer had fallen asleep and saw what the earthquake had done. He assumed the prisoners had escaped and decided it would be better to kill himself than to be executed. Amazingly, because of the influence of Paul and Silas the prisoners did not escape. This is an example of being salt and light among the unsaved world (Mt. 5:13-14). The jailer had been ready to kill himself, but Paul called out to him not to harm himself. When people are planning to kill themselves, we, as believers, are to speak up and attempt to dissuade them from doing this. The outcome of this badly frightened the jailer so that he knew that he had better get right with God. He asked what he needed to do in order to be saved. There was but one requirement – faith or belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word “believe” in its Greek verb tense speaks of a single action at a point of time. In other words, salvation happens at the point of time that we believe. Notice that the object of our faith is to be Jesus Christ and that we are to trust that He is Lord, i.e. God, the supreme source of authority for us. The phrase “and your household” is to be understood that they will be saved by the same type of faith on their part which we will see that they had exercised in Acts 16:34.

Acts 16:32-34 - The jailer evidently moved Paul and Silas from the jail to his house. There, they spoke the word of Christ to this jailer and the others in his house. We notice in verse 34 that the jailer and his household believed in God. Notice the interchange of the words “the Lord Jesus Christ” in verse 31 and “God” in verse 34. Jesus stated in John 12:44 that those who believed in Him were not just believing in Him but in God, the Father, as well. Even though it was after midnight, the jailer washed their wounds from the beating that they had received. He also brought them into his house and set a meal before them. This showed his love for believers and the authenticity of his faith and those of his household. This is an example of Christian hospitality based on that love (1 Pet. 4:8-9). We also note that he and his family were quick (Ps. 119:60) to obey Christ's command to be baptized in Mt. 28:20 to show that they were serious about their faith in Christ. Finally, we see that he was filled with joy. This reminds us that a genuine salvation experience with Jesus Christ brings joy.

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4. Release and departure (16:35-40)

Acts 16:35-40 - We do not know what brought about the quick decision to release Paul and Silas. We do know that God works in the hearts of those who are in authority according to Prov. 21:1. They were expected to leave town quietly. Paul made a protest that they had been publicly beaten and imprisoned without a trial which was contrary to Roman law and pointed out that he and Silas were Roman citizens. In the believer's relationship to those who are in authority, it is quite okay to exercise our rights as a citizen under that authority. In order for Paul and Silas to leave, the magistrates had to appear before them. They kept on asking Paul and Barnabas to leave. However, before leaving Philippi, they did go to the house of Lydia and met with their fellow-believers and spoke words of encouragement to them. We can imitate Paul by giving encouragement to other believers when we meet with them (1 Cor. 11:1 cp. Heb. 10:25). However, their brief time at Philippi was enough to set up a local church with overseers and deacons according to Phil. 1:1. This continues to remind us that follow-up is a necessary part of evangelism (Mt. 28:20).

E. Thessalonica (17:1-10)

Acts 17:1-4 - Notice the pattern followed by Paul, a Jewish Christian. He took his message to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. We see that order in Rom. 1:16. This reminds us that we often do better to bring the gospel to people of our own religious and ethnic background and work out from there. Notice that human reasoning is used in presenting God's word. However, the basis and the content of that reasoning comes from scripture which Jesus declared to be truth (John 17:17). Human reasoning often is viewed in a negative light (1 Cor. 1:19-21; 3:19-20). However, when the foundation of that human reasoning is the word of God, then it becomes effective. The scriptures from which we reason (in this context the Old Testament) explain that the Christ/Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead. Christ's death is clearly set forth in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. His resurrection is mentioned in Psalm 16:8-11; 22:20-24 (Christ's prayer for deliverance was heard according to Heb. 5:7 and He was saved or delivered from death by His bodily resurrection). Isa. 53:10 shows that Jesus' days were prolonged through His resurrection from the dead. By reasoning from the scriptures, Paul was able to show these Jewish people that the Jesus that He was proclaiming to them was the promised Christ/Messiah. Some of the Jews who heard Paul were persuaded to place their trust in Christ as well as a large number of the Greeks who feared God and leading women of the city. Regardless of how well we present Christ, we will not experience 100% success in a given audience because Jesus clearly predicted that only a few would be saved (Mt. 7:13-14). We also see that because these people trusted Christ that they joined Paul and Silas to form a local church even though they were there only 3 weeks (17:2; 1 Thes. 1:1 cp. 5:12-13). It is important for us as believers to use our minds to reason from the scriptures. As we obey them we can give a defense to those who ask us concerning our confidence for the future (1 Pet. 3:15).

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Acts 17:5-10 - The scripture mentions that the Jews became jealous. Some manuscripts include the information that these were unbelieving Jews which is also obvious from the context. These Jewish unbelievers gathered some of the less decent elements of society and created a mob and disorder. They were looking for Paul and Silas and attacked Jason's house. Jason and some of the believers were taken to the city officials where they were accused of disloyalty to the Roman government. The officials let Jason and the believers go after posting bond. The believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea by night. Several principles gain our attention. There was the sin of jealousy which we are to avoid (Gal. 5:19-21). There was the joining with a mob to do evil which is also a sin (Ex. 23:2). We are not told what they did when they attacked Jason's house as far as property damage is concerned. They maligned Paul and Silas by accusing them of stirring up trouble all over the Roman empire (the word "world" is translated by a Greek word meaning the "inhabited earth"). Maligning is mentioned as a sin according to 1 Peter 2:1. While it is not surprising that unsaved people do these things, it is recorded as a reminder to those of us who have trusted Christ not to be engaging in such conduct. They also misunderstood the relationship of Christ's kingdom to the governing authorities (John 18:36) which is that His kingdom is presently not of this world. Almost always, believers are taught subjection and obedience to the governing authorities even dictators (Rom. 13:1-14; 1 Peter 2:13-14) unless asked or required to disobey God's word (Acts 5:29). Notice the persecution that Jason and the other believers received by being hauled into court and having to post bond. As believers, we are promised that it has been given to us not only to believe in Christ but to suffer for His sake (Phil. 1:29). Finally, we see that it was necessary for Paul and Silas to leave town quietly and secretly not only for their safety and well being but for the safety and well being of the church. By having Paul and Silas leave, this removed a lightning rod for so much persecution for the believers in Thessalonica. This is an example of pursuing peace with all people (Heb. 12:14).

F. Berea (17:10-15)

Acts 17:10-15 - The Jews in Berea that attended the synagogue were more honorable in their thinking. They received the word of God with great eagerness. They received it not as the word of men but as the word of God (1 Thes. 2:13). They examined the scriptures each day to see if what they were being taught was in harmony with scripture. This sets a pattern for us to study God's word each day. In this way, we can see if what we are being taught in Bible classes and at church is in harmony with God's word. If these people checked out the great Apostle Paul, how much more should we check out those who give out God's word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). As a result many of these people believed which included not only the Jews but prominent Greek men and women. However, when the Thessalonian Jewish opponents of Paul found out he was proclaiming God's word in Berea, they agitated and stirred up the crowds. Once again Paul and his associates were suffering persecution. To defuse the situation, Paul was sent to Athens while Silas and Timothy remained behind probably to do follow-up with the believers. This again sets a pattern of obeying Mt. 28:20 and pursuing peace with all people in keeping with Heb. 12:14. It would appear that Paul had some sort of escort from some of the Berean believers which shows us

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that while we depend on God for protection in doing His work that human means are often also used (see Neh. 4:10-18 for an illustration of this). The escort took Paul's message to Timothy and Silas at Berea to join him at Athens. This reminds us of the importance of communication in doing God's work. We will look at Paul's situation in Athens in our next meditation.

G. Athens (17:16-34)

Acts 17:16-21 - Paul had been in cities that had idols but not one like Athens. They were given over to multiple gods. He was inwardly provoked by this lack of knowledge and understanding of the true God. Since there was a synagogue of Jews and Gentiles who feared the true God, Paul was able to reason with them on a daily basis. In addition, he spent time each day in the market place reasoning with those who were present. Acts 17:2 would help us to understand that this reasoning was done from the foundation of the scriptures. Then Paul encountered some philosophers from the Stoics and Epicureans. The stoics were self-sufficient in their outlook toward life and self-exalting in their morality or virtue whereas Christianity is based on a faith relationship with Christ which starts with salvation and continues with one's daily life (Col. 2:6). In addition, Christian behavior is based on humility and glorifying or spotlighting God (Mt. 5:16). Epicureanism is based on pleasure – "if it feels good, do it." Their philosophy would fit with the sin mentioned in 2 Tim. 3:4 which is "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God" and would be based on one of the principles of the world mentioned in 1 John 2:16 termed "the lust of the flesh". They considered his teaching strange or different from their systems of teachings and understandings of God or gods. They called him an idle babbler (literally "a gatherer of scraps") because they believed what He was teaching was like garbage scraps in relation to what they heard and believed. However, they were willing to give Paul a hearing and wanted to know who this God was and about Jesus and the resurrection. In short, they wanted to understand more completely and fully what he was teaching. They took him to the Areopagus where the council of religious and educational matters convened. While their interest was more one of curiosity and desire for novelty, God would use this. Like Paul we must be prepared to give a defense for the hope (confidence regarding the future) that we have (1 Peter 3:15).

Acts 17:22-29 - Before Paul could present the gospel, these unbelievers had to know about the true God and His characteristics or attributes. Since scripture had no authority with these people, he did not quote it as he would with an audience that was more familiar with the scriptures such as the Jews and Gentiles proselytes. He noted that these people were very devoted to a number of gods (false gods to be sure – cp. Jer. 10:10). He mentioned that he had observed their objects of worship and found an altar to "an unknown god." He noted that they were ignorant (=without knowledge) of this god that they were worshipping. Paul explained that this God was the one that He was going to explain to them. He noted that this was the God who made the world and everything in it. He went on to point out that this God was in control of the universe and the earth. He added that God is not confined to manmade temples built by people. He stated that God is not dependent on people for anything. He then noted that we are dependent on God for life and breath and everything else. He taught that God

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made all human beings from one man including the nations. The nations are God's work including their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God's purpose in his actions and attributes was to motivate people to seek Him, reach out to Him and find Him even though God is not a God far off (Jer. 23:23). In God Himself is imparted our very life, activity and existence. Paul then quoted one of the Greek poets who had written an item that is in harmony with God's word. We are God's offspring. We are God's offspring by virtue of creation, but of course, we do not become His spiritual children unless we receive His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ by faith (John 1:12). Paul drove home the point that the true God is not like gold, silver or stone or any kind of humanly designed image. The important lesson from this passage is that some people do not have a background in the Bible. Before they can understand the gospel, they must discard their false ideas about God or gods and recognize the true God. This does not save them (James 2:19), but it is foundational to receiving the gospel information by which they can be saved if they choose to trust Christ as savior.

Acts 17:30-34 - The times of lack of knowledge are over. There is now a specific command for people to respond to special revelation (for people then, the message of Christ and the Apostles and for people today, the New Testament). God's wrath had been displayed against people for their ignoring Him in their response to Him in natural revelation and His laws in their conscience (Rom. 1:18-21; 2:14-15). Now people are also under God's wrath for not trusting Christ for salvation (John 3:36). Acts 14:16 also carries the same thought about God overlooking their lack of knowledge. There were people who did not have special revelation who were believers in the Old Testament such as Rahab, Job and Naaman. However, the vast majority of mankind was lost then as well as now. The message was to repent. This simply means to change your mind. It also includes trusting Christ as we see "repent" in v. 30 is used interchangeably with the word "believed." However, repentance always includes discarding something when we trust Christ. In this case, it would have been their systems of idol worship (see Rev. 9:20-21). For people who were depending on their works to save them, it would involve changing their mind about these dead works to save them as mentioned in Heb. 6:1 (see Phil. 3:4-6 to see an illustration for dead works). The reason for repentance - in discarding whatever keeps them from trusting Christ alone and then trusting Christ - is that God is going to judge the world in righteousness. This simply means, God has a standard and that those who fail to meet that standard will fall under God's wrath. The only reason that Christians meet God's standards is that when they trust Christ they have forgiveness of all sins (Acts 10:43 cp. Col. 2:13) and are justified from all things (Acts 13:38-39) having the righteousness of Christ credited to them (Rom. 4:3-5). God has given this judgment to the Lord Jesus Christ according to John 5:22, 27. The evidence that God will carry out His righteous judgment and that it will be carried out by the Lord Jesus Christ is that He bodily raised Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4). It was now time for people to make a decision to trust or not to trust Jesus Christ. This is the essential message that we must carry to every unbeliever as we have opportunity.

We will note the response to the gospel as Paul presented it to the Athenians. He started by helping them form an accurate concept of the true God and the only God. He then pointed to the issue of the coming judgment by Jesus Christ based on His resurrection from the dead. This

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proved to be a sticking point to many in his Greek audience. They believed in the immortality of the soul but not in the resurrection of the body. Their three-fold response to the gospel mirrors the response of people today. There is one group who will sneer at and absolutely reject the resurrection of the dead regardless of the evidence. Their bias ruled out any possibility of the bodily resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:12-13, 16). The next group of people were those who wanted to hear more. These were the undecided. The urgency of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as savior was lost on these people. 2 Cor. 6:2 is an important scripture to use with such people. Luke 12:16-21 warns against the presumption that the undecided will have further opportunity to make the decision to receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. However, some of the people to whom Paul spoke became believers and joined themselves to him so that he had opportunity to follow-up with them and disciple them. Once again, we see a woman mentioned as one of the people to come to Christ as we saw in Acts 16:14-15. It is interesting to note that Dionysius was a member of the council to which Paul spoke. The fact that the results were not as good in Athens lines up with the fact that not many who are wise from a human standpoint accept the gospel according to 1 Cor. 1:26. However, we are to attempt to bring the gospel to these people even if the results are meager.

H. Corinth (18:1-17)

Acts 18:1-6 - Following Paul's preaching in Athens, he left there and arrived at Corinth. God used a Jewish Christian couple named Aquila and Priscilla who were native to the Roman province of Pontus. They had been living in Rome but had to leave because the emperor Claudius had ordered all people of Jewish descent to leave Rome. We can see that God used this injustice to move this couple to Corinth so that Paul would have a place to lodge. This is another illustration of the principle that what people mean for evil, God means for good (Gen. 50:20). They and Paul formed a close relationship because they were all tentmakers by trade. Notice that Paul was working to provide his own support as was his custom (1 Cor. 9:7-18; 1 Thes. 2:9) so as to avoid hindering the spread and acceptance of the gospel. He spent every Sabbath at the synagogue trying to persuade both Jews and Greeks to receive the Lord and savior Jesus Christ by faith. Notice that he was reasoning with them, and because of their regard for the scripture, he was probably using the scriptures to reason with them (see Acts 17:2). This reminds us of the importance of carefully laying out the gospel in a logical fashion and the need to use reason and the word of God rather than emotion. However, Paul was able to start telling the Jews and Greeks the gospel full time after the arrival of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia. His message centered on the Lord Jesus Christ since Christ is the Holy Spirit's main focus (John 15:26; 16:14) as is the scripture (John 5:39). However, the Jews in the synagogue resisted the gospel and insulted Paul and his message. By shaking out his garments and telling them their blood would be on their hands and not his hands (Ezek. 33:1-5), he was renouncing all responsibility for their rejection. What this means is that when we share the gospel and clarify the judgment to come, the decision and the results rest completely with the hearer. His plan was to go full time to the Gentiles with the gospel. This clarifies the principle that when we encounter rejection from one person or group, we move on to another person or group.

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Acts 18:7-11 - Paul showed that he was serious about taking the gospel to the Gentiles and went to the home of Titius Justus who was a Gentile worshiper of God and probably a believer at this point. This helped to provide lodging for Paul. Despite the hostility that he had encountered at the synagogue, Crispus, the synagogue leader and everyone in his household placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many others who lived in Corinth trusted Christ for salvation. They were baptized in obedience to the command of Christ (Mt 28:19). However, Paul only remembers baptizing Crispus and a man named Gaius (1 Cor. 1:14) as well as the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16). This would mean others were involved in doing the baptism. 1 Cor. 1:17 points out that Christ simply sent Paul to preach the gospel and not to baptize. It is the gospel that is God's power for salvation to those who believe according to Rom. 1:16. Water baptism is clearly not a part of the gospel. The gospel is the first part of the Great Commission with water baptism being the second part of the Great Commission, and the teaching of obedience to all that Christ commanded is the third part of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). This leaves us with the conclusion that when baptism is mentioned in Mark 16:15-16 that Spirit baptism - which occurs the moment we trust Christ (Acts 11:15-17; 1 Cor. 12:13) - is in view. In this passage we see another post-resurrection encounter of Jesus Christ with Paul. He told Paul and us by extension not to be afraid to speak out for Him in presenting the gospel. He promised to be with Paul and with us (Mt. 28:20). Because of Christ's presence and the because of the presence of many believers in Corinth, Paul would be protected from an attack which would harm him. Believers would do well to note in some areas of the world that this has held true for us as well. The last verse sees Paul implementing the third portion of the Great Commission teaching these people for a year and a half. In addition to this time of teaching, Paul wrote two letters to this church giving them further instruction. As we obey the Great Commission, we are to see that all three parts of it are carried out even if we are not the one directly doing the baptizing and follow-up teaching.

Acts 18:12-17 - Because of the conversion of Crispus the ruler of the synagogue and his family plus Paul's 18 month follow-up teaching ministry, the Jews forcibly took Paul before the proconsul Gallio for the purpose of shutting down his ministry. The only charge that they could come up with was that Paul was violating the Law of Moses by teaching worship contrary to that law. God had already worked in the proconsul's heart to follow the Roman law (Prov. 21:1), and he threw the case out of court because like American law, Roman law did not require government intervention in a religious group's conflicts unless there was some conflict with Roman law. The decision to throw the case out of court is how government is supposed to work according to Rom. 13:1-5 and 1 Pet. 2:13-17. This part stands as an example of how government is ordained by God for our benefit. However, Gallio acted in total disregard of Roman law and God's law when the crowd beat up Sosthenes right in his presence. However, if this Sosthenes is the same man as mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:1, this incident may have given the Christians a chance to minister to him and bring him to a saving knowledge of Christ. Because believers in obedience to God are called upon to overcome evil with good in Rom. 12:20-21, this often provides an opportunity to bring the enemy to Christ. However, even he is not the same one; this kept Christians from being persecuted by the Roman authorities and allowed the

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church to grow and for Paul and his associates to minister. For this reason, we are commanded to give thanks for those who are in authority and to pray for them.

I. From Corinth to Ephesus to Antioch/Syria (18:18-23)

Acts 18:18-23 - When Paul left for Syria by boat, Aquila and Priscilla went with him. However, before they disembarked, he had his hair cut off at a city on their way to leave by boat. This was probably a Nazirite vow as mentioned in Numbers 6:1-18. Based on that text, it appears that perhaps something occurred that would require the cutting off of his hair. We must remember that Paul was not under the Law of Moses but under the law of Christ according to 1 Cor. 9:20-21. However, Christians are allowed to obey any Jewish law so long as they are not doing it to gain salvation (Rom. 3:20), retain salvation (Gal. 3:1-3) or to be spiritual (Gal. 5:16-18). In this case, Paul undoubtedly was doing this to build rapport with Jewish unbelievers in line with 1 Cor. 9:20 which states that “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.” (N.I.V.). Paul did get a favorable response from the Jews when he went into the synagogue at Ephesus. They wanted him to stay longer but because of his travel itinerary, he had to leave but promised to return if it was God’s will. This teaches us another principle. It is okay to plan to do something so long as we leave it open for God to change our plans. In James 4:13-16, the people were not rebuked for planning for the future, but they were rebuked for presuming on the future rather than qualifying their plans under the limits of God’s will. The Textus Receptus and the majority of Greek manuscripts state in verse 21 that Paul told them that he was planning to keep some unspecified feast (probably the Passover according to most commentators) in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, he had opportunity to greet the church and probably to attend the feast. After returning to the Antioch church who had sent him on his missionary journey, he went through the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. The Holy Spirit had prevented him, Silas and Timothy from speaking the word there earlier in Acts 16:6. However, through the message of other believers, there were people in these areas who had come to Christ. Therefore, his purpose was related to edification (Mt. 28:20 – follow-up teaching to help them grow) rather than evangelism (Mt. 28:19) which hopefully these people were doing. In summary, we see the need to adjust to expectations of those whom we want to win to Christ if we can do so without disobeying God’s word, plan according to God’s will and be sure that follow-up is done with those who have been won to Christ.

PART FOUR: Missionary Journey Three (Acts 18:24-21:25)

A. Ephesus (18:24-19:41)

1. Apollos (18:24-28)

Acts 18:24-28 – Here, we are introduced to Apollos, a Jewish man born in Alexandria, Egypt. He was said to be an eloquent or polished speaker in contrast to Paul (1 Cor. 2:1-4). He obviously

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had a good working knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures. He had been taught the way of the Lord up through the teaching related to the baptism of John the Baptist. Acts 19:4 tells us that John, the Baptist, had taught people to believe in the one coming after him, i.e. Jesus. His communication of God's word was enthusiastic and accurate concerning Jesus Christ. When he spoke out boldly in the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila saw that he lacked a certain understanding of God's word. They took him aside, and both of them explained to him the way of God more accurately. In the next paragraph, we will deal with the issue of a woman teaching a man in relation to this verse. Apollos wanted to go to Achaia (southern Greece). According to Acts 19:1, he landed at Corinth. Notice how fellow-believers encouraged him and sent letters of recommendation. When he got to Corinth, he helped those who had accessed God's grace by faith in Christ (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:8-9). Using the scripture, he explained to the Jewish people there that Jesus was the promised Messiah and publicly refuted those Jews who tried to contradict his message. This reminds us that it is important to help even good Bible teachers to be better when there is something that they are presenting that does not seem to be complete. Notice that it was done privately and not openly. We need to encourage those who go out as missionaries. We each need to be powerful in our working knowledge of God's word so we can back up what we teach or share from the scriptures.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 - *A woman should learn in silence with full submission.*¹² *I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to be silent.* (HCSB)

Acts 18:26 is often used by some to try to override 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Those who do that try to negate what 1 Tim. 2:11-12 is saying. Others try to say that it was Paul's personal opinion and not God's viewpoint, but if one starts doing that with the scripture, pretty soon we have words without authority. Paul made it very clear that the Holy Spirit was guiding him in his directives (1 Cor. 7:40). Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit was going to guide the Apostles and their associates into all truth (not partial truth – John 16:12-13). The solution to what appears to many to be a contradiction lies in the Greek verb tenses used. In Acts 18:26, when Priscilla was involved with Aquila is explaining the way of God more accurately, the word "explained" speaks of an action that took place at a point of time. It was not one that occurred repeatedly. In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 the words "to teach" and "to have authority over" speak of continuing or recurring action. The Greek word for "silent" in 1 Tim. 2:11-12 simply means "not argumentative" (see Acts 11:18). It does not mean that she has to be absolutely quiet. So it would be okay for a woman to call a male Bible teacher in the church to question if she sees that he is presenting a point that is not scripturally accurate. However, what 1 Tim. 2:11-12 does say is that she cannot be in a role in the church where she is teaching men or where she is exercising authority over a man on an ongoing basis. Interestingly, the reasons given in 1 Tim. 2:13-14 for this command are not cultural but doctrinal. Obviously, she can teach other women as in Titus 2:4-5. In my experience in teaching God's word, I have had women raise points challenging some point of my teaching, and it forced me to go back to the scriptures helping to present God's word more accurately and clearly.

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2. Paul converts 12 disciples of John the Baptist (19:1-7)

Acts 19:1-7 - There are passages where the Holy Spirit is received after salvation rather than at the time of salvation. In all of these cases there are some definite elements that appear to be present: These include the presence of at least one Apostle, the laying on of hands and the people who receive the Holy Spirit are Jewish or part Jewish.

#	Scripture References	Presence of Apostles	Laying on of hands by Apostles	Jewish or part Jewish People	Teaching
1.	Acts 8:12-18	vv.17-18 Peter and John	vv. 17-18 yes by Peter and John	v. 14 people of Samaria were part Jewish	Although Phillip had the hands of the Apostles laid on him in Acts 6:5-6, he had to wait until Peter and John came for them to lay on hands and impart the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans
2.	Acts 19:1-7	vv. 1-2 Paul	v. 6 yes by Paul	Probably	These men were probably Jews because Acts 13:24 tells us John's preaching was directed to Israel. Also Acts 19:8 speaks of a synagogue at Ephesus.
3.	2 Timothy 1:6-7	vv. 6-7 Paul	vv. 6-7 yes by Paul	Acts 16:1 yes part Jewish	Timothy was given the Holy Spirit who gives us love, power and a sound mind.
4.	Acts 2:38	Acts 1:13-14; 2:1- all of the Apostles	It is not stated one way or another	Jewish audience	Acts 2:5,39 tells us that the audience were all Jews

Special Note: In the case of Cornelius and his household, who were Gentiles, the Holy Spirit was given at the time of faith in Christ (Acts 10:44-48; 11:14-18). Since 1 Corinthians 12:13 shows that all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit, it is logical to conclude that this occurs at salvation. Since Romans 8:9 shows that anyone who does not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not a true believer, then we know that the Holy Spirit must be given at the moment of trusting Christ (Galatians 3:26;4:6). Given the fact that the spiritual gift of Apostle was either primarily or exclusively foundational (Ephesians 2:20), this argues for the passages in the table above being foundational and transitional.

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3. Paul's ministry among the Ephesians (19:8-22)

Acts 19:8-10 - This passage explains that the subject is the kingdom of God. There would probably be two aspects of the kingdom under discussion. The first aspect would be the fact that people enter that kingdom by the new birth (John 3:3-7 cp. Col. 1:13). This occurs when the individual receives the Lord Jesus Christ by simple child-like faith (John 1:12-13) and by that new birth becomes a child of God. Faith in Christ is directed toward His person and His work. He is Lord, i.e. God, the supreme source of authority for our lives. He is also at the same time fully human (2 John 1:9-10 cp. Heb. 2:17). He died for our sins as our substitute shedding His blood (1 Cor. 15:3 cp. Eph. 1:7) and was bodily raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4). Many of the Jews wanted a visible political kingdom now and any offer less than that was unacceptable to many of them. The presence of a spiritual requirement to enter that kingdom did not set well with them. Paul would have undoubtedly explained to them the future aspect of that kingdom which would include the 1000 reign of Christ on earth with us believers reigning with Him (Rev. 20:1-6 cp. 5:9-10) and then our reign with Him in the new heaven and new earth in the eternal state (Rev. 22:5). Along with the implementation of the 1000 reign at Christ's return to earth would be the restoration of the kingdom for Israel (Acts 1:6-7 cp. Rom. 11:25-26) when the nation consisting of a remnant (Rom. 9:27) would be saved. Notice how these truths were to be communicated. Firstly, they were to be communicated boldly. Acts 4:29-31 shows us that the filling of the Holy Spirit is vital for there to be a bold communication of the gospel. Secondly, the communication of these truths was to be by reasoning. Again the necessary foundation for this reasoning would be the scriptures (Acts 17:2). It is important to lay out the information concerning entry into God's kingdom in a logical and systematic manner, not an emotional manner. Thirdly, we see the importance of trying to persuade unsaved people to make a choice as in John 3:18, 36). Hopefully, through the facts of scripture and the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11), this will occur. We must always remember to use God's word in communicating Christ because it is God's word that is the sword that the Holy Spirit uses to work in the hearts of unbelievers (Eph. 6:17). Finally, the word "persuading" reminds us that trusting Christ is a matter of people making a choice and is not a matter of coercion.

The response to Paul's efforts was mixed. There were those who trusted Christ as Savior as can be deduced from this passage. Some of the hearers at the synagogue were becoming hardened. This describes the mindset of the unsaved according to Eph. 4:18-19. The word used to describe those who did not trust Christ was the word "disobedient". It is the opposite Greek word from our word "persuading" in this passage. It simply means that they remained unpersuaded. When it states that they spoke evil of the way, it strongly indicates that they were unpersuaded that Jesus was the way to God as He stated in John 14:6; 10:1, 9. The mindset of the majority of the Jewish people is set forth in Rom. 9:30-33. This tells us that they were seeking to produce the righteousness that God requires for salvation by works and not accepting it as a free gift received by faith. Because of the audience that Paul was teaching, it was necessary for him to withdraw the believers away from the open and outspoken unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-17). When churches openly tolerate unbelievers in their midst who are not interested in learning the truth of God's word, they will infect the church with false

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teaching (Mt. 16:12) and openly sinful living (1 Cor. 5:6-8). When we fail to withdraw from such churches, we prolong the problem and become part of the problem. By being obedient and separating the believers from them, we see how God honored Paul's ministry. The church had a regular meeting place, the lecture hall of the school of Tyrannus. Paul kept instructing these believers in the word of God for two years so that all kinds of people in the Roman province of Asia (located in modern day Turkey) heard the word of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Jews and the Greeks. (The word "all" can also be translated "all kinds of" as in Mt. 5:11.) It would appear that one of the outcomes of Paul's teaching was that the people he was teaching started reaching people for Christ. He was making disciples who made disciples.

Acts 19:11-12 - This passage explains how God was doing multiple miracles by the Apostle Paul. Heb. 2:3-4 would point out that there was a generation who did these miracles and a generation who received these miracles. The stated purpose in Heb. 2:3-4 was to confirm once and for all the word of God which they were speaking. At this point in early church history, healing was so widespread that even Peter's shadow passing over people brought about healing (Acts 5:14-16). Here in our passage above, Paul was sending out handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched his body. As a result sick people were being healed of diseases and demons went out of people. However, just a few years later, healing was no longer widespread. Timothy was told to take a little wine rather than just drinking water for his stomach and his frequent illnesses (1 Tim. 5:23). Shortly before he was martyred, Paul stated that he had left Trophimus ill at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). Obviously, there was a significant shift in the number of people being healed. Some would argue that it was a lack of faith. Yet, there was no evidence that Paul's faith was in a state of decline at that time (2 Tim. 4:7). Some would argue that Jesus is the same in the past, the present and the future (Heb. 13:8). However, that does not mean that he works the same. For example, in Gen. chapter 5 people lived hundreds of years and now, they seldom live beyond 100 years. Does that mean that Jesus changed. Not at all, He is still the same. So if Jesus chooses to heal one time and not another, there could be a problem of a lack of faith (James 1:6-7), or it simply may not be His will to heal at that point. So-called faith healers have made a market out of sending out prayer cloths. Yet, we know that if Jesus is willing to heal and the person has faith in His ability to heal that healing does take place. However, we saw from 1 Tim. 5:23 and 2 Tim. 4:20 that it is not always God's will to heal. We do know that our bodies as believers will be like Christ when we are raised from the dead according to Phil. 3:20-21 (or if living when Jesus comes they will be changed to be like His immortal body - 1 Cor. 15:49-53). It will all work out in God's perfect plan which will involve the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23).

Acts 19:13-17 - One of the things that many believers fail to understand is that unbelievers can be successful in casting out demons either in the name of Jesus or otherwise (Mt. 7:21-23; 12:27). However, Jesus made it very clear that no one casts out demons by Satan's power (Mt. 12:24-30) – believer or unbeliever. In our passage, we notice that the seven sons of Sceva were doing this on a continual basis according to the Greek verb tense in v. 14. However, this proved that unbelievers can cast out demons sometimes (Mt. 7:21-23). These men had obviously had some success in exorcising demons. However, they decided to see if they could improve their

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success rate by invoking the name of Jesus and of Paul. Basically, they were trying to use Jesus. God's design is not for people to use Him or His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. His design is for Christ to use us. The name or authority of Jesus or even of His Apostles were not magical words to be used to do whatever any individual might choose to do. These unbelieving men finally came up against a situation where they were outmatched. Notice that the demon recognized that these men did not have the authority to ask him to leave the man. Instead the demon empowered the man so that he became violent and overpowered all 7 of these men. One of the things that we see is that demons are able to give supernatural strength to people as in this passage and as noted in Mark 5:4. The men were so badly beaten that they ran out of the house (where the man was) with all of them being naked and bleeding. This opened up further opportunity for the gospel in Ephesus because as this incident became widely known. Both the Jews and Greeks were very fearful because they realized that the power and reputation of Christ was real and not some magical formula for accomplishing what they wanted. We will see that this incident had a very practical effect on those in Ephesus, who were already believers, and not just on the unbelievers. As believers we are reminded that the occult and demonic activity is not something to be trifled with. Jesus Christ has allowed us to share in His authority (Eph. 2:6). With that authority, however, comes the solemn responsibility to use it under His Lordship.

Acts 19:18-20 - This passage is an excellent passage on the need for Christians to break all ties with the occult. By occult, it is meant the utilization of demons to gain supernatural power or supernaturally known information. The incident with the sons of Sceva was not ignored by the believers. There were many of those who had previously become believers but had hung on to their practice of magic and books. When people receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, there are always areas of their lives that do not fall under the Lordship of Christ. The church at Corinth had problems 1 Cor. 1:1-8 cp. 3:1-3. The Galatians had such problems (Gal. 3:26 cp. 3:1). The church at Rome had such problems as well (Rom. 6:1-15). Even Paul had his struggles (Rom. 7:15-25). Notice the road to restoration and the fuller blessing of God in the lives of Christians who have hung on to any vestiges of the occult. First, those involved in this sin made a public confession and disclosure of their sinful practices. Secondly, they brought their books on magic and the occult and burned them before the congregation. Thirdly, the cost of a break with the occult can prove very costly. The value of the destruction of these items was 50,000 days wages. The result of these believers getting in fellowship with God impacted evangelism. The word of God kept spreading and prevailing in bringing people under its control. When I first became a believer in 1969, I was convicted in reading this passage. Several months before I was saved, I had gone with a fellow-soldier to some meeting concerning an eastern religion. There was a package of candles called a Gehunza. I was told if one purchased those, all they had to do was hold it in the hands, repeat certain words, make my request and it would be granted. I had been a Christian about a week or two and on reading this passage, I took the Gehunza, broke the candles and tossed all of it in the trash. Fortunately, I was out only \$10.00 but God blessed my life as a result. I then shared this decision with fellow-believers. The overriding truth of this whole passage is found in Rom. 13:14 where we are told to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for our sinful nature.

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Acts 19:21-22 – This passage introduces a rather controversial question. Was Paul led by the Holy Spirit as many translators suggest, or was he led by his human spirit as this translation suggests. He was determined to go to Jerusalem? Notice that several disciples in Tyre said through the Holy Spirit that Paul should not go to Jerusalem (*Acts 21:4*). In *Acts 21:10-14* Agabus, a New Testament prophet (*1 Cor. 12:28*) gave Paul a message that he would be bound and delivered to the Gentiles. One must remember that God's word records not only the steps of faith and obedience of His servants but also the missteps of His servants. Paul's desire to go to Jerusalem was probably quite sincere as he had great affection and concern for the Jews according to *Rom. 9:1-5* and may have hoped that the gifts of the Gentiles sent by him to the poor believers at Jerusalem would open hearts to the gospel (*Rom 15:25-28*). However, Paul was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (*Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8*). It would appear that God allowed Paul to go to Jerusalem and learn by experience that he would not be able to have the desired impact on the Jewish people. Paul was still able to go to Rome from there but not in the manner he had planned. God's word explains that people plan their way or course in life, but God directs their steps (*Prov. 16:9*). In His permissive will, God allows believers to deviate from His purposeful will in order to accomplish His perfect will. Doing God's permissive will generally brings extra suffering that we might not have had if we had followed His purposeful will. Paul did pass through the northern part of Greece which was part of the province of Macedonia and through Greece before heading onto the Roman province of Asia before going on to Jerusalem. At this point in his ministry, Paul stayed in Asia at Ephesus (prior to his journeys through Macedonia and Achaia/Greece). Two men who had served with him (Timothy and Erastus) were sent into Macedonia. God was getting ready to use an unexpected development to move Paul from Ephesus. This shows how God not only uses His word and the Holy Spirit to direct us but circumstances as well. As believers, we at times, misread the leading of the Holy Spirit, and God will work through the events of life to get us on track with His purposes (*Acts 8:1-5*). When we do miss God's plan, we must be teachable to let God get us back on the track of His good, acceptable and pleasing will knowing that as we express our salvation in our works, He works in us to give us the will and ability to do what pleases Him (*Phi. 2:12-13*).

4. Riot and opposition at Ephesus (19:23-41)

Acts 19:23-27 - We see conflict between religion and the Way. Religion would have us come to God or a series of gods through our works. In many cases such religions have many paths to a god or to God (*Prov. 14:12*). The ways of the world and the thoughts of the world are built around three principles according to *1 John 2:15-17*: (1) pleasure – the lust of the flesh, (2) possessions – the lust of the eye, (3) prominence – the pride of life. On the other hand the way, the truth and the life of God is founded upon a person, the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 14:6*) and the eternal and unchanging word of God (*John 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:25; Psalm 119:89*). Persecution had arisen because the reality of Christ was seen as a threat to the livelihood for Demetrius and the craftsman. The deliverance of the people of Ephesus was less important than their financial well-being. The men wanted nothing to do with Jesus when he cast the demons out of the Gadarene man and sent them into the pigs in *Luke 8:26-37* because they valued the lives of the

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pigs and the money they represented more than the man who had been tormented by the demons. Demetrius focused on the Apostle Paul as the man who was responsible for causing many people to not patronize their business because he taught that man-made gods were false gods. He deftly appealed not only to their concern for financial security but also to their religious tradition of worshipping the false goddess Artemis. He pointed out that their trade was in danger because of the spread of the gospel from Ephesus to the whole Roman province of Asia. Demetrius was using these people to stir up the populace on the religious issue. When people have lack a relationship with the true God, they have no problem promoting businesses that honor substitutes for God. These people were trying to hold on to something that they could not keep rather than embracing that which they could not lose (Mark 8:35-37).

Acts 19:28-40 - 1 Timothy 6:9-10 reminds us that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Here we see how the love of money on the part of Demetrius and the craftsmen incited a whole city to act against the cause of Christ. First of all, we see the problem of anger out of control. No wonder that Solomon wrote in Prov. 16:32 that the one who controls his inner man rather than acting impulsively is better than the one who captures a city. This is why as believers, we are to behave in a counter-cultural manner when it comes to our anger (James 1:19-20; Eph. 4:26). The result of this uncontrolled anger was confusion of which God is not the source (1 Cor. 14:33). Paul's helpers were seized by the mob and taken to the amphitheater. We are warned in scripture not to follow a mob to do evil (Ex. 23:2). Here we see fellow-believers showing their love for Paul by trying to protect him from the anger of the mob (1 Cor. 13:7 - NIV). Some of the unbelieving government officials who were friends of Paul sent a message urging him not to risk his life by going into the amphitheater and by doing so fulfilling their God-designed role of being a servant for good for all people, even believers (Rom. 13:4). Alexander representing the non-Christian Jews who were fearful that they might be lumped together with the Christians tried to speak in their defense but was shouted down. God used the leader of the city to address the mob and quiet them down by assuring them that their idol was safe and the reputation of the city was behind that idol. Notice that Paul had not staged anti-idol rallies nor had he organized picketing of the temple of Artemis. He simply had taught God's word and equipped believers to reach people for Christ. Luke records for us in Acts 19:37-38 that the city leader and the officials had not found Paul guilty of speaking against the goddess Artemis nor had he or his people robbed temples. He reminded the people that the courts were open, and they needed to follow the due process of the Roman law. Prov. 21:1 reminds us that those in charge of government are in God's hands to work His will. We see how God worked to keep believers from further persecution at this time.

B. Macedonia, Greece and Troas (20:1-12)

Acts 20:1-7 - With the restoration of order in Ephesus, Paul decided to leave. However, before he left, he gave encouragement to the disciples. Encouragement is an important aspect of our relationship to other believers. Our attendance at church is designed as a place to encourage one another (Heb. 10:24-25). In addition, we are commanded in Heb. 3:13 to encourage one another daily so that we will not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Paul then went to

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Macedonia where he spent his time encouraging the believers. When we travel out of town, it is good to visit churches and give encouragement to the believers there. Paul then moved south to Greece from where he was planning to sail by ship to Syria. However, he became aware of a Jewish plot to waylay him. So he changed his plans and went back through Macedonia accompanied by the men mentioned in v. 4. Proverbs 22:3 explains that the prudent believer sees danger coming and takes evasive action. However, these men went on ahead of Paul, Silas and Luke and waited for the trio at Troas. It was there that Paul and the men spent 7 days. Finally, on the first day of the week (Sunday), the church came together to break bread which probably had to do with the Lord's table as mentioned in 1 Cor. 11:23-32. It is very interesting to see that the believers were generally coming together each Sunday. Paul addressed the people and spoke until midnight. This was necessary because he only had brief time with them before he had to leave. This coming together on the first day of the week became standard practice since the very early days of the church. If a local church were to choose a different day, the New Testament provides for the freedom to do this as taught in Rom. 14:5-6 and Gal. 4:9-11.

Acts 20:7-12 - I have included verse 7 because it sets the stage for what happened in the rest of this passage. It states that Paul preached his message until midnight. They were in an upper room of some building or house. The early church did not have buildings set apart for that use. They met in homes (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phlm. 1:2), a lecture hall (Acts 19:9 and the upper room of a building as in this passage. However, what would have been a marathon sermon was interrupted when a man name Eutychus fell sound asleep and fell three stories to his death. Paul evidently raised this man from the dead which showed his Apostolic gift (2 Cor. 12:12 cp. Mt. 10:5-8). When Paul said "his life is in him," the Greek rendering is that "his soul is in him." Gen. 35:18 shows that the soul leaves the body at death. Paul then took time out to eat and continued speaking until dawn. The church family of Eutychus took him home obviously being greatly comforted by the fact that he had been raised from the dead. This event was obviously a very faith-strengthening event for the church and family and confirmed the New Testament message (Heb. 2:3-4). The main lessons from this account are that the preaching of the word is a very important part of church life and something that we should look at when choosing a church or hiring a pastor (2 Tim. 4:2-4). Secondly, we see that God sometimes allows tragedies to open the way for Him to do something far greater – in this case comfort or encouragement. Thirdly, we see the importance of meeting together on a regular basis and observing the Lord's Supper.

C. Troas to Miletus (20:13-18)

Acts 20:13-18 - We are not told why Paul walked to Assos rather than sailing with Luke and the others. Since several of the unbelieving Jews had been plotting to kill him, this may have been a way for him to elude them. In any case, Paul needed to avoid unnecessary delays in getting to Jerusalem. This demonstrates that in doing God's work that planning and setting goals are often necessary. When Paul reached Miletus, he decided to send for the elders of the church at Ephesus. We notice that in the New Testament plan of church government that each church

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had multiple elders. These elders are called “overseers” (same as the Greek word for bishop in the KJV and NKJV) in Acts 20:28. They are called upon in Acts 20:28 to shepherd or feed the local church. The word for “shepherd” is the same Greek word form as the word for “pastor” in Eph. 4:11. We saw multiple elders in each local church here, in Acts 14:23 and in James 5:14. When the elders arrived, Paul reminded them of the way that he had lived while he was with them. This was to point to the example that he had been while among them which would re-enforce his instructions to them. We will see in the body of Paul’s address how he had lived and served while among them. The upcoming passage sets a good pattern for spiritual leaders to imitate.

D. Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders (20:19-38)

Acts 20:19-21 - Here we see how Paul reminds the elders from the church at Ephesus (20:17) of how he lived and served among them. We see that the first quality that he manifested was complete humility. Humility is the recognition and expression of our inadequacy apart from God in response to Him and to others. Two verses stand out in the writings of Paul with regard to this. 1 Cor. 15:10 stated that Paul was what he was by God’s grace yet he worked harder than all the other Apostles – Yet, it was not him doing the work but God’s grace working in him. 2 Cor. 3:4-5 reminds us that we are not adequate in and of ourselves but our adequacy is from God. This was the manner in which he served among them. When he stated that he served among them with tears, we think of his sorrow for his Jewish countrymen who had rejected Christ (Rom. 9:1-5) and his sorrow over the sins of his fellow-believers (2 Cor. 2:1-5). Finally, he mentions all the trials or difficulties that he experienced as a result of the plots of the Jewish unbelievers. He did not shy away from teaching them what was profitable which would refer to the scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16). He did his teaching in different settings. Sometimes it was done publicly and other times in their houses. As believers today, we can teach in a church setting or we can teach someone in their own home. The chief center point in teaching the word of God is testifying to the need of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. At first glance, this appears as two separate actions. However, this is one item because the definite article in the Greek comes before repentance but not before faith. If they were two separate acts, the definite article would come before both repentance and before faith. When repentance is viewed with faith, we must remember that to trust Christ, we must discard any false or sinful belief or behavior that prevents us from doing so. Trusting Christ in a sincere manner focuses on trusting Him alone for our salvation and not trusting in anything else such as our good works or any ritual. As we saw in Acts 17 in Paul’s encounter at Athens, there must be a proper understanding of who God is. This is all wrapped up in the idea of a change of mind about God and in relation to God as we exercise that faith in Christ that saves us.

Acts 20:22-25 - Paul continues his farewell address to the Ephesian church elders and reviewing his example and his priorities. Some translations would lead one to think that Paul was being led by the Holy Spirit but this does not seem to be the case in light of Acts 21:4. It is very clear that the Holy Spirit had warned him that imprisonment and suffering were awaiting him. However, he valued what he inwardly wanted to do which was to testify of the gospel of grace.

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Jerusalem and Judah were full of people who were bringing another gospel which was based on works and was, in fact, not a gospel. In addition, Paul wanted to finish his course. Here he compares his life to a course to be run. We see this idea in Heb. 12:1-2. He wanted to finish the course that God had laid out before him and the ministry that he received from the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was very willing to lay down his life for the purity of the gospel. However, he appeared to be following his heart rather than the leading of the Holy Spirit. We are warned in Jer. 17:9 that our heart can lead us astray. He was wanting to do the right thing in the wrong place at the wrong time as he was the Apostle to the Gentiles Acts 22:21; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8-9). As we will see, God finally got Paul to Rome after much adversity and imprisonment. He did not succeed in making any inroads with the Jewish people in Jerusalem as we will see as we move through the rest of the book of Acts. Sometimes, as believers, we miss God's leading and substitute our own concerns for the leading of the Holy Spirit. However, if we are committed to doing God's will, he will steer us back on to the right path. When we miss the leading of scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit which will always be consistent with scripture, then God has to give us an extra measure of suffering to help us back on course. After his imprisonment Paul was released and not arrested again until several years later. He wrote in 2 Tim. 4:6-7 during his second imprisonment and shortly before his martyrdom that he was ready to be offered (=executed) and that he had finished the course. In the coming meditations, we will see how God still used Paul in his sufferings despite the fact that he had gotten off course. We must always remember that God has put other believers in our life and that they have the indwelling Holy Spirit as we do. This can serve as a real corrective to misreading the Spirit's leading in our own life. Paul concluded this section by telling the Ephesian elders that they would not be seeing him anymore. As we build into people's lives, sometimes moves on their part or our part make it so that we do not continue to have personal contact. However, Paul did continue to have influence over this church through Timothy as we see in the book of 1 Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3).

Acts 20:26-28 - In verses 26 and 27, Paul stated that he was innocent of being blamed for any failure on their part because he did not hesitate to tell these leaders the whole plan or counsel of God as we now have it in our New Testament. Ezekiel 3:18-19 reminded Ezekiel if he warned the wicked of judgment that he was delivered from any judgment or blame on his part, but if he failed to warn the wicked of judgment that he would experience judgment and blame on his part. Paul applies the principle behind this teaching to his own ministry in teaching and training the Ephesian elders. He gave them the full scope of God's plan so the ball was now in their court meaning that they would be responsible for acting in faith and obedience concerning that word in their own lives and teaching that same word to those who were under their oversight. These elders were warned to guard their own lives and all of the believers over whom they had oversight. They were reminded that although they had been appointed elders or overseers by elder-qualified people (Titus 1:5) and the approval of the congregation (Acts 14:23), God the Holy Spirit had been the most important one to appoint them. *Note: Please recall that the Greek word for "appoint" in Acts 14:23 means to choose by the raising of hands and was used for the voting of each citizen in the Athenian assembly.* Shepherding the believers in a congregation is a solemn responsibility. It involves instruction (2 Tim. 4:2-4), modeling (Titus

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2:7), ruling (Heb. 13:17), restoring (Gal. 6:1), and guarding them as mentioned here. The motivation involves the fact that it was the very blood of the God/man Jesus which purchased the believers in the church (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

Acts 20:29-31 - This passage emphasizes the responsibility of elders/overseers/pastors to guard the believers that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to them. The first problem are those who come in among true believers and are themselves wolves in sheep's clothing which Jesus warned about in Mt. 7:15-20. These people are identified by the way they live and sometimes by their doctrine. In one church in which I served on the elder board, we were between pastors. A man showed up who had been a pastor in a sound Bible-believing group of churches. However, he claimed to be an Apostle. However, our board found that he did not meet those criteria plus the fact that he was no longer in good standing among those churches. He only visited our church once and was not allowed to teach or to fill the pulpit. This man went and started a church which grew quickly to 400 people. Several months later, he suddenly left town and the church absconding with several thousand dollars and leaving the church with a huge debt. As a result the church folded, but the cause of Christ was harmed while the church was going and after it folded. Sometimes error comes from within a church. In one Bible-believing church, a man who taught that the second coming of Christ was at the moment one trusted Christ was allowed to teach that false doctrine and confused and destabilized many believers. In another Bible-believing church, a deacon was holding séances in his house in direct violation of God's word and led several of the members astray. Those who promote error from within are either poorly instructed believers or false brethren (Gal. 2:4; Mt. 7:21-23 – those who claim to have trusted Christ for salvation but have not in reality done so). Paul closed his exhortation with the fact that he had warned the elders of the church of Ephesus for a period of 3 years. Gal. 1:16-18 suggests that Paul spent 3 years in Arabia being instructed directly by Jesus Christ. The Apostles were trained and taught by Jesus for the 3 years of His earthly ministry. Because of the stakes involved in these two channels of error mentioned in vv. 29-30, he had openly wept. The church has been riddled with false teaching since its very early history but it has survived and will survive (Mt. 16:18) because there is always a faithful remnant who refuse to cave into that which is contrary to God's word (Isa. 8:20).

Acts 20:32 - After Paul had given his charge to the elders of the church of Ephesus, he entrusted them to God Himself and the word of God. The word or message of His grace obviously refers to the New Testament (John 1:17). The written word would be replacing Paul's apostolic authority. There are two things that the word of God does for us and that it would do for the elders of the church at Ephesus. It helps those of us who are already saved to be built up which simply means to be made more like Christ. The verb tense is present tense which reminds us that this is something that the word of God will keep on doing. The second thing that God's words would do was to give these Ephesian elders and an inheritance among those who had been sanctified. The word sanctified is in the perfect tense reminding us that these believers had been sanctified in the past with results that continue to the present time. This sanctification happened at the moment that they trusted Christ as Savior according to Acts 26:18 which uses the same verb construction as Acts 20:32. The words "to give" speak of an

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action that takes place at a point of time. This refers to our positional sanctification which occurs the moment that we trust Christ as Savior (see also 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Heb. 10:10, 14). Our progressive or practical sanctification occurs as we are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 Thes 4:3; John 17:17). We never arrive at His complete likeness in this life but will do so when Jesus returns according to 1 John 3:2. This is our perfect sanctification spoken of in 1 Thes. 5:23-24. It is stated that this sanctification by saving faith will result in us being given an inheritance. This inheritance is described in 1 Peter 1:3-4 as imperishable, as undefiled meaning not ruined by sin, as not losing value with the passing of time, and reserved in heaven. This is the part of our inheritance that comes with salvation. Col. 3:24 speaks of the part of our inheritance that is a portion of our reward and depends on our faithfulness in the workplace.

Acts 20:33-38 - We are reminded that like Paul we must keep our eyes on Christ and not on material gain to get rich (silver or gold) or even to supply our needs (clothing). This is not to say that pastors should not be paid because 1 Cor. 9:14 and 1 Tim. 5:17-18 make that very clear. However, Paul had willingly foregone that right (1 Cor. 9:15). What this does mean is that any believer ministering full time can willingly forego such things if he so chooses. Paul wanted to set an example for laymen by working to earn enough to supply his own needs and the needs of those who served with him. He also set an example of helping people who were weak, i.e. unable to work or otherwise provide for themselves. This is why Paul commanded each believer to work in 1 Thes. 4:11-12 so that they could supply their needs and be a good testimony to the unsaved. In Eph. 4:28, he emphasized that our work should be that which is good, i.e. beneficial so that he can help those in need. Paul quoted the Lord Jesus in saying that there is greater blessing in giving than getting. This flies in the face of consumer Christianity which is more concerned with what the church can do for me than what I can do for the church. The measure of the abundant Christian life is not how much we receive but by how much we give. Paul models what is important for all spiritual leaders and that is to spend time praying with those to whom you have ministered God's word. There is a sense of knowing that there will always be a last time (i.e. in this life) when we will experience not seeing a spiritual leader or a spiritual leader not seeing us. However, by accompanying him to the ship, they made the most of the time that they had with Paul, this man of God. May we do so with those who minister God's word to us!

E. Miletus to Caesarea (21:1-14)

Acts 21:1-7 - We notice that Luke is still with Paul and his associates and that he details their travels. In Tyre, they disembarked and looked up the disciples. It is important when we spend time in another community that we spend time with the believers who are there. God used this meeting together with these believers to give a message from the Holy Spirit to Paul. He was told not to set foot in Jerusalem. The fact that they kept on giving him this message points to the certainty that this was from the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, Paul chose not to heed this warning. As believers we must always remember that the Holy Spirit communicates from within us and from within other believers. Being connected with other believers helps us to

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avoid misreading the leading of the Holy Spirit in our own life. Like the Ephesian elders, they spent as much time with Paul as possible. It is noteworthy again that Paul and these believers spent time in prayer together prior to him and his associates leaving. Their next destination was Ptolemais where they disembarked and spent the one day that they had with the fellow-believers who were there. Paul and his associates exemplify believers who seek and desire to spend time with other believers. All of us know Christians who only spend time with other believers for one hour on Sunday but lack involvement with them otherwise. The time that we want to spend with our fellow-believers is a good measure of our love for them.

Acts 21:8-9 - These two verses show us that God can give us information that we can easily overlook and not apply to our lives individually as a church. It is interesting to note that although Phillip was chosen as a deacon in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1-6), he was living in Caesarea because of the persecution that had arisen when Stephen was martyred (Acts 8:1-5, 40). It speaks highly of Phillip's willingness to forgive that he extended hospitality to the very man who had been responsible for leading the persecution which caused him to have to flee Jerusalem (Eph. 4:32; Rom. 12:13). Based on the fact that Phillip was one of the seven chosen to oversee the distribution of food to the widows in the Jerusalem church shows us that he had the spiritual gift of administration (Rom. 12:8). However, in this verse and seeing his activity in Acts 8:5-40, we see that he also had the spiritual gift of evangelism. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift according to 1 Cor. 12:7 and 1 Pet. 4:10. However, some believers, as we have seen previously have more than one spiritual gift as did Phillip. We, as believers, all have the responsibility to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). We can improve our ability to share Christ, but only certain believers have that particular gift (Eph. 4:11). Phillip was an example of such a person. We see that his daughters all had the spiritual gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:28-30). This does not authorize women to preach but simply to prophesy. We must recognize that this spiritual gift was primarily foundational in nature to the church according to Eph. 2:20). The spiritual gifts of Apostle and Prophet functioned as the New Testament for those New Testament believers who had not yet come to have available the contents of our New Testament. While the gift of prophecy could be given today, it is to be tested or proved according to 1 Thes. 5:20-21 and 1 John 4:1-6 by the word of God (Isa. 8:20). Women were allowed to prophesy in the church but only if they had their head covered according to 1 Cor. 11:4-5. In addition, they have to obey the commands for the exercise of this gift in 1 Cor. 14:29-32. Also, no one is to be recognized as a prophet if even if one of their predictions is false according to Deut 18:21-22, if their prophesy conflicts with God's word (Deut. 13:1-5; Isa. 8:20) or if the fruit or outcome of their lives and ministry is evil (Mt. 7:15-20). Finally, we note that all 4 daughters who were obviously not married and were virgins. This reminds us that God expects unmarried people to abstain from sexual activity prior to marriage (1 Thes. 4:3), to avoid behaviors that might lead to this activity (1 Cor. 6:18) and to avoid even the appearance of being involved in pre-marital or adulterous sexual activity (Eph. 5:3 – NIV – “no hint of”). 1 Thes. 4:7 reminds us that God has not called us to sexual impurity but to holiness.

Acts 21:10-14 - This is the second time that we encounter the prophet Agabus (see Acts 11:27-30). A prophet was God's spokesmen. Notice that Agabus did not advise Paul to go or not to

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go to Jerusalem. He simply prophesied what was going to happen to Paul. He used an object lesson to communicate his message from God. Everyone who teaches the word of God knows that object lessons can be very helpful in communicating biblical truth. Agabus took Paul's belt and used it to tie his own feet and hands and stated that the Holy Spirit was saying that Paul was going to be bound this way by the Jews in Jerusalem and delivered into the hands of Gentiles (non-Jews). Notice the response of Paul's ministry team and the local believers to this message, and notice Paul's response to the message from the Holy Spirit through Agabus. The first group encouraged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Paul, on the other hand, rebuked them for being emotional about this. He made it clear that he was ready to face loss of freedom or loss of life to bring Jesus Christ to the unbelieving Jews. He refused to be persuaded. As a result, the group simply asked that God's will be done in this situation. As we noted before, the Holy Spirit through the believers at Tyre clearly communicated that he should not go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4). Paul had been made aware of God's will and the consequences of disregarding that will. While God still used him, as he does us when we fail to follow the Holy Spirit's leading, it brought him no noticeable fruit among the Jews in Jerusalem plus some needless suffering and danger. God was going to make sure that his apostolic work would be among the Gentiles (cp. v. 11 with Rom. 11:13). As believers – like Paul in this instance – we sometimes have to learn the leading of the Lord through suffering rather than learning through scripture or the Spirit. It was very commendable that Paul was willing to risk his freedom and life for the salvation of his countrymen, the Jews. May God give each of us the willingness and the strength to stand so firmly for Christ. But let us do so with our head (2 Tim. 4:5 – NIV) and not just our heart (Jer. 17:9).

F. Jerusalem (21:15-25)

Acts 21:15-20 - We see that Luke is still with Paul and those who had been accompanying him. They brought believers from Caesarea with them and came to Jerusalem. Mnason, one of the early disciples gave them lodging. Lodging of believers, especially missionaries was one of the ways that people in the early church contributed to the cause of missions (3 John 1:5-8). The believers in Jerusalem gave Paul and those who accompanied him a noticeably warm welcome. Open and warm welcomes extended to missionaries and fellow believers is a vital part of New Testament interaction among believers. Paul had a very immediate opportunity to meet with the apostle James (Gal. 1:19) and the elders of the Jerusalem church. As a missionary, Paul gave a detailed report of how God, using Paul and those who were with him, had worked among the Gentiles in bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ and helping them grow. Notice that the focus was on God's working through his ministry and not on his own competence. After hearing the missionary report, they set the example for us in offering praise to God for His working through the missionaries. This shows us the value of these reports in the worship of believers when they assemble together whether it is a congregational meeting as in Acts 14:27 or meeting with the leadership of the church as in this passage. In the next paragraph, we will start with verse 20 as a new issue is introduced which would affect how Paul would be able to minister in Jerusalem.

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Acts 21:20-25 - We dealt with the first phrase of v. 20 in the last paragraph. The leaders of the church of Jerusalem along with James explained that a great many of the Jews had come to Christ but were still sincerely trying to keep the law not for salvation but as part of their sanctification. However, we are told that if the Holy Spirit is leading in the lives of Jewish believers or any believers that they are not under the Old Testament law of Moses (Gal. 5:18). However, any believer is free to keep many of the features of the law of Moses so long as they are not doing it to gain salvation (Rom. 3:20); keep salvation (Gal. 3:1-5) or to be spiritual (Gal. 5:18). One of the reasons that Paul kept certain features of the law was to help Jewish unbelievers to trust Christ for salvation (1 Cor. 9:20-21). For example, he had Timothy circumcised for this reason because his mother was Jewish although his father was a Gentile (Acts 16:1-3). At the same time, he did not have Titus, a Gentile, circumcised according to Gal. 2:3. However, because Paul did not observe certain features of the law, he was maligned about telling Jews in Gentile areas to not follow the Old Testament Law of Moses, telling these Jews not to circumcise their children or to live according to the customs and traditions laid down by the Jewish leaders. In order to put this distortion of information aside and have a gospel audience, the church leadership encouraged Paul to join in the purification rites himself and pay the expenses for four believers concerning these rites. The Jerusalem church leadership made it very clear that the Gentiles' only responsibilities that carried over from the Law of Moses was to not eat food sacrificed to idols, meat that had not been drained of most of the blood or meat from strangled animals. Finally, they were to abstain from marrying close relatives (Lev. 18:6-18) which was an extension of the command against sexual immorality. Regular sexual immorality such as premarital sex and adultery was already prohibited by the New Testament law of Christ (Mt. 15:19; Mark 7:21). Unfortunately, Paul's effort to accommodate the believing Jews who were still holding on to the law of Moses backfired.

PART FIVE: Move from Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 21:26-28:31)

A. Assault on Paul (21:26-36)

Acts 21:26-30 - Paul was not doing this rite to be more spiritual but simply to avoid setting up a barrier to the gospel (1 Cor. 9:20-21). However, some of the Jews from the Roman province of Asia, who had previously heard him speak and had not trusted Christ spotted him. They seized Paul by physical force and stirred up a mob of people against him. They falsely accused him of teaching against the Jewish people. However, Paul had a real heart for his people the Jews (Rom. 9:1-3) but acknowledged their problem of trying to be saved by works in Rom. 9:30-33. They also misrepresented his teaching concerning the law. The Jewish leaders had turned the law into a mistaken way of salvation (Gal. 3:21) rather than a way to establish the fact that they were sinners in need of a savior (Rom. 3:20). The law had taught salvation by faith, but they had missed that according to Gen. 15:6 and Hab. 2:4. Because Paul had not upheld the false interpretations and applications of the law, they accused him of teaching against the law. Rom. 7:12-14 shows what Paul had to say about the law being holy, just, good and spiritual. They also falsely said that Paul had taught against the temple. This may have been a twisting of his

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words in 2 Thes. 2:1-4 in which he predicted that the temple would be desecrated. Otherwise, he had nothing to say about the temple other than teaching that the believers physical body was a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), the local church was a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) and the church at large was a temple of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22). These people remind us of those who twist the scriptures to their own ruin (2 Pet. 3:15-16). They made erroneous assumptions based on Paul having been seen in the city of Jerusalem with Trophimus, a Greek. From this, they fomented the charge that Paul had brought him and other Greeks into the temple which he had not done. Proverbs 26:28 reminds us that a lying tongue hates those that it crushes. The people were so sure that Gentiles would try to enter the temple that they panicked and shut the gates. This demonstrates a lack of self-control which is so prevalent among those who are unsaved (Gal. 5:22-23). Also once again, we see people following a crowd to do evil (Ex. 23:2) and acting in haste (Prov. 19:2). Each of us must look at our lives and see what we need to imitate and what we need to avoid imitating.

Acts 21:31-36 - At the time the people in the mob were trying to kill Paul, the news that there was a riot came to the commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. The Greek word for “commander” in this passage is “chiliarchos” (also called a “Tribune”) which was a commander of 1000 and the word for “Centurion” is a commander of 100 men. When the rioters saw the commander and the soldiers, they quit beating Paul. Here we see how God uses government as His servant to promote what is good and punish what is evil (Rom. 13:1-4). We learn that the commander’s name was Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:22-26). Because Paul appeared to be the cause of the riot, the commander ordered Paul to be arrested and put in chains. When the commander asked who Paul was and what he had done, there was so much confusion as one person would say one thing and someone else would say another thing. As James 3:16 points out that where envy and conflict are present there is confusion and every kind of evil work. The Romans were generally (not always) committed to the concept of government by law and Lysias upheld this concept. To protect Paul from being killed or attacked further, the commander ordered that he be taken to the barracks. The mob thought they were obeying God (John 16:2), but they were disorderly while God is a God of peace and order (1 Cor. 14:33, 40). They were so out of control that the soldiers had to carry Paul because of their violence. As believers, we must remember that one important aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). The people had no interest, at this point, of hearing Paul out (Prov. 18:13) nor were they interested in hearing both sides of the conflict (Prov. 18:17). As believers, we must avoid these bad examples.

B. Address to the Jewish crowd (21:37-22:21)

Acts 21:37-40 - Notice that Paul dealt respectfully with this chief officer by asking permission to speak with him. Evidently surprised that Paul addressed him in Greek, he asked him if he knew Greek. It is important that we show respect for all people including those who are in authority (1 Peter 2:17). When asked if he was the Egyptian who had started a revolt and led a band of rebels called the Assassins out into the wilderness, Paul explained that he was Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia and a citizen of that city. He asked permission to address the people. God was

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obviously working on this commander's heart (Prov. 21:1) because he gave Paul permission to speak to the people. Paul's intent was to have an opportunity to explain to the Jewish people his background, how he came to salvation, how God had worked in his life after that point and the mission and purpose for which Christ had saved Him. Rather than just being content to go to the Roman jail for protection, he was concerned that the people have an opportunity to hear about Jesus and how he can revolutionize our lives. We see that Paul showed respect to the unruly crowd by motioning with his hand and patiently waiting for them to quiet down so that he could speak to them. Patience in such situations is an important characteristic produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), and boldness to proclaim the gospel results from being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:29-31). Paul could have spoken to them in Greek but was concerned that most of the Jewish people would be able to understand him so that the gospel would be clear so he spoke to them in Aramaic which was the Hebrew dialect in use at that time (Col. 4:4). This reminds us that when we talk to people about trusting Christ to use words that they can understand.

Acts 22:1-5 - In Acts 22, we see a good model for a personal testimony about how we came to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This also presents Paul's defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:7, 16) as well as his personal defense. The term "brethren" does not refer to fellow-believers as in most of the New Testament but refers to fellow-Jews (Rom. 9:3). The term "fathers" was a title of respect for members of the Sanhedrin according to Vines Expository Dictionary. When we give our testimony, it is important that we show respect for those who give us a hearing. We notice that he spoke in a language that they could understand. This reminds us to use words that unbelievers can understand. As a result, they became less contentious or argumentative. The meaning of the Greek word for "quiet" is not absolute silence but rather not being contentious or argumentative as in Acts 11:18. He explained his birthplace, the place where he was raised (Jerusalem) and his educational background which was to be taught by Gamaliel who was a respected member of the Sanhedrin. This supported his statement that what he had learned was strictly according to the Jewish law. He pointed out that he was zealous for God as an unbeliever. This emphasizes that he was sincere although sincerely wrong (Prov. 14:12; Rom. 10:2-3). He made it clear and we should too that we do not doubt the sincerity of our hearers. He was so dedicated to the teachings of the Jewish leaders that he was persecuting Christians by death and imprisonment. It is important to share what our attitude and disposition was toward Christians before we were saved. He pointed out that the High priest and Sanhedrin knew of his sincerity and dedication. We need to explain who we were trying to please before we were saved. The Sanhedrin gave Paul full authorization with written letters to his fellow-Jews in Damascus to arrest and imprison Christians who were to be punished. In sharing our testimony, we need to note any past resentment or hostility we had to God and Christ prior to salvation.

Acts 22:6-10 – At this point, we learn about Paul's saving encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. On the road to Damascus, Paul saw a very bright light about noontime which flashed all around him. Acts 22:14 tells us that Paul actually saw as well as heard the Lord Jesus Christ. He fell to the ground, and heard Jesus ask him, "Why are you persecuting me?" Paul had been

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persecuting believers but Jesus did not ask him why he was persecuting believers but why he was persecuting Jesus Himself. Christ's sufferings for our sins are finished (John 19:30 cp. Heb. 10:10-12). However, He suffers with us as part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:26 cp Col. 1:18) so that when believers are suffering persecution, Jesus also is suffering persecution. We see Paul confessing Jesus as Lord (Rom 10:9) which cannot happen except by the Holy Spirit. It is at this point that Paul becomes a believer (John 17:3) when he knows the speaker is Jesus. The bright light was visible to the men who were with Paul, and they heard the voice (Acts 9:7) but not distinctly enough to understand what the voice was saying. Many believe that the light was the Shechinah glory of God showing that Jesus was not only a resurrected human man but very God in all His fullness (Col, 2:9). We see that Paul was ready to do whatever Jesus asked Him. This is called consecration by some and dedication by others. It is described in Rom. 12:1-2 and 2 Cor. 8:5. It is best to make that decision as quickly as possible after we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as savior. We see from our passage in Romans that some of the believers there needed to make that decision and a reading of 1 Corinthians makes it obvious that they were badly in need of making that decision (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:1-4). Notice when we ask God for direction, He does not tell us everything at once. We have to obey what we know, and then God will disclose His plan as we take the necessary step or steps of obedience. He had to get up and go into Damascus in order to receive the information concerning what God wanted him to do. Too many people want God to show them his full plan for them without acting on what God has already told them to do. If we do not act in a faith that obeys, we will find ourselves frustrated by not receiving the needed guidance (James 1:5-7 cp. James 2:17).

Acts 22:11-16 - Everyone's testimony is different. After Paul received the instruction from Christ to go into Damascus, he had to depend on unbelievers to lead him to a house belonging to a man named Judas (Acts 9:7). Ananias, even though he was a believer, had an excellent reputation among the Jews for his adherence to the Old Testament law. He was said to be a devout man which simply meant that he lived his life to please God and not himself or the world. Ananias was commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ in Acts 9:10-16 to go to Paul and lay his hands on him so that Paul would regain his sight. The healing occurred that very hour according to v. 13 above. Because of this step of obedience, Paul was given additional information on what the Lord Jesus Christ wanted him to do. Through Ananias, God was disclosing to Paul at this point His plan for Paul's life because of seeing Christ and because of hearing His voice. He was instructed (and so are we by extension) to be a witness to all people of what he had seen and heard. A good testimony tells of the believers who impacted our lives after we were saved and in what way that they did so. Our testimony should also include what God has shown us that he wants us to do. A good testimony also includes when we were baptized in water. Paul was immediately baptized. By way of application, we should not delay being baptized after we trust the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. We will look at v. 16 because this verse is often misused by those who teach that water baptism is required for salvation.

Acts 22:16 - According to Acts 22:6-16; Galatians 1:11, 12, Paul received the gospel not from Ananias but by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. Ananias, not Christ, told Paul to be baptized (Acts 22:13-16). We saw that Paul received the gospel from Jesus. If baptism were a part of the

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gospel then Paul would have heard part of the gospel from Ananias. However, Paul heard the gospel by a revelation from Jesus Christ and not from any man nor was he taught it by any man (Galatians 1:11, 12; Acts 22:13-16). According to Romans 1:16, the gospel is God's power for salvation to those who believe. Notice baptism is not mentioned as a requirement. Looking at Acts 22:8, 10, on the Damascus road Paul called Jesus Lord. 1 Corinthians 12:3 clearly says that no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit – assuming they are a sincere believer as Paul was. Romans 10:9-10 explains that if we believe and confess Christ as Lord that we will be saved. By comparing Acts 22:5-16 and Romans 10:9-10, based on Paul's confession of Christ as Lord, he was saved while he was on the road to Damascus and before he was baptized in Damascus. Acts 9:17-18 tells us that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit before he was baptized. Roman 8:9 emphasizes that if someone does not have the Holy Spirit, he is unsaved. On the other hand, John 14:16-17 tells us that the unsaved world cannot receive the Holy Spirit because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. By comparing Acts 9:17-18 cp. Romans 8:9 cp. John 6:63, the fact that Paul obviously had the Holy Spirit prior to being baptized tells us that he was saved before he was baptized. John 1:12; Galatians 3:26 clarifies how we become a child of God by receiving Christ by faith. Acts 22:13-16 shows that we know Ananias recognized that Paul had already become a child of God because he addressed him by the word "brother". I have below a note on how this verse can be interpreted:

Note: There are differing interpretations of how Acts 22:16 should be translated:

a. A.T. Robertson notes that it is possible to understand this verse to teach that baptism brings forgiveness of sins and salvation.

However, he goes on to say that his opinion is that this is saying that baptism pictures the washing away of sins by the blood of Christ.

b. Amplified Bible: "Rise and be baptized, and by calling upon His name wash away your sins."

c. Ryrie: "Having arisen, be baptized; and wash away your sins, having called on the name of the Lord."

d. Thieme: "By calling on the name of the Lord; your sins are washed away; arise, be baptized at once."

*Additional Note: We are left with the conclusion that we are washed from our sins by calling on Christ's name **or** baptism symbolically, but not literally, washes away our sins.*

As can be clearly seen, making water baptism a requirement for salvation makes it impossible to take the passages that were given in the discussion above in a plain and normal sense.

Acts 22:17-21 - Paul continued his testimony to the end of this passage. He explained the nature of His call given directly to him by Jesus Christ. Normally, God uses the guidance of the scriptures and the Holy Spirit at this point of our experience as a new believer. After being saved on the road to Damascus going to Arabia, back to Damascus and then going to Jerusalem,

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he was praying in the temple seeking the Lord's direction. We are promised in James 1:5 that if we ask for wisdom that God will give it to us. In Paul's case, he experienced a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In this vision Jesus commanded Paul to leave Jerusalem because people there would not accept his testimony. However, Paul tried to point out to Jesus that the people there knew of his past life and how Jesus Christ had completely turned it around. They would be aware of how involved he was in persecuting the believers by imprisoning and beating believers. He had been in agreement with the stoning of Stephen. However, the Lord Jesus made it very clear to Paul that his ministry was not going to be to the Jews but to the Gentiles in faraway places.

C. Antagonism to Paul's message (22:22-29)

Acts 22:22-29 - Paul had a large Jewish audience for his testimony. When he mentioned that Christ had commanded him to go far away to the Gentiles, the crowd of deceived Jews, who believed that God was going to save them because of their connection to Abraham (Mt. 3:9) and their good deeds (Rom. 9:30-10:4), broke out into disorder and shouted Paul down. They wanted him dead and flung dust in the air (2 Sam. 16:13 shows this was done to show contempt and strong rejection). The commander (=Tribune – was over 1000 soldiers) did not understand Aramaic and decided to flog Paul to extract a confession from him by having him flogged. In this case, Paul exercised his rights as a Roman citizen to keep himself from being flogged. This passage shows that believers who live under governments who respect human rights can use those rights to keep from being punished for their efforts to bring others to Christ. Fortunately, God worked in the heart of Lysias to keep him from examining Paul by flogging (Prov. 21:1). Lysias had a high regard for the Roman law requiring due process for citizens. This shows human government working in keeping with God's intent (Rom. 13:1-4). From this time on, Lysias was much more kindly disposed toward Paul as we will see. One has to note that Paul was a peacemaker and not a troublemaker (Mt. 5:9). This concluded the first of Paul's 5 defenses of himself and the gospel.

D. Address to the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:11)

Acts 22:30-23:5 - This begins Paul's defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin council. The Roman tribune (commander) wanted to find out exactly what the allegations of wrong doing were against Paul. He gave the order for them to assemble and released Paul to stand before them. Again the word "brothers" was used meaning his "brethren according to the flesh" which would be fellow-Jews who were not saved as mentioned in Rom. 9:3. He stated that he lived before God with a good conscience up to the present. It is important as believers that we recognize that our consciences are cleansed at salvation (Heb. 10:22) and that we must strive to keep a good conscience (Acts 24:16) so that we do not lose it (1 Tim. 1:19). Notice this is loss of a good conscience not salvation. Ananias felt like Paul needed to be struck contrary to the Old Testament law and let his feelings take over in ordering Paul to be struck for what he said. As believers, we are order our life based on God's word and not on our feelings. Paul called Ananias a whitewashed wall – clean outwardly but dirty underneath. Basically, he was charging

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Ananias with hypocrisy. The sin of hypocrisy is failing to practice what we preach while pretending to do so (Rom. 2:17-24). Other council members rebuked Paul for insulting God's high priest. Paul apologized for what he said because he did not realize Ananias was the high priest. This could have been due to an eye problem on Paul's part, poor lighting where they were meeting or that Ananias was not appropriately attired. Some have suggested that Paul was being sarcastic. However, the other options appear more likely. Paul quoted Ex. 22:28 against himself. He did not try to dodge responsibility for his insult. Jesus showed how to handle insults in John 18:19-23 (cp. 1 Pet. 2:21-23 cp. 1 Pet. 3:9). We are to show respect for those who are in authority, no matter how despicable their conduct may be (1 Pet. 2:17).

Acts 23:6-11 - Paul decided to try to divide his persecutors. The Sadducees were the group over the temple. They were deniers of the supernatural as v. 8 points out that they denied the existence of angels/spirits and the resurrection. The Pharisees were over the Synagogues and were in agreement that both were real. From this we see that there were two points of denial on the part of the Sadducees as the word "both" is used and correctly in this case. It shows the resurrection was one issue while it shows that "angel" and "spirit" must be interchangeable or he would have said "three" or "all" instead of "both." Since Christ's resurrection was one of the key points of the gospel, Paul stated that he was on trial because of his hope and the resurrection of the dead. Then a debate broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees because of this issue of the resurrection. Finally, the Pharisees declared that Paul was innocent. When the argument became heated, the commander ordered the soldiers to take Paul by force from the meeting of the Sanhedrin council. Mt. 10:16-20 explains that believers on trial for their faith must be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. Once again, we see human government as God's servant in protecting Paul by removing him from the scene for his protection (Rom. 13:1-4). Finally, Paul took encouragement from the word of the Lord Jesus Christ on the following night that he would be a witness in Rome just as he had been in Jerusalem. In the same way, the written word of God is used to encourage us as believers facing difficult situations (1 Thes. 4:18; Rom. 15:4).

E. Assassination plot thwarted (23:12-35)

Acts 23:12-22 - If anyone ever wondered why the word of God taught against rash oaths in Eccl. 5:2-6, this account helps us readily see God's working and thinking. A curse is a sentence of judgment against someone. What they were doing was asking God to judge them if they ate before they killed Paul. There were 40 men willing to ignore God's word and sign on to this plot. This was nothing less than a plan to murder which God's word severely condemns (1 Pet. 4:15 cp. Gen. 9:5-6). However, we must keep in mind that God considers hatred of a believer as murder in 1 John 3:15 and likewise holding a grudge against a believer is considered equal to murder (Mt. 5:21-22). One cannot help but wonder how these men got out from under that oath when the plot fell through. The priests and elders were in agreement with this plot and the idea was to have the Sanhedrin summon Paul so they could ambush him on the way to the Sanhedrin council by lying in wait for innocent blood (Prov. 1:11). In the providence of God, Paul's nephew overheard the plot and informed him. Paul asked the Centurion to take the boy

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to the Tribune (commander) so he could share what he overheard. Again God used human government to serve his purposes of protecting Paul (Rom. 13:3-4) and worked in the heart of the Centurion to take his nephew to the commander and worked in the commander's heart to hear the information (Prov. 21:1). The commander ordered the boy not to tell anyone that he had informed him. This shows government working as a servant to protect the identity of this boy (who probably would have been killed had the plotters known what he had told the commander) and to decide on a course of action to derail this plot. 1 Peter 2:13-15 reminds us that government exists to punish evildoers and to praise those who do well. This is a case of government working as God intended. This is why we believers are to give thanks for and pray for those who are in authority so we can have an uncontentious and peaceable life (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Acts 23:23-35 - Following the intent of Roman law to protect its citizen, Lysias had 40 soldiers take Paul to Caesarea to the governor. We repeatedly see the outworking of human government (Rom. 13:1-2) and God working in the heart of one in authority (Prov. 27:1). God was working to protect Paul through human means. Lysias, in his letter, put himself in the best light not mentioning his intent to have Paul flogged nor did he mention that he did not find out Paul was a Roman citizen at the outset. Deuteronomy 16:18-20 states that judicial proceedings under the Old Testament law were to be concerned with justice and only justice. Lysias, a pagan, did a better job of adhering to this law than did Paul's Jewish persecutors. Anytime that we serve on a jury, as believers, we must keep this principle in mind. Notice that Lysias heard the Jewish accusers and also Paul. In any dispute among people, we need to hear people out (Prov. 18:13) and to hear out any other party or parties (Prov. 18:17). Finally, we see that Lysias' opinion was that Paul had done nothing to deserve death or imprisonment. This reminds us that in our relationship to the authorities and to people that we are not to suffer for wrongdoing but only for living out the truth of God's word as a Christian (1 Pet. 4:15-16). God provided for Paul to be under house arrest in Herod's palace rather than the regular prison. Once again, we see God working in the heart of this unsaved Felix for Paul's good (Prov. 21:1).

F. Address to Felix (24:1-27)

Acts 24:1-9 - The Jews brought a lawyer named Tertullus since they were dealing with the Roman system of law which required some due process. Also it would require some adjustments of the allegations to make them fit the Roman legal system. We must, as believers, be sure that, in being respectful to those in authority, we do not resort to the sin of flattery (Prov. 28:23). It is interesting that the flattery of this lawyer toward Felix garnered him and his client less favor than Paul (Acts 24:24-25) who warned him about sin and the judgment to come. Paul was falsely presented as an instigator of disorder as a ringleader of the Christians who were called the sect of the Nazarenes. In this, we remember that Jesus promises that those who are falsely accused for His sake will have God's blessing now and future reward at the judgment seat of Christ (Mt. 5:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:10 cp. 1 Cor. 3:10-15). The lawyer added another false charge of desecration of the temple. He misrepresented the uncontrolled behavior of the Jewish mob in beating Paul by saying that they intended to judge him according

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to Jewish law. By misrepresenting the truth, they were not even giving Paul due process under Jewish law. These pious Jews who boasted in the law were disobeying it (Rom. 2:23). The lawyer also lied about the conduct of Lysias that he was overly forceful in removing Paul from their control. As believers, we are commanded to be truthful even if we think we have a right cause (Eph. 4:25). This likewise, showed great disrespect of the proper conduct of Lysias (1 Pet. 2:17). As believers, we are to show respect for those who are in authority. The Jews who were present with Ananias stated falsely that these things were true.

Acts 24:10-14 - Paul now had the opportunity to speak in his own defense and more importantly in defense of the hope (confidence concerning the future) that he held. As believers, we are commanded to be ready to give an answer (literally, a defense) for the hope that we have, but with sensitivity and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). In addition, we see that Paul addressed Felix with respect (1 Pet. 2:17) as we are commanded to do in speaking to government officials. Paul pointed out the falseness of the charges of inciting a riot or disorder that had been lodged against him. He had only been in Jerusalem 12 days and came from a considerable distance away. This would not give adequate time to start a riot or any kind of disturbance. He pointed out that he was not disputing with anyone in the crowd, the synagogues or the temple complex. As believers, we are commanded not to be quarrelsome (2 Tim. 2:24; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20). Finally, he pointed out that his accusers lacked evidence of the reality and truth of their charges. Paul was very truthful in not denying the fact that he was part of what his accusers called a sect. His worship for God was based on the Way. Jesus Christ explicitly stated that He was the way (not a way or not one of many ways) to God the Father in John 14:6. This is thought to be very narrow to the unsaved world which it is. Jesus Himself stated that the way of salvation was narrow and only a few would find it (Mt. 7:13-14). However, rather than complaining because God only has one way of salvation; let us be glad that He offered us any way at all. He could have justly sent the whole lot of us to an eternity in Hell. Paul noted that His belief in Jesus as the way was based on the Old Testament scriptures – the Law and the Prophets. Rom. 3:21-22 clearly support the fact that the Old Testament scriptures testify of the righteousness that God requires being found by faith in Jesus Christ,

Acts 24:15 - In his defense Paul had mentioned that even though the Jewish leaders considered him and other Christians a sect, he believed all things written in the law and the prophets. In this verse which is connected in most translations to verse 14, Paul stated that he had the same confidence regarding the future (meaning of the word “hope”) in reference to the fact that there would a resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous. The word “righteous” refers to those who have Christ’s righteousness credited to them by faith in Christ (Rom. 4:3-5, 22-24) and the unrighteous refers to those who lack that righteousness because they have not trusted Christ as savior. We must remember that the righteous deeds of man will not bring salvation as our righteous deeds to do so are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6) and all fail to attain the perfect righteousness that God requires (Rom. 3:10; Mark 10:18). At least, those of the Pharisees among his accusers would be able to reference Dan. 12:1-2 which stated both groups – righteous and unrighteous - would be raised. Revelation 20:4-6 states that the resurrection of these two groups will be a thousand years apart. Jesus was the first one raised permanently

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from the dead. Then those who are His will be raised at His coming (1 Cor. 15:23). The first resurrection will be at the rapture or catching up of believers living during the present time from Pentecost to that time (1 Thes. 4:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54). The next part of the first resurrection will include the resurrection of those who become believers during the coming 7 year tribulation period and are raised at the end of that time period (Rev. 20:4-6). Also at the end of the tribulation will come the resurrection of the Old Testament believers (Dan. 12:1-2), The resurrection of the unrighteous will occur at the end of the 1000 year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:6-15), Another scripture that refers to the two resurrection is John 5:28-29.

Acts 24:16-20 - Because of who Jesus is and because both saved and unsaved will be raised from the dead, like Paul, we as believers need to maintain a clear conscience. A clear conscience is one that does not cause someone else to stumble in sin or to reject the Lord Jesus Christ as savior. This is denoted by the Greek word for “clear”. We received a cleansed conscience when we trusted Christ as Savior according to Heb. 9:14; 10:22. However, we must maintain that conscience by the way that we think and behave in harmony with God’s word. To maintain this type of conscience before God, it is important that we obey God in thought, word, deed and appearance. To maintain this type of conscience before men, it is important that what we do is not only right in the sight of God but also right in the sight of people. Paul explained in his defense that after an absence of several years, he had returned to Jerusalem to aid his people with the offering that he had taken from the Gentiles. This is discussed in 1 Cor. 16 and 2 Cor. chapters 8 and 9. He explained that during the visit, he had gone to the temple and was completing a purification ceremony. At this point, there was not a crowd around him and not any rioting or disorder in process. However, the Jews from the Roman province of Asia were there, spotted him, seized him and set off the disorder that he was accused of starting. Paul pointed out that these Jews from Asia should have been there to bring the actual charges. Finally, Paul was able to point out that in his trial before the Sanhedrin that there was no verdict on his guilt and that the only issue anyone had was his declaration that he was on trial because he believed in the resurrection of the dead. This had resulted in disorder at that time, but it was the council’s doing and not Paul’s. Paul’s defense was truthful (Eph. 4:25) and is was presented in wisdom (Mt. 10:16-18). Paul’s testimony provided a more specific defense against the vague charges of his prosecuting persecutors. In all of this, Paul could be seen as a man who truly respected the true God, the temple and the Jews who were still living under the Old Covenant. In modern church disputes, sometimes those who uphold the truth of God’s word are labeled as being divisive when in fact it is the ones who disregard the word of God who are causing the division (Rom. 16:17-18) by their deceptiveness. As believers, we are to be people of integrity (Eph. 4:25, 28), holy and godly (2 Pet. 3:11).

Acts 24:22-27 - Fortunately, Felix was familiar with the facts concerning the Way. He should have dismissed the charges but decided to delay a verdict and leave Paul in custody for two reasons: (1) He was hoping Paul would offer him a bribe. (2) By leaving Paul in custody he would gain favor with the Jews. Isa. 1:23 spells out that bribes are sinful. Gal. 1:10 reminds us that we are to seek to please God and not to please people at God’s expense. Despite the fact that Felix was corrupt, God worked in his heart to give him some favor toward Paul (Gen.

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39:21). Paul had a certain measure of freedom. His friends were allowed to visit him and attend to his needs. However, Paul had an excellent opportunity to speak the truth of God's word to Felix. He spoke to Felix about the need for faith in Christ for salvation. Notice how Paul's discussion with Felix mirrors the convicting work of the Holy Spirit which shows people why they need a savior (John 16:8-11). Paul talked about self control which Felix lacked and was therefore sin. He talked with Felix about righteousness. This is the fact that all are lacking in righteousness that God requires (Rom. 3:10) and that only by trusting Christ can we have the righteousness of Christ credited to us (Phil. 3:9). Finally, Paul spoke with Felix about judgment because God is going to judge the world through Jesus Christ whom He appointed and authorized to judge the world (Acts 10:42-43; 17:30-31). Felix reacted with fear but postponed any decision to trust Christ. As far as we know, he never made that decision. That is why 2 Cor. 6:2 warns people against delaying the decision to trust Christ. Felix, because of corruption did end up being removed as governor and replaced by Festus showing how God is at work in the removal and raising up of government officials (Dan. 2:21).

G. Address to Festus (25:1-21)

Acts 25:1-8 - Once again, Paul's enemies were trying to kill him. They were basically plotting murder (Prov. 1:11) a violation of God's law. Their pretext was wanting Paul to stand trial in Jerusalem rather than in Caesarea. Then they were plotting to kill Paul enroute from Caesarea to Jerusalem. In doing this, they were showing their spiritual paternity was from Satan himself (John 8:39-44). Festus did not agree to their request and required them to come to Caesarea to state their charges and give Paul a chance to defend himself. Since the account of this trial was very generally stated in terms of their accusations and Paul's defense, it is probably safe to assume that their accusations were the same fabrications that they had stated before and Paul's defense was the same facts that he had previously stated. We do note that their charges were multiple and serious but that they offered no proof to back them up. We also see that Paul stated that he was not guilty of any violation of Jewish law or of Roman law and that he had not committed any crime against the temple. As believers, we must remember to love our enemies and to pray for them (Mt. 5:44). We must also remember that we are not to imitate our enemies in murder: actual (1 Pet. 4:15), hatred of fellow-believers (1 John 3:14-15) and anger grudges (Mt. 5:21-22). We are not to imitate them in being deceitful but to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) and to put away all malice and deceit (1 Pet. 2:1). Unless we do this, we cannot grow (1 Pet. 2:1-2).

Acts 25:9-12 - Felix, unaware of the plot against Paul's life, decided to see if he could gain some favor with the Jews. Once again, we see the sin of trying to please people rather than pleasing God (Gal. 1:10). He wanted Paul to agree to go to Jerusalem to stand trial before the Jews with regard to their charges. Paul used his right as a Roman citizen to refuse to change the location of his trial. Whether Paul had any inkling of any kind of plot against his life is not stated. Paul repeated the fact that he was innocent of all charges. Paul made it clear that Festus was aware of Paul's innocence. Paul stated that if had done anything that was punishable by death, he did not refuse to die. This re-enforces the New Testament teaching that governments have the

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God-given authority to put law-breakers to death (Rom. 13:3-4). Jesus, in John 19:10-11, when He was being tried before Pilate, stated that Pilate had authority from God to put law-breakers to death even by crucifixion. Paul was very aware that Roman law forbade handing him over to the Jews and that no one had that authority. Paul then exercised his right under Roman law by appealing his case to the Roman emperor, himself. As believers, we are to obey the law, but we can exercise all the rights afforded by the legal system under which we live. Festus was not an impulsive man and conferred with his advisors. This is a good example of not being impulsive and seeking good advice (Proverbs 19:2, 20).

Acts 25:13-21 - This paragraph deals with the political visit of Agrippa and Bernice with Festus at Caesarea. Festus consulted King Agrippa about Paul and his situation. In this, we can see how Prov. 21:1 works itself out in the deliberations of those in authority. It would appear that the chief priests and elders were wanting Paul put to death. Festus had told them that Roman law and custom required that the accusers come to the trial and face the accused and give the accused opportunity to put forth a defense. Again we see God's working in the heart of this man to uphold Roman law rather than to completely give in to the whims of the corrupt leaders of the Jewish unbelievers. Festus stated that the case of the Jewish unbelievers had to do with their religion and differences surrounding that. Basically, there was no charge that could be lodged against Paul. This showed that he truly had a right conscience before people that did not cause them to sin. He did note that there was a large difference over the matter of Jesus. Paul was stating that Jesus had been raised and obviously could reference eye witness testimony in addition to himself (1 Cor. 15:4-8). Festus had no idea of how to judge such a matter because this situation was totally unique. No one had ever been raised from the dead of whom he was aware. One of the matters of which people who are ignorant of Roman customs often allege is that the Bible is inaccurate in saying Paul appealed to Caesar and to Augustus because Caesar Augustus had been dead for decades. However, as good historians know, the title Caesar and the title Augustus was used by all of the Roman emperors including the one that Paul was appealing to, who happened to be Nero. Nero did not start his persecution and roundup of Christians until after Paul's trial and release which came as a result of this appeal. As believers, we see the wisdom of Paul's command under the Holy Spirit's direction for us to continually pray for those who are in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2) because in their peace or wellbeing, we have peace and wellbeing (Jer. 29:7).

H. Address to Agrippa (25:22-26:32)

Acts 25:22-27 - The desire of Agrippa to hear Paul was not based on any type of conviction that the gospel might be true. It was based on simple curiosity. However, many people have ended up coming to Christ even when their motive began as simple curiosity. Paul was now to stand before this governor and this king along with the important men. This was a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Luke 21:12 in which this prophecy predicted this would happen prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The Jewish leaders had petitioned Festus to put Paul to death. However, Festus was not about to grant the petition because he had found Paul not guilty of anything worthy of death. However, because of the injustice of both Felix and then

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Festus, Festus now had a dilemma. Felix in violation of Gal. 1:10 left Paul in prison to please the Jews. When Festus took over from Felix, he inherited this dilemma. Festus also sought the favor of the Jews in Acts 25:9 and left Paul in prison. Felix could have headed off this dilemma by setting Paul free. The same was true of Festus. Now Paul had appealed to the emperor Nero who had the title of Augustus. Festus needed some charge, any charge, to send Paul to the emperor Nero. Otherwise, Nero would ask him why he had not set Paul free when he took over as governor and saw there were no charges. Taking the easy way out of a dilemma by sinning only opens us up to a greater dilemma later on. Festus asked Agrippa to help him come up with a charge to send Paul up to the emperor knowing he would look incompetent if not unjust for holding an innocent man prisoner. However, God was going to use this injustice to further the gospel here and later on (Phil. 1:12-14).

Acts 26:1-11 - Before beginning our look at this passage, it is interesting to note that Acts 26:7 mentions the 12 tribes of Israel along with James 1:1. Many have tried to say that when the Assyrians took the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity that these people ended up being the ten lost tribes of Israel. All sorts of elaborate explanations have been given as to who these people became, but Paul points out that their identity was still intact even after the earthly ministry of Jesus. Paul now made his 5th defense before King Agrippa. The other defenses are as follows: (1) The Jewish mob in Jerusalem – Acts 22; (2) The Sanhedrin – Acts 23; (3) Felix the Roman governor – Acts 24; (4) Festus, Felix's replacement – Acts 25. Paul made this a defense not only of himself but of the gospel including his brief testimony. As believers, we are to not only declare the gospel (Mark 16:15) but to defend it (Phil. 1:7, 16). Paul explained that he had grown up in the Jewish culture in Tarsus and then in Jerusalem. His Jewish accusers knew his background. He was a Pharisee in his religious background. This had been a prior source of confidence for his salvation according to Phil. 3:4-6. Many people point to their religious heritage rather than Christ for their salvation. It is worthless as only faith in Christ can receive the salvation that He provided by His death and resurrection (Phil. 3:7-9). In his defense Paul moved to the issue of the resurrection which was the confident expectation (hope) of the promise made to the Jewish fathers by God. He pointed out that the Jews were hoping to attain to the resurrection – and specifically that of the righteous. However, they were going about it the wrong way because they were trying to attain it by their service or works rather than by faith (Rom. 9:30-33). As an unbeliever, Paul had jailed and voted to execute Christians. He tried to force Christians to blaspheme Jesus. Since blasphemy is against God. This verse shows us that Jesus is God. Paul was very zealous and sincere in what he was doing but sincerely wrong (Rom. 10:2; Prov. 14:12). He was willing to go to foreign cities to do this showing his great sincerity. Paul then explained how Jesus completely changed and transformed him.

Acts 26:12-18 - In his defense before King Agrippa, we see that Paul gave information that was not mentioned in the other accounts of his testimony in other passages. Paul described the light that he saw while on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians as being bright as the sun shining all around him. Many believe this light was the Shechinah glory. Jesus manifested His Divine glory on the mount of Transfiguration when He prayed (Luke 9:29) and His face shined

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like the sun (Mt. 17:2). Acts 9:17 plainly states that Jesus appeared to Paul. We noted before that Jesus asked Paul why he was persecuting Jesus (not the believers). This reminds us that Jesus suffers with us as the head of His body the church (Col. 1:18) because when one part suffers every part suffers (1 Cor. 12:26) which would include the head. As noted before, these have nothing to do with His sufferings for sin which were finished on the cross (John 19:30 cp. Heb. 10:10-14). Jesus explained to Paul that he had been like an animal kicking against the goads and by implication; he needed to yield to Christ and quit resisting. Paul was ordered to stand up as a servant in front of a master to receive his direction and instructions. He was to be a minister or servant as are all believers (Mark 10:42-45). He was to be a witness as all believers are to be (Acts 1:8). This would include not only what Jesus had shown him on the road to Damascus but also would show him in future appearances. So it is with us as believers. We encounter the Lord Jesus Christ and are given enough guidance to know our first steps. Then subsequently as we live in faith and obedience, Christ reveals more and more to us of His plans and directions. Jesus promised to rescue Paul from the persecutions by Jewish and Gentile peoples. His mission was to let Christ send him to the Gentiles. His mission like ours is to open their eyes or understanding so that they will turn from spiritual darkness to spiritual light and from Satan's authority to God so that they can receive (Greek emphasizes at a definite point of time, i.e. by faith in Christ) forgiveness of sin and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified at a point of time in the past with present results. This is all by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must understand that sanctification occurs in our standing or position the moment we trust Christ. However, as we grow we become more and more conformed to the image of Christ. This is progressive or practical sanctification (John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:15-16). When Jesus returns we will experience perfect sanctification (1 Thes. 5:23-24 cp. 1 John 3:2) because we will be completely like Christ.

Acts 26:19-23 - Paul's ministry started with the Jews in Damascus, then Jerusalem and then in all Judea. After that, his ministry continued with the Gentiles. His message was repentance which involves a change of mind which results in a change of faith and actions. It discards anything that keeps the hearer from saving faith in Christ such as sins (Rev. 9:20-21) and dead works (Heb. 6:1). These dead works are works done to gain salvation which is not possible (Rom. 3:20; 9:30-33). When we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as savior we turn to God because faith in Christ is the only way we have access to God according to John 14:6. Paul stated that this message was why certain Jews seized him in the temple courts and tried to kill him. Paul gave credit to God for helping him to be able to continue testifying what Moses and the Prophets had predicted would happen to both Jews and non-Jews. This prediction was that the Messiah would suffer (Isa. Chapter 53) and would rise from the dead (Psalm 16:8-11). He would be a light to the Jews (Isa. 9:1-2) and to the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6). Christ was the first person to rise from the dead permanently. Others were raised in the Old Testament and New Testament but subsequently died. Paul had now laid out for King Agrippa and Festus the provision of the gospel in Christ's death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4) and its reception by faith (Rom. 1:16).

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Acts 26:24-32 - People are often accused of being nuts when they trust Christ as savior and their life changes dramatically. These unbelievers roll their eyes and say that we have really gone off the deep end. Paul was accused of this by Festus and obviously others (2 Cor. 5:13). In John 10:20 even Jesus was accused by His enemies of being out of His mind. In Mark 3:21, even those close to Jesus thought Him to be out of His mind. Therefore, it is no surprise that such is the opinion the unsaved hold of many believers today. Paul affirmed that he was not out of his mind but that his words were sober (better “sound-minded”) truth. The Greek word for sober is the adjective form of the words translated “sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7 NKJV) and “right mind” in Mark 5:15. Paul then gave his attention to King Agrippa and pointed out that the testimony concerning Christ that he was giving was not anything that happened secretly but openly. He pointed out that King Agrippa believed the prophets showing that it is possible to believe the facts about Christ and yet miss receiving Him by faith for salvation. King Agrippa correctly accused Paul of trying to persuade him to become a Christian. Paul stated emphatically that this was his desire for King Agrippa except for the loss of freedom that Paul was experiencing. This reminds us that if anyone to whom we are witnessing sees our agenda which is to persuade them to become a Christian, we should be open like Paul and not try to deny or hide it. The verdict and consensus among Agrippa, Bernice and Festus was that Paul had done nothing that merited death or imprisonment and noted that he could have been released if he had not appealed his case to Caesar (the Roman emperor Nero). Because Paul would linger in prison longer, this would work out so that others to whom Paul would have probably not otherwise spoken would hear the gospel (Phil. 1:12-14). This reminds us not to fret about those with whom we cannot share the gospel but to rejoice concerning the opportunities that God gives us in our particular circumstances.

I. Adrift and shipwrecked (27:1-44)

Acts 27:1-11 - The trip to take Paul to Rome for his appeal before Caesar (the Roman emperor Nero) was begun by ship. We see that unbelievers are capable of kind acts and we know that God works on their hearts in behalf of His people (Gen. 39:21) as he did for Paul on this occasion. Paul was able to fellowship with his fellow-believers at Sidon who were able to provide for his needs. When we have opportunity as Paul did, we are to meet with other believers to encourage and promote love and good works (Heb. 10:24-25). This also reminds us to aid and support missionaries as these people aided Paul (3 John 1:5-8). Notice that circumstances (pictured by the contrary wind) were working against these unbelieving men who were taking Paul and the other prisoners to Rome. Notice that their trip ran behind their schedule but not God's. They, like us, were not able to hold their course (Prov. 16:9). This delay opened their plans up to danger. Paul pointed out to the ship officers and the Centurion that to continue would mean danger to them, the lives of those aboard, the cargo and the ship itself. Here we see Paul offering godly counsel to these unbelievers. Unfortunately, the centurion chose to listen to the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. An important lesson for us is that when we ignore the counsel of the godly, it affects our lives and our possessions and just our overall well-being. In short, we miss God's blessing (Psalm 1:1).

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Acts 27:12-20 - Since Paul's counsel was ignored, the guide for these unbelievers in charge of the ship and its mission was the circumstances. Based on sight and experience, the harbor was a poor place to spend the winter. The decision to try to find a good harbor to spend the winter was made by the majority. Many people believe that this is the best way to make decisions. However, when it comes to spiritual matters, most people choose the broad road which leads to eternity in Hell while only a few choose the narrow road which is to come to God by faith in Christ (Mt. 7:13-14; John 14:6; 3:18). Favorable circumstances in the form of a light wind from the south prompted the sailors to think that they could make it to Phoenix. For the believer, circumstances are no substitute for the scriptures, the leading of the Spirit and godly counsel when it comes to making decisions. However, their circumstances changed quickly when their ship was caught by a typhoon strength wind from the northeast. So it is when we as believers mistake favorable circumstances alone for the leading of God. The circumstances were so overwhelming; they were unable to move against them to achieve their goal. When people are unable to overcome the circumstances of life, they tend to be driven by forces beyond their control. Believers are warned not to be driven by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14) for when we get caught up in the adverse circumstances of life, it is all too easy to look into the wrong places rather than the word of God for direction and the Holy Spirit for empowerment. As the sailors tried to strengthen the ship with ropes, we as believers are reminded not to strengthen our source of security (the ship for these people) but to strengthen ourselves in the Lord and the power of His might (Eph. 6:10; 1 Sam. 30:6). We notice that fear took over because they could see the adverse circumstances were causing them potential danger. As believers, we are challenged by the words of Christ to be people of faith rather than people of fear (Mark 4:40). When we make decisions based on circumstances and become caught up in the consequences of those decisions, there is often a loss of possessions or things such as the cargo in this case. Even some of the ships gear had to be thrown overboard which led to fewer options to get control of their situation. My wife has continually counseled people that bad decisions lead to bad consequences. As circumstances grew worse for these unbelievers, they began to lose any confidence regarding their future (i.e. hope). As believers, we do not have to lose hope knowing that our hope in Christ is our sure and steadfast anchor which enters the very presence of God in heaven (Heb. 6:18-19).

Acts 27:21-26 – At this point, we see how Paul used the word of God to encourage these unbelievers. Paul received this word of God through special revelation by an angel of God. Normally, since we have the complete scriptures, God gives us His word through those scriptures. First of all, he reminds the men that if they had listened to godly counsel, they would have avoided all the damage and loss not to mention the stress that they had experienced. We, as believers, can look back on situations in which we ignored godly counsel and encountered a great deal of hardship that we could have avoided. Paul used the word of God to encourage these men to remain courageous in the face of this situation that appeared totally out of control. God had reminded Paul and us by extension not to be afraid. In Luke 12:32 Jesus reminds us to live without fear in the midst of life's uncertainties. Joshua 1:7, 9 reminds us to be people of courage. As Paul encouraged these people to keep up their courage, in the same way, we should encourage fellow-believers as well as unbelievers to

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exercise courage in the face of difficulties. Paul emphasized that he belonged to God. Each one of us knows that we also belong to God and have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20), the price of Christ's shed blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). Paul also pointed out that He was a servant of God. This shows us that as believers, God does not exist to serve our purposes but that we are here to serve His purposes. Prior to our salvation, we were servants of sin, but now, we are servants of Christ (Rom. 6:17-18). Paul explained that God in His grace would spare the lives of all the men who were sailing with Paul. Because of God's grace, they were to persevere with courage to face their adversity. This shows how unsaved people experience God's grace in the situations of their lives. God's kindness is meant to lead unsaved people to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Paul pointed out that he had faith that the situation would happen as God had revealed it to him. This faith was not blind optimism but based squarely on the word of God who cannot lie (Heb. 6:18). So the ship would be destroyed and run aground on some unknown island. God does not tell us everything we want to know. He did not tell Paul which island they would run aground on nor did He tell Paul what the outcome of his trial before Caesar would be. We must respect God's word, and we must respect God's silences. Deut. 29:29 reminds us that the secret things belong to God but the things revealed belong to us and our children with the purpose that we might obey all of His word.

Acts 27:27-36 - We see the unsaved crew using the best means that they know how to stop the ship from wrecking but can sense that they are getting closed to running aground. They even tried to throw out four anchors to keep the ship from running aground. As believers, we can learn from this illustration to avoid spiritual shipwreck. 1 Tim. 1:19-20 warns us that we have to keep holding to a good conscience and to live by faith (Gal. 2:20). This is not referring to saving faith but the faith by which we live the Christian life. We do not have to throw our anchors aimlessly hoping that they will hold. We have to look only to our one anchor Jesus Christ (Heb. 6:18-19). We see that the sailors were planning only to look out for themselves and leave the soldiers and prisoners to drown. When they were trying to get into the lifeboat on the pretext of putting out anchors, Paul exposed their plan. In this we see the need to avoid their example of selfishness and look out for the interests of others and not just our own (Phil. 2:3-4). We also need in our love for others to be discerning believers like Paul (Phil. 1:9). Notice that he warned the soldiers of the impending danger and they responded by cutting the ropes to the lifeboat. In the same way, God wants us to warn the unsaved of their need of salvation (Acts 2:40) and the saved of any spiritual danger (Acts 20:31). Paul encouraged the unsaved crew and soldier to eat something because they needed food and because God's word through the angel had promised them that they would all live through this ordeal. Paul set an example by praying audibly in front of them all in giving thanks for his food (1 Tim. 4:3-5) and by his example encouraged them to eat. This shows that we must not only encourage wise actions but set an example for others (Col. 4:5).

Acts 27:37-44 - One of the things that we notice here and throughout the book of Acts is the detail with which Luke describes their situation. He knew the exact number of people on the ship. He noted that they threw the wheat overboard. This certainly shows us that this an eyewitness account and not something that some individual made up. Despite Paul's prophecy

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based on God's word through the angel, the crew made a plan to drive the ship into a bay with a beach. Paul had prophesied that the ship would run aground on an unrevealed island and the ship would be wrecked or lost (Acts 27:22-26), but that everyone on the ship would live. Notice how every detail of this prophecy came true literally and not in some vague figurative form. This guides us in the way that we interpret prophecy in other portions of scripture. Symbols may be used but they always have a plain meaning. When we interpret prophecy by its plain and normal meaning, we are able to see how God's word fits together in an accurate and precise manner. The sailors tried to beach the ship but despite every known technique, they did not thwart the outworking of God's word. In the same way, people who try to bypass what God's word has decreed will find their bypass does not work out – whether it is for salvation or whether it is for the Christian life. Notice how God worked in the situation to spare Paul's life. The soldiers were planning to kill the prisoners to prevent them from escaping, but because of Paul's presence in the group, the centurion kept them from carrying out their plan. First of all, this shows how God works in the hearts of those who are in authority over us for our benefit as in Daniel 1:9. Secondly, it helps us to see how believers are salt in this world and have a preserving effect in relation to the people among whom we live (Mt. 5:13 cp. Gen. 18:23-32). Paul's presence among the prisoners kept them from being executed. As believers, we never will probably know in this life how our presence as salt and light (Mt. 5:13-14) affects those among whom we live and work. Each of us must ask ourselves if we are going to be that salt and light (Eph. 5:8; Mark 9:50).

J. Ashore on Malta (28:1-10)

Acts 28:1-10 - Again we see God working in the hearts of the people of the island by them building a fire to warm the people from the ship when they floated or swam to shore. In a similar way, God had worked in the hearts of the people of Egypt in Ex. 11:2-3 on behalf of His people Israel. Notice the servant heart of Paul, the Apostle, in gathering sticks for the fire (Mark 10:44-45). God performed a miracle to confirm Paul as a man of God by allowing a poisonous snake to bite him. The people made the mistake of judging him to be a murderer who had fallen under some type of judgment. This reminds us that our judgment is to be a righteous judgment according to Jesus in John 7:24 and not based strictly on appearance. The miracle was that Paul did not swell up or die. Then they went to the other extreme and decided He was a god. However, based on Acts 14:11-17, Paul probably tried to persuade them otherwise. Publius, the island's chief official, welcomed Paul and the shipwrecked group to his estate. Again, we see God's hand at work (Prov. 21:1). Notice, that Publius's father was ill with a fever and dysentery. Nothing in God's working is wasted if we will look for it. In response to Paul's prayer and his laying hands on this man, he was healed. Notice that all the other sick people on the island were also healed. We see that in the early ministry of Paul how healing was widespread. Yet a few years later, we see that this was not the case with Paul in 1 Tim. 5:23 and 2 Tim. 4:20. This reminds us that God can heal anyone at any time (Mt. 9:28) but it may not always be His will. Heb. 2:3-4 explains the reason that God did so many miracles through those who had been with Jesus. It was to confirm the reality and validity of the New Testament message centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. God continued to use the people of the

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island in honoring Paul and his associates and in supplying their needs (Phil. 4:19). We are not told whether Paul and his associates shared Christ with them, but in view of the purpose of miracles, it would seem probable that they did. However, one of the main purposes of this segment of scripture was to show how God orders and orchestrates events and circumstances to further His plan and to provide for His servants.

K. Arrival in Italy and Rome (28:11-20)

Acts 28:11-20 - Once again, we see great detail showing that these are real events and not contrived events. All of these observations help us to see that the scripture is definitely God's word. At Puteoli, Paul and his party received hospitality from the believers in Puteoli for one week. 3 John 1:5-8 reminds us that this is the way that believers supported missionaries and reminds us to be diligent in our giving, support and prayer for missionaries. On arriving in Rome, the believers, who were there, greeted Paul and the men with him. Seeing a flourishing group of believers moved Paul to give thanks to God for them. In the same way, we as believers are to be thankful for the believers among whom we fellowship and those that we encounter in our travels. The presence of these believers encouraged Paul. When we attend church, the presence of the other believers should encourage us. Once again, we see Paul receiving favor from those in authority (Dan. 1:9) as he was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him. Paul acted quickly to contact the leaders of the Jews in Rome. He briefly explained that he was arrested in Jerusalem and turned over to the Roman authorities and would have been released had he not appealed to Caesar. He felt he had to do that because the Jews were so strongly objecting to him being freed. He pointed out that the antagonism was not him against the Jews but them against him. He made it clear that he was bound because of the hope of Israel, Jesus, the Messiah. This entailed the resurrection (Acts 23:6; 24:14-15). Paul was setting the stage to present the gospel to these Jews.

L. Allowed to minister God's word (28:21-31)

Acts 28:21-27 - Fortunately for Paul, the Jews in Rome had not received any letters from Judea concerning him nor had any fellow-Jews come there and said anything bad about Paul. All that they knew was that the Christian sect was spoken against throughout the Roman world. However, they were willing to give Paul a hearing. On a given day, they came to Paul's lodging place. He gave solemn testimony about the kingdom of God. The Messianic kingdom had been offered to Israel and rejected by the nation. Basically, the nature of the true kingdom was spiritual and was entered by the new birth according to John 1:12-3; 3:3-5. This new birth occurred when an individual trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Then there was the outward form of the kingdom which included true believers and counterfeit believers spoken of in Mt. 13:38-43, 47-50. He used the Old Testament scriptures – both the law and the prophets - to try to persuade them concerning Jesus Christ. There were two responses: Those being persuaded and those who chose to not believe. The quote from Isaiah has the Holy Spirit speaking through Isaiah the prophet in Acts 28:25, but in Isa. 6:9-10 from which the quote is taken speaks of Yahweh or Jehovah being the speaker in Isa. 6:8. This shows us that

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Jehovah/Yahweh is the Holy Spirit. Paul pointed out how Isaiah had predicted that the Jews would not understand the message regarding their Messiah because their heart had become dull. Otherwise God would heal or restore Israel. John 12:37-40 outlines the problem. Despite overwhelming evidence in the way of signs and miracles according to John 12:37-38, they willfully refused to believe. As a result, God punished them by judicially blinding them so they could not (=lacked the capacity to) believe according to John 12:39-40 which cites the Isa. 6:10 passage. We notice that Paul did not allow the fact that people were not persuaded to prevent him from continuing to testify of Jesus Christ. As we find our presentation of the gospel rejected by people, we need to follow the example of Paul in continuing to bear testimony of Christ.

Acts 28:28-31 - Paul had generally gone to his own countrymen, the Jews, whenever he went to a different location. He could proclaim the gospel to them first and then to the Gentiles as he outlined in Rom. 1:16. On coming to Rome, he followed the same pattern. While there were some Jews who believed when he presented the gospel, it would appear that a sizable number of them rejected the message. Yet verse 29 shows that there was a dispute among the Jews regarding Paul's message – probably between the believers and unbelievers. The most ancient Greek manuscripts do not have verse 29. However, a majority of the existing early Greek manuscripts have this verse. In light of their response in Acts 28:24, it would seem likely that there would be some type of dispute among the Jews. Jesus Christ and the gospel are a divider of people (Mt. 10:34-37). The important issue for anyone is to be on the right side of the divide by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as savior. While Paul could not leave his rented house as he was basically under house arrest, there was no restriction or hindrance on people coming to his house or being brought to his house. This gave him an audience for the two years before his trial to preach the kingdom of God in all its aspects (the present real kingdom entered by the new birth at salvation – John 3:3, 5; Col. 1:13), the outer aspect of this kingdom consisting of all those who professed Christ but not all were saved – Mt. 13:41-44, 47-50, the fully manifested aspect of this kingdom which will come about in the future when Christ returns – Mt. 25:31; Luke 22:28-30). He was also able to teach the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, His full deity (Col. 2:9), His full humanity (Heb. 2:17), His death on the cross (Eph. 1:7) and His bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4), His coming back to judge the world (Acts 17:31) and the need to receive Him by personal faith in the gospel and the person of Christ (Rom. 1:16; Acts 16:30-31). Finally, we read that Paul did this with complete confidence. The Greek word translated “confidence” also includes the idea of boldness. May God give each of us who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as savior that same holy confidence and boldness!

A list of the miracles in Acts and the relationship of the Apostles to each miracle is included on pp. 62 and 63.

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#	MIRACLE	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	APOSTOLIC INVOLVEMENT
1	Christ's ascension	Acts 1:9-11	Apostles and others witnessed it.
2	Speaking in tongues	Acts 2:1-13	120 believers including the Apostles participated in it.
3	Signs and wonders	Acts 2:43	Done through the Apostles
4	Healing of lame man	Acts 3:1-10	Done through the Apostle Peter
5	Signs and wonders	Acts 4:29-31 cp. 5:12	Done through the Apostles
6	Death of Ananias and Sapphira	Acts 5:1-11	Done through the Apostle Peter
7	Healing and exorcism	Acts 5:12-16	Done through Peter and the other Apostles
8	Angelic delivery from prison	Acts 5:18-19	Done for Apostles
9	Great signs and wonders	Acts 6:8 cp. 6:5-6	Done by Stephen after laying on of Apostles' hands
10	Vision of Christ at the Father's right hand	Acts 7:55-56 cp. 6:5-6	Experienced by Stephen after laying on of Apostles' hands
11	Signs, exorcism and healing	Acts 8:6-7 cp. 6:5-6	Done by Phillip after laying on of Apostles' hands
12	Imparting the Holy Spirit	Acts 8:14-19	Done by the Apostles
13	Moved instantly from one place to another	Acts Acts 8:39-40 cp. 6:5-6	Experienced by Phillip after laying on of Apostles' hands
14	Events of Paul's conversion	Acts 9:3-6	Experienced by the Apostle Paul
15	Restoring Paul's sight	Acts 9:10-17	Experienced by Apostle Paul
16	Healing of Aeneas' sight	Acts 9:32-35	Done through Peter the Apostle
17	Raising of Dorcas from the dead	Acts 9:36-42	Done through Peter the Apostle
18	Angelic appearance to Cornelius	Acts 10:1-7 cp. 11:13-14	Cornelius, a seeking unbelieving Gentile, prepared for the Apostle Peter's message.
19	Peter's vision	Acts 10:9-16	Experienced by Peter the Apostle
#	MIRACLE	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	APOSTOLIC INVOLVEMENT
20	Cornelius and other Gentiles spoke in tongues	Acts 10:44-48	Response to the Apostle Peter's message
21	Agabus' prophecy of famine	Acts 11:27-30	Witnessed by the Apostles Paul and Barnabas
22	Angelic deliverance of Peter from prison	Acts 12:5-11	Experienced by Peter the Apostle
23	Angel made Herod mortally ill	Acts 12:20-23	No Apostolic involvement; direct act by an angel
24	Men who prophesied	Acts 13:1	Witnessed by the Apostles
25	Barjesus struck temporarily blind	Acts 13:11	Done through Paul the Apostle
26	Signs and wonders	Acts 14:3, 14	Done through Paul and Barnabas both of whom were Apostles.

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27	Lame man healed	Acts 14:8-10, 14	Done through Paul and Barabas both Apostles
28	Signs and wonders	Acts 15:12	Done by Paul and Barnabas both Apostles
29	Judas and Silas as prophets strengthen the believers	Acts 15:32	Witnessed by Paul and Barnabas both Apostles.
30	Macedonian vision	16:9-10	Experienced by Paul the Apostle
31	Exorcism of demon	16:16-18	Done through Apostle Paul
32	Earthquake	Acts 16:26 cp. 1 Thessalonians 1:1	Experienced by the Apostles Paul and Silas.
33	Vision from Christ reassuring Paul	Acts 18:9-10	Experienced by the Apostle Paul
34	Disciples of John the Baptist receive the Holy Spirit and speak with tongues	Acts 19:1-7	Apostle Paul laid hands on them
35	Exorcisms and healings even by handkerchiefs and aprons	Acts 19:11-12	Done through Paul the Apostle
36	Backfired exorcism	Acts 19:13-17	Misuse of Christ's and the Apostle Paul's authority
37	Eutychus raised from the dead	Acts 20:9-12	Done through Paul the Apostle
#	MIRACLE	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	APOSTOLIC INVOLVEMENT
38	4 daughters of Phillip who were prophetesses	Acts 21:8-9	No Apostolic involvement
39	Agabus predicts Paul's arrest and confinement	Acts 21:10-11	Experienced by Paul the Apostle
40	Paul's vision of Christ giving him direction	Acts 22:17-21	Experienced by Paul the Apostle
41	Christ told Paul in a vision that he would testify at Rome	Acts 23:11	Experienced by Paul the Apostle
42	Angelic promise of deliverance	Acts 27:23-24	Experienced and shared by Paul the Apostle
43	Poisonous snake bites Paul who has no ill effects	Acts 28:1-6	Experienced by Paul the Apostle
44	Healing of Publius' father	Acts 28:8	Done through Paul the Apostle
45	Rest of the people healed of sicknesses	Acts 28:9	Done through Paul the Apostle

CONCLUSIONS: 45 MIRACLES IN ACTS

1. 2 of the 45 had no Apostolic involvement.
2. 43 of the 45 had Apostolic involvement
 - a. The Apostles were direct agents in 20 of the 43 miracles.
 - b. The Apostles received benefit or guidance in 16 of the 43 miracles.
 - c. The Apostles were indirect agents in 4 of the 43 miracles.
 - d. The Apostles were simply witnesses in 3 of the 43 miracles.