

Acts 1.1-8

Acts 1:1 “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: 4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

It is generally agreed that the book of Acts was written by Luke, the beloved physician. In the first verse Luke speaks of the former treatise that he had made (the book of Luke) of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Moreover, the book of Acts is addressed to “Theophilus.” The name, Theophilus, means lover of God. The book, therefore, is written to those who love God. The former treatise, (book of Luke) covered those things which the Lord began to do and teach until the time that Christ had given commandments through the Holy Ghost unto the apostles whom he had chosen just before his ascension back into heaven.

The first thing that the Lord commanded the apostles was to wait at Jerusalem until they had been endued with power from on high. No doubt these men would have been ready immediately to begin to tell the Lord’s people what they had seen, heard, and learned. But the Lord told them to wait. One of the hardest lessons many of us as the Lord’s children have to learn is to be patient until the Lord gives us direction or shows us what we are to do. We have to learn to wait. This is a critical lesson for if we don’t wait on the Lord’s direction we will certainly make a mess of things.

After the Lord’s resurrection he had showed himself alive to the apostles for a period of forty days. Among the infallible proofs he showed to the apostles were these:

1. He shewed them his hands and feet and pierced side.
2. He ate fish before them.
3. He prepared a table of fish and bread for them.

The feast of weeks, also known as Pentecost, was coming up ten days after his ascension. The commandment to observe the feast of weeks is given to the children of Israel and recorded for us in Deu. 16:9 “Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. 10 And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:” The resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week was the time that they would have started counting and fifty days later would have been the feast of weeks or Pentecost. Thus, the apostles had ten days to wait until the day of Pentecost when they would be endued with power from on high.

“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” In this the Lord tied together the baptism of the Holy Ghost with Pentecost.

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” It is apparent from this that the apostles were infected with the same belief that most of the Jews had, that there was going to be a restored kingdom in Israel like unto the kingdom they had in the days of David. The Lord answered them by telling them that it wasn’t given to them to know either the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. In like manner, it is not given to us to know the time when the Lord is coming to take his people home to glory. All of those predictors of the end of time have been wrong so far and show that they are not true believers in the word of God. The Lord has told us that no man knoweth the date of the end of time.

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” The book of Acts is an account of this very statement of the Lord being fulfilled by the apostles and ministry of the Lord. They became witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1.9-14

Acts 1:9 “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. 12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”

The “cloud” in the scripture is often associated with the glory of God and the Holy Spirit. What a glorious site the disciples were blessed to see as Jesus ascended out of their sight. The same God who created nature also can overrule nature. Christ did this with his resurrection from the grave and again as he ascended back to heaven.

Moreover, there is the promise that he will once again overrule nature when he comes again, and takes his people home to glory.

Who the two men were in white apparel is not given unto us. Some believe these men to be angels. Others think that it may have been Moses and Elijah as at the mount of transfiguration. It is only speculation as we are not told who they were. We do know that they were in white apparel. White apparel is associated with righteousness.

“Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.” Here we see the apostles obeying the command of the Lord to tarry at Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high.

“And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.” The names of the apostles are given to us again to show us that none had been lost and that they were all together after the resurrection and later ascension of Jesus.

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” If anyone ever wondered what we should do when we are patiently waiting on direction from the Lord, this verse tells us plainly. We need to continue with one accord in prayer and supplication. What a wonderful situation when the whole church is in one accord and continues in prayer and supplication.

Acts 1.15-26

Acts 1:15 “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) 16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take. 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)” The number of disciples after Jesus had ascended unto heaven was numbered at about an hundred and twenty. Organized religion today focuses on numbers. They assume that the greater number of people that you have in a congregation, the stronger the congregation and the better the preacher. Yet, here we have by far the greatest preacher who has ever walked the face of

the earth, Jesus Christ, and at the close of his ministry while walking on earth there are 120 disciples. This leads us to several conclusions:

1. It is not the number of people that you have in a congregation but the number of true disciples that makes for a strong church.

2. The size of the congregation is not a reflection of how good a preacher or pastor the church has.

3. The focus of Jesus teaching was not to see how large a congregation that he could build, but was truly on discipleship of his followers.

4. If we go back to Matthew chapter 28 we find the Lord's instruction to the apostles was to make disciples of the believers: 18 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Again we see the focus on developing disciples and not on the number of members of a congregation.

"Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." Peter is directing the attention to Old Testament prophecy concerning the replacing the fallen apostle named Judas Iscariot with another apostle. It begs the question; however, does the Lord need help in fulfilling prophecy?

"For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood." Peter in his argument recalls what happened to Judas after he had betrayed Jesus. We are told in the scriptures that Judas returned the money he had received (30 pieces of silver) and then proceeded to hang himself. The money was used to purchase a field called Aceldama, known as the field of blood. That is it was purchased with blood money.

"For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take." Peter is quoting from two different psalms:

1. Ps. 69:25 "Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents."

2. Ps. 109:8 "Let his days be few; and let another take his office."

"Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." One of the requirements for someone to be an apostle is that they must be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. The question then becomes who does the selection of the apostle to replace Judas.

As a side issue, knowing that an apostle must be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ, then this exposes all those men throughout the world today who claim to be apostles. Not any of them are eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, therefore, they are not apostles.

“And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.” Again, the question is: Is the Lord restricted to whom men choose in making His choice? The church appointed two. If you go back to the Lord’s calling of the 12 apostles, that He did the choosing, calling, and sending, not man.

“And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” Contrast this with the Lord calling Saul of Tarsus. The Lord chose someone the church would never have chosen. The Lord called him and made him a disciple. At the time the church chose Matthias, Paul would not have qualified to be an apostle for several reasons, but at that time he had not been a witness of a resurrected Christ. The Damascus road experience changed that however.

Acts 2.1-4

Acts 2:1 “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

The cloud was used in the dedication of the tabernacle, the temple, and the building of Ezekiel's vision:

1. Ex. 40:33 "And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. 34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."

2. 1 Ki. 8:10 "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11 So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD."

3. Ezek. 10:3 "Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. 4 "Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory."

In these three occurrences, the buildings had been completed and the cloud filled the buildings and the glory of the Lord filled the buildings. We have three similar instances in the New Testament when the Holy Ghost "dedicated" the Lord's church in what is known as the "baptism of the Holy Ghost:"

1. Acts 2:1 "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

2. Acts 8:14 "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen

upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

3. Acts 10:44 "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." Also, Acts 11:15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

Thus, on these three occasions the Holy Ghost "dedicated" the church among the Jews, then the Samaritans, and finally among the Gentiles. Like in the Old Testament types the dedication was for a finished work that God had completed the organization of the church.

Acts 2.5-11

Acts 2:5 "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."

"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." Many of the men who had come to Jerusalem had come from a great distance. They had hazarded their lives to be there at the day of Pentecost. Under the law, the Lord required that: Deu. 16:16 "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:" These who had come had done so in obedience to the commandment of the LORD. Moreover, it was said of these men that they were devout. To be devout means to be devoted to the LORD. Thus, these devout men were not just following tradition, but were actually devoted to the service of God.

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." The

miracle here was not that the men heard an unknown tongue, but rather they heard in their own native tongue the wonderful works of God. They heard and understood what was spoken. The miracle is that the speakers spoke in the Galilaeans language and the men heard in their own native language. In effect this was a reversal of the confusion of tongues that God caused at the tower of Babel.

Because there are many who declare that the early church practiced speaking in an unknown tongue I have included below an essay I had written on this subject.

Speaking in Tongues

This topic has seen great abuse in application in our day. The biggest abuse is the teaching that the bible teaches that it is a spiritual gift to speak in a language that is not known by anyone. As we will see the scripture teaching on tongues are that we have some people speaking in tongues that they did not learn and we have some people hearing in their native languages what was spoken in another language. Never do we have a situation in the scriptures where someone spoke in a language they do not know and that that language is unknown to any hearer.

The speaking in a language not known by the speaker or the speaking in one language and someone hearing in another language are called signs in the scriptures. As we will see these signs were present in the early church. We will undertake this study by looking at each time the speaking in tongues is set forth in the New Testament.

The Lord gave signs to the apostles before his ascension back into heaven in Mark chapter 16. One of the signs he gave was found in verse 17: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues..."

The first example of speaking in tongues occurred on the day of Pentecost: Acts 2:3 "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."

If we count up we find that there were seventeen different dialects listed for us in the above and all the people of these different groups heard the apostles and elders speak in their nature language. Further, they understood what was being spoken because they heard them speak in their native tongues "the wonderful works of God." If they had not understood what was spoken then they would not have known that what the preachers spoke was "the wonderful works of God." The great miracle here was not in the speakers but in the hearers hearing in their own tongues.

The next occasion of speaking in tongues took place when Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius and his household and friends: Acts 10:44 "While Peter yet spake

these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" On this occasion we have the speakers in tongues and the hearers in tongues. Those who spoke in tongues may not have understood the tongues they were speaking in. However, this is not plainly set forth. The hearers understood the tongues that were spoken because they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. If the hearers had not known the tongues, then how could they know that they magnified God? The fact is the hearers understood the languages spoken and knew they magnified God in what was spoken.

In the 19th chapter of Acts we come across some men who had been followers of the teachings of John the Baptist. 1 "Paul took these men and baptized them and then the sign gifts were manifest: And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And all the men were about twelve." Again, these were not tongues unknown to man, but rather they apparently were unknown to the speakers. However, they were not unknown to the hearers, because they "spake with tongues, and prophesied." The hearers would not have known they prophesied if they did not understand the language that was spoken.

1 Cor. chapter 12 speaks to us about spiritual gifts that were present in the early church. The gift concerning tongues is presented as follows:

1. 10 "To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:"
2. 28 "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."
3. 30 "Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"

As we will see in chapter 13 some of these gifts faded away.

Next, we look at what chapter 1 Corinthians chapter 13 tells us about tongues:

1. 13:1 "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Here Paul speaks of speaking with the tongues (languages) of men and of angels. Some men know multiple languages because they have learned them. Others in Paul's day spoke multiple languages because of the sign gift that was given them.

2. 13:8 "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Paul spoke of a day when prophecies shall fail and tongues shall cease and knowledge shall vanish. In the early days of the church we had prophets and apostles prophesying, we had sign gifts of speaking in tongues and we had special knowledge of the word of God given to some. When the canon of scripture was complete, there ceased to be a need of prophets and apostles because their work was complete. There also ceased to be the need of special knowledge because such was now a part of the canon of scriptures. Likewise, there ceased to be a need for the sign gifts because God had already authenticated the work of the apostles and prophets and his word was complete and the church had everything she needed in the scriptures.

We will now consider 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse by verse. It is in this chapter that most of the confusion on speaking in unknown languages has arisen.

14:1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. 2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries."

The speaker is speaking in a tongue not known to the hearers. God knows all languages and we can speak to God in our language even if we are among a people who do not understand our language. If I speak to someone in English and those people do not understand English, then they will not understand what I speak. However, God will understand what I speak.

14:3 "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. 4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church."

In verse 4 the speaker is speaking in a tongue he knows because he is edifying himself. However, the congregation to which he speaks does not understand the language he is speaking in, because they are not edified.

14:5 "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."

When I first went to Kenya, I spoke in the only language I knew well enough to speak in which is English. Most of the people to whom I spoke knew little or no English. Most of them were fluent in Kisii language or Swahili language. There were a few brethren who knew English well enough to interpret for me. One brother who knew English and Kisii interpreted for me and the people received edifying. If no one had known English then if I spoke there would have been no edifying.

14:6 "Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?"

It would be foolish for me to speak in a language the people do not understand if I can speak in a language they can understand. If I can speak to them in a language they can understand then I can speak to them by revelation, knowledge, prophesying, and doctrine. If I speak to them in a language they do not understand then I can not do this.

14:7 "And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? 8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? 9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. 10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. 11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me."

Paul is emphasizing the importance of speaking with words that are easily understandable. If we fail to speak with words that are easily understandable, then we, as soldiers of Jesus Christ, shall not be prepared to the battle. Further, if we do not speak with words easily to be understood then those who hear us will not know what we are saying. Further, if those who hear me do not know the meaning of my voice, then I shall be a barbarian to them and they shall be like barbarians to me. Clearly Paul is teaching plainly the importance of not speaking to people in languages they cannot understand.

14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. 13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret."

Plainly, the church cannot be edified by me if I speak in a language the congregation cannot understand. If I do not know the language the congregation speaks then I need an interpreter. Back during the time of the sign gifts, I would have needed to pray that God would give me knowledge to interpret what I said into the language of the congregation. The speaker is not to speak in a tongue the congregation cannot understand unless it can be interpreted to the congregation.

14:14 "For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. 16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? 17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified."

If I did not know the language in which I am speaking, even I would not have understanding of what I said. In the above scenario, neither the speaker nor the congregation knew the particular language that is spoken, however, the language is known to some men. Again, to pray or sing in a language that neither I nor the congregation knows will not edify anyone. It is a total wasted effort. If I pray or sing with the understanding in a language the congregation understands then the congregation will be edified.

14:18 "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: 19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. 20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

Paul emphasizes the importance of being men in understanding. That is why he said it is better to speak five words with understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

14:21 "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. 22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."

Paul sets forth the principle that speaking in tongues was a sign gift and that the sign was to unbelievers. When we speak in the church, we are not speaking to unbelievers but to believers. Prophesying serves the believers. Thus, we are to speak with the understanding in a language known unto the church.

14:23 "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? 24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: 25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."

Further Paul states that the unlearned and unbelievers will declare that you are mad if you speak in a language they cannot understand. Whereas, if we speak to edifying in a language the congregation understands then the unlearned or unbeliever may be convinced of the truth and having the secrets of his heart made manifest by the preached word, he will worship God and report that God is in you of a truth.

14:26 "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. 27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. 28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."

Here, Paul sets forth a principle that the church is to follow: Any man who comes into the congregation to speak and he speaks in a tongue not known to the congregation, then there must be an interpreter. If there is no interpreter, then he is not to speak. Based on this, then there should never be someone speaking in the church in a language not known to the congregation, unless there is an interpreter and the interpreter interprets to the language the congregations knows. Also, to speak in a language unknown to the congregation without it being interpreted does not edify the church and is in violation of the principle Paul stated above "Let all things be done unto edifying."

14:32 "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

To speak in a language not known to the congregation only adds confusion to the church. Further to speak things in a language that I do not understand and the congregation does not understand is also confusion and is contrary to the spirits of the prophets being subject to the prophets.

14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

Paul did not forbid the speakers to speak in tongues, but rather that there be an interpreter so that the congregation can receive edifying. This is the decent and orderly thing to do.

Acts 2.12-21

Acts 2:12 "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19 And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

There were some who mocked the speakers saying they were full of new wine. However, Peter answered and said it is but the third hour of the day and these men are not drunk. So long as the earth remains there will be mockers who will mock anything that is of God or godly.

Peter continued to show the people that what was taking place was the fulfillment of prophecy set forth in the book of Joel. Notice that Peter did not say that this was a portion of that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, but rather he said, "this is that..." Now Peter did not go into any detail about the significance of all the things in Joel's prophecy, and therefore, I will not either. However, Joel's prophecy was all fulfilled in that day.

Acts 2.22-36

Acts 2:22 “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: 26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: 27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

In the above we have the sermon that Peter preached to the people on the day of Pentecost. Men who preach the gospel have different gifts when it comes to evangelism. Peter was a net fisher. He was casting his net into a large pond on the day of Pentecost. Many men are blessed to fish in much smaller ponds with a single line most of the time.

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Jesus was approved of God by miracles, wonders and signs. Even the unbelievers and the wicked Pharisees, scribes, and rulers acknowledged that Jesus was performing signs, wonders, and miracles. Peter to the gathering calls attention to these wonderful works that God did by him in their midst. Next, Peter tells them that God delivered Jesus by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God into their hands. Then they, with wicked hands, crucified and slew. God’s deliverance did not change that what the people did was wicked and murderous. Thus, Peter accused the people of being wicked and murderous.

“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” God raised up Jesus whom the people had crucified and slain. Death could not hold its prey.

“For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not

leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.” Peter was quoting from Ps. 16:9 “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” We see this fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His soul was not left in hell on the cross and his body saw no corruption in the grave. The second part Peter quoted from Ps. 21:6 “For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.”

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.” That David was dead and buried and his sepulchre being with them unto that day, has the significance that the promise made to David in 2 Sam.7:12 had now been fulfilled in Jesus Christ: “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.” Jesus Christ was the seed of David in which the everlasting kingdom of God was established.

“He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” Thus, David was not speaking of himself, but was prophesying of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” Peter, the other apostles, the women at the grave, and about 500 others were witnesses of the resurrected Christ.

“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Peter quoted from Ps. 110:1 “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Then he concluded by saying: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Thus Peter’s concluding remarks in the sermon is that the same Jesus that the people had crucified was now Lord and Christ. The word Lord carries with it a Lord/servant relationship and the word Christ (meaning anointed one) indicates that he is both King and High Priest of the Kingdom of God.

Acts 2.37-41

Acts 2:37 “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the

Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart...” What had pricked their hearts is that they had come to the realization that they had slain the Lord of glory and desired a murderer in His stead. Also, now this same Jesus is now Lord and Christ. They had now come to realize that he is now King of the kingdom of heaven.

“And said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” This is the cry of children of God who have come to the realization that they are sinners and have sinned against the very God of glory and are worthy of everlasting punishment.

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Repent indicates a change of mind and action. Previously these people had been steeped in law service. Under the law they now realized their own sinfulness. The solution for them was to turn from the law service and serve God in his kingdom. In order to serve God in his kingdom they must turn from the law service and press into the kingdom of God through repentance and water baptism. Baptism was to be done in the name or authority of Jesus Christ “for” the remission of sins. The word, “for,” sometimes means “in order to” but most times means “because of.” The reason for the people to repent and be baptized was “because of the remission of sin.” The effect of their repenting and being baptized was that they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” To understand what is the gift of the Holy Ghost we must see what happened when they repented and were baptized. In verse 47 we read “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” We can conclude then that the gift of the Holy Ghost was to be added unto the church.

Some have wondered why Peter said they were to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ whereas Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” “In the name of” means “by the authority of.” Thus we are baptized by the authority of Jesus Christ who commanded we be baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” The promise of being added to the church wasn’t just to these who at Pentecost heard the gospel message, but it also applied to their children and to all that were afar off. It was made to as many as the Lord our God shall call. The only ones who can and will be able to respond to this promise are those whom the Lord our God has called in regeneration.

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” This verse points us to two types of salvation. The first type is eternal salvation from sin which abundant scriptures tell us is by the grace of God and without the works of man. However, when Peter told them to save themselves from an untoward generation, he was exhorting them to good works and through their good works to deliver themselves from following after the ways of the world.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” The church increased in number from 120 before the day of Pentecost to over 3000 on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 2:42 “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” By continuing stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine they were continuing in the teachings of the apostles. That surely teaches us that we should continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine. Moreover, they continued stedfastly in fellowship. To have fellowship we must be agreed in our gospel beliefs. Moreover, they continued stedfastly in the breaking of bread. Sometimes the breaking of bread is symbolic of fellowship, but in the use here it has already been stated that they continued stedfastly in fellowship. In feeding the multitudes of 5000 and 4000 the Lord broke bread and gave to the apostles and the apostles to the multitudes and they ate and were filled. I suspect that the breaking of bread was in the teaching of the word of God. Finally, they continued stedfastly in prayers. Again, this is a wonderful example to be followed by all of us.

“And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.” This is consistent with what the Lord said to and about the apostles in Mark 16:17 “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” What a wonderful examples these early disciples showed to us in their unselfishness and love for one another.

“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” This, to me, teaches us that they were were worshipping God daily and the ministry was teaching the people daily in breaking of bread, from house to house. I also believe that the eating their meat is not speaking of literal meat but of spiritually partaking of the word of God with gladness and singleness of heart. The result of all this is that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. That is he added to

the church daily those who believed the gospel, repented, and were baptized. These are the ones such as should be saved. Those who did not believe, or refused to repent or refused baptism, are not the ones that should be saved into the Lord's church kingdom here on earth.

Acts 3.1-10

Acts 3:1 "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. 2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. 4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. 5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." From this we gather that the 9th hour (about 3 p.m.) was traditionally the hour of prayer in which the people gathered together each day in the temple for prayers.

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;" This man as we discover later was about 40 years of age and had been lame all of his life. Apparently he had friends or relatives who brought him to the temple each day so that he could beg alms of the people entering at the hour of prayer. No doubt this was a matter of survival for the man as he would not have been able to do manual work.

"Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms." This man was depending on the compassion of others for his livelihood and when he saw Peter and John as he no doubt had asked many others asked an alms of them.

"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them." Peter spoke getting the attention of the lame man who was expecting to receive something from Peter and John. However, he had no idea what he was about to receive. He thought maybe they would give him some money.

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Peter's statement here of not having any silver or gold destroys the idea of preaching to make much money. Can any of the very rich so called evangelists of today say as Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none?" However, Peter had a gift given unto him of the Lord as we read in Mark 16:17 "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any

deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” The power to heal was a sign of the apostles. Paul verified this to us in 2 Cor. 12:12 “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” Since the signs, wonders and mighty deeds were signs of the apostles, then we would not expect those who were not apostles to manifest these signs. Peter, using this gift said unto the man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”

“And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.” None of the so called faith healers of today can do anything close to this. This man immediately received strength in his feet and ankle bones. Moreover, the miracle was so great that the man did not have to learn to walk as he leaped up, stood, and walked and entered into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God. This could only be done by our Almighty God.

“And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.” All that came regularly to the temple knew that the man now leaping and walking and praising God was the same man who had been lame all of his life and who begged alms of them as they entered into the temple.

The man’s response to his healing was that he praised God. He knew that it was the power of God that had healed him. This was the appropriate response. Notice that he did not praise Peter and John, but he praised God. No doubt he was appreciative of Peter and John for using the gift that God had given them, but the praise properly belonged to God and not to the preachers.

Acts 3.11-18

Acts 3:11 “And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. 12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.”

One of the reasons for gift of performing the signs, wonders, and miracles was given to the apostles was to demonstrate to the people that these men had the authority of

God as the apostles of Jesus Christ. The apostles used these gifts, often to open doors of opportunity to preach unto the people.

“And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.” To see such a miracle as this performed upon a man that they knew to have been lame since his birth, would make the people to wonder what is taking place.

“And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” Peter was quick to point out that it wasn't by his and John's power or holiness that enabled the lame man to walk. The praise belongs to the Lord and not to the apostles.

“The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.” One thing that stands out in this passage to me is that if you are going to call upon people to repent, then it is needful that you show them that they have sinned. Calling upon people to repent when they do not see that they have sinned will not lead to repentance. Peter tells the people that they are guilty of delivering up the Lord, of denying him in the presence of Pilate who was determined to let him go and desiring a murderer to be granted unto them and then being responsible for killing the Prince of life whom God raised from the dead.

Moreover, Peter pointed out that the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of the fathers, glorified his Son Jesus by raising him from the dead. Now such charges as this one would think would prick in the heart the children of God among them and cause them to feel the guilt of their sins.

“And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” Peter points out to the people that the very one they had crucified and that God had now raised from the dead is the same that hath healed the lame man whom they all knew. The man was made strong through the apostle's faith in Christ name. He also points out that this faith is given them by Jesus Christ who had given the lame man perfect soundness.

“And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.” Sin through ignorance is still sin. They were still guilty of sin, even though it fulfilled the prophecies that Christ should suffer.

Acts 3.19-26

Acts 3:19 “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of

all his holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

Acts 3:19 “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;” From the above we gather that repentance and conversion are not the same thing. Repentance is to turn from sins. Conversion is to turn from error to truth and to become the disciples of Jesus Christ. When we are convicted of our sins and repent, then the Lord sends refreshing to our souls that we have been forgiven of our sins.

“And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” In the Old Testament we read of the year of jubilee that once every 50 years the children of Israel were to restore all lands that had been sold, to release the bonds of servitude and otherwise have a new beginning every 50 years. We never read where the children of Israel ever observed the jubilee. However, the jubilee was pointing to a much greater new beginning. Even with the new beginnings we have already received in this life, there is still a new beginning awaiting us. That new beginning will be when the Lord comes again to take his elect children home to glory. This will happen in the resurrection from the dead. The prophets in the Old Testament have spoken of this since the world began.

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” Peter quotes from Deu. 18:15-18 “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.” Peter is telling the people that they should either hear and hearken unto the Lord as that Prophet or be destroyed. This destruction came in 70 A.D. when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem.

“Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up

his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” Peter ended his discourse to the people by telling them how blessed they are to be the first to hear this gospel message.

Acts 4.1-37

Acts 4:1 “And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.”

We ask ourselves why the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees were grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead? First of all these people were afraid of losing their power and authority and position. It didn't matter that a person who had been lame and unable to walk for 40 years can now walk. They were more concerned with themselves and their power, position, and authority than the miraculous and compassionate healing of the man. In addition, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead and the teaching that Jesus had arisen from the dead was contrary to their religious teachings and if the people believed this then they would no longer want to be associated with the Sadducees. Thus this teaching of the resurrection would harm their denomination and their financial livelihood. This sounds a lot like denominational religion today and their rejection of the gospel of the grace of Christ.

In addition we see that the persecution against Jesus now was turning to the persecution against those who believed and taught through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Acts 4:4 “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.” The rejoicing in the gospel of Jesus Christ was greatly manifest in that five thousand believed the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This further infuriated the priests, the rulers of the people and the Sadducees.

Acts 4:5 “And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, 6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” Here we see almost the whole establishment of the organized religion in Judah arise in opposition to the apostles of Jesus Christ because of the miraculous healing and their preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It mattered not that it was in accordance with the word of God to them. Their question concerning “By what power, or by what name, have you done this, should have been apparent to them that this was done by the power of God. Such a miracle could only have been done by the power of God. Their anger was that these things were not authorized by them.

In answer to the above question Peter answered as follows: Acts 4:8 “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; 10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead,

even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Peter being filled with the Holy Ghost answered with boldness and declared plainly that it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that the good deed done to the impotent man was made whole. Moreover, Peter pointed out to them that it was that same Jesus whom they had crucified and whom God raised from the dead. Peter went further and declared unto them that Jesus was the stone that was sought at nought by them that now was the head of the corner.

Moreover, Peter made the statement: “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” That statement teaches us that salvation from sin is by Jesus Christ alone. If it took any one else to help, then there would be other names under heaven required in our salvation.

Acts 4:13 “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.” Obviously the rulers and elders of the people were not used to what they considered to be unlearned and ignorant men answering them with such boldness. It was enough that they took note of them that they had been with Jesus. Today, the Lord’s ministry can speak with boldness when they are filled with the Holy Ghost. However, these same men must spend time with Jesus in meditation, power, reading and studying.

The miracle of healing was so apparent to the multitudes, that the rulers and elders could not speak against it.

Acts 4:15 “But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. 17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.” The rulers and elders and religious leaders were so full of pride in their own power that they thought that by threatening the apostles that the apostles would no longer speak in Christ’s name.

Acts 4:18 “And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Who is our Master? Is it God or is it the powers of this world? Peter and John were not hesitant to say that the Lord was their Master and that would hearken unto God rather than to the commandments of man, when they are contrary and opposed to the things of God. This should be our desire and practice as well.

Acts 4:21 “So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. 22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.” It is apparent that the rulers, leaders, and elders were afraid of the multitude who had witnessed what had been done to the man on whom the miracle of healing had taken place. By punishing Peter and John the rulers, leaders, and elders

would have looked like the hypocrites that they really were in the eyes of the multitude, so they refrained from punishing them and let them go.

Acts 4:23 “And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. 24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: 25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. 29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.”

In the above passage the people being in one accord thanked God for the deliverance and praised him for his fulfillment of the work done by the Lord Jesus Christ and prophesied beforehand by King David. Moreover, they asked God for deliverance from the threatenings of the rulers and religious leaders and that God would stretch forth his hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:31 “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” When the Holy Ghost is present then we can speak the word with great boldness.

Acts 4:32 “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” How precious it is when a church is of one heart and of one soul. How we should strive as church bodies to be of one heart and one soul. Moreover, these brethren above had set aside their pride and were willing to share the things that they possessed and to have all things common to the entire congregation.

Acts 4:33 “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” When such love is found among the brethren and sisters of the church so that they consider that all they possess are in common then we see that great power was given the apostles to witness the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. How we should desire that such would be so in our day.

Acts 4:34 “Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” These things were done out of a willing heart by the people. There was no coercion for them to do this. Consequently all the needs of the people were met.

Acts 4:36 “And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” Here we are introduced to Barnabas and given a glimpse of his loving heart. Barnabas will be a principle disciple in the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the book of Acts.

Acts 5.1-6

Acts 5:1 “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it, at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.”

Anytime a sentence begins with the word, “but,” it is a contrast to what was said before. By going back to the previous chapter we find that Barnabas having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. This money was to be used for the benefit of the needy in the congregation of the church. I am sure that the church looked at this as an unselfish act of love by Barnabas. Ananias and Sapphira had sold a possession and wanted to appear to the church that they too had unselfishly given the entire price of the land to the church. However, they had conspired to keep back part of the price, but not tell anyone so that they may appear to be like Barnabas. However, their deed was known for the Holy Ghost had made it known to Peter.

When Ananias brought he money and laid it at the apostles' feet, Peter said, “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” Instead of giving unselfishly, they were giving for self-acclaim and telling a lie while doing so.

Peter went on to say to Ananias: “Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” The sin here was not in keeping back part of the price, but rather the sin was in that they lied about it and said that it was the entire price for the land that they had given. Moreover, Peter equated a lie unto the church was a lie to the Holy Ghost.

“And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.”

Acts 5.7-11

Acts 5:7 “And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.”

In the above we see that Sapphira had conspired with her husband, Ananias, to lie to the church about the amount of money they had sold the land for and to say that they were giving the whole amount to the church, whereas they were only give a portion of the money to the church. God's penalty for both of them was death. They died because of their lie to the church which was equated to a lie to the Holy Ghost. Since the Lord is the head of the church, then to lie to the church is to lie to God. The penalty for this was severe and when the members of the church heard this, then great fear came upon all the church.

Acts 5.12-16

Acts 5:12 "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."

In Mark chapter 16 it was declared by the Lord concerning the apostles: 17 "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." In the above passage we see the apostles using the gifts that Christ had given them before his ascension back to glory. Notice, it was by the hands of the apostles that many signs and wonders were wrought among the people.

Also, we notice that the people were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. It is a great blessing for the Lord's people to use the gifts that God has given them and for them to be in one accord is another great blessing.

Moreover, we are told: "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them." These signs and wonders were being done by the apostles and no other man would dare join himself to the apostles to perform these signs and wonders and they had not these gifts, but the apostles only. The people magnified the apostles because of the gifts the Lord had given them.

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." This was a time of great joy to the people of God as they rejoiced not only in the sign gifts, but in the love of God being manifest and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The phrase, "added to the Lord," did not mean that they became a child of God as a result, but rather they were added to the Lord's church and became a disciple of the Lord.

"Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing

sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.” There was great rejoicing at the signs and wonders being manifest through the gifts God had given to the apostles and for the grace, mercy, and love of God who granted these miraculous works.

Acts 5.17-25

Acts 5:17 “Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, 18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, 20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, 23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. 24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.”

“Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation...” Were they filled with indignation because of the rejoicing of the people and the compassionate healing of those who were diseased and sick or for the miraculous works of God being manifest? No their indignation was that they believed themselves to be in danger of losing their power and control over the people. These, the high priest and the Sadducees, were indeed wicked people and manifest their wickedness by opposing the very plain work of God.

“And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, 20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” The high priest and Sadducees laid hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison because of the amazing abundance of compassionate healings of the people. They thought they had the power to stop the apostles; however, they were no match to the Lord as an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth. The high priest and Sadducees had power to put them in prison, but the Lord had power to loose them. Being delivered from the prison, the angel told them “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” That is they were to preach to the people, what the Lord hath done for them and how they should repent and be baptized and serve the Lord. “And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.”

“But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.” Notice the number of enemies of the Lord’s people and church has grown to

include not only the high priest and the Sadducees, but also the council and senate of the children of Israel.

“But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.” Notice that the keepers were standing before the doors. The Lord can deliver out of a prison, without the keepers even realizing that they had been delivered out of the prison. What an amazing and all powerful God we worship and serve.

“Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.” While the apostles could have fled knowing the wrath of the high priest, Sadducees, council, and senate, yet they refused to do so but did as the angel told them and went into the temple and taught the people as they were instructed.

Acts 5.26-32

Acts 5:26 “Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, 28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”

“Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.” The captain and the officers had a better understanding and compassion than the high priest, Sadducees, council, and senate. They properly feared and respected the opinion of the people for the good works the apostles had done to the sick and afflicted people that had been healed.

“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council:” The captain and officers had done their job.

“And the high priest asked them, 28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” In asking this question the high priest assumed that he had more authority than the one responsible for the miracles that were manifest. God was responsible for the miracles that were manifest as anyone could have surmised. In the high priest's accusation, he inferred that preaching the doctrine of grace and using the gift's God had given to show compassion to the poor and needy was somehow going to bring the wrath of Rome upon the nation of Israel. The high priest showed that he preferred the bondage to Rome if he could keep his power and influence over the obedience to God.

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.” What a profound statement Peter makes here and one that all of us should be willing to do. Unfortunately, too often God’s people succumb to obey the dictates of sinful rulers rather than obeying God.

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Peter rightly accuses the rulers and leaders of the people of being guilty of slaying the Lord Jesus Christ whom God raised up from the dead and is now exalted by God to be a Prince and a Saviour. One who has given repentance and forgiveness of sins. “And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” The apostles were witnesses of those things along with the Holy Ghost and this was manifest by the miracles and signs being done on the people.

Acts 5.33-40

Acts 5:33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. 34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; 35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. 40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.”

“When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.” This shows forth the murderous nature and intent of the high priest, the Sadducees, the council, and the senate. It didn’t matter how much the power and compassion of God was manifest, they intended to wipe out those who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;” This Gamaliel, who was in such reputation among the people, put forth a strong argument why they should refrain from their evil intent at this time.

“And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.” The

argument he puts forth here is that if the apostles are not truly what they say they are then it will all come to naught and all their followers will perish.

“And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.” Gamaliel’s logic is obviously sound here and has proven true for over 2000 years now. Thus the work is of God and has not been overthrown nor will it ever be overthrown, though wicked men continue to try to wipe out those who call upon the name of the Lord.

“And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.” As we will see, beating the apostles and commanding them not speak in the name of Jesus will not stop the apostles. Thankfully, persecution has not stopped the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ from continuing to proclaim the name of the Lord and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 5.41-42

Acts 5:41 “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

We might ask, “Why would the apostles rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ?” They knew the horrible shame that Jesus suffered to redeem them from their sins along with all the elect family of God. Thus, it was a cause of rejoicing to be able to suffer shame for His name.

With all the warnings and beatings that the apostles had undergone at the hands of the high priests, Sadducees, council, and senate of the people, yet they continued with resolve as Peter had said, “We ought to obey God rather than man. Therefore, daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. These who had journeyed with Jesus and had been witnesses of his death and resurrection, were not worried what man might do to their bodies; for they knew that they had a home in heaven awaiting them after this life is over.

Moreover, notice that their teaching and preaching Jesus Christ was daily, not only in the temple but in every house. This shows forth the zeal not only of the apostles, but also the zeal of the people and their desire to learn more about Jesus. They were teaching the scriptures to the people and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ daily. What a contrast that is to what we see today. Many of God’s people don’t seem to be able to make it to the place of worship even once a week. How few of those who claim to be the disciples of Jesus Christ today would even consider having studies and worship in their homes.

Acts 6.1-7

Acts 6:1 “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.” Clearly it is taught that the church should take care of the widows and needy in the congregation. Failing to see to the needs of the widows is a reproach to the church and a reflection of the attitude of its members often resulting in the ministers of the gospel being blamed. The situation had arisen in the church at Jerusalem that the number of the disciples had greatly multiplied. About 3000 were added on the day of Pentecost and then another time about 5000 were added and it was said that the Lord added to the church daily. Clearly there were thousands of disciples in this early church. Moreover, a portion of the widows in the church who had needs were being neglected. This led to a division in the church over the situation.

“Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” The ministers of the gospel, which at this time were the 12 apostles had a lot of work to do in ministering the word of God. For them to leave off the ministry of the word to serve tables would be counterproductive in their efforts to minister the word which the Lord had called them to do. Their admonition to the church was for them to look out seven men among them whom the gospel ministers might appoint over the business of seeing to the needs of the needy widows amongst them and the other needs of the church that would hinder the gospel ministers from ministering the word of God.

These seven men would not just be any seven men in the congregation, but would be seven men who had certain qualifications for the task before them. These men were to be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. These qualities were essential for the business they were to be appointed to. Later in the scriptures these men were called deacons. These men were not appointed to do all the work or to provide all the resources for the tasks they were charged with, but were to oversee that the work was done by the church.

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” The above passage of scripture teaches us that the office of deacon was established to relieve the gospel ministers so that they could give their time to prayer and the ministry of the word. Therefore the deacons in the church have the responsibility to

see that the needy in the congregation are cared for and to relieve the gospel ministers from those duties that would prevent them from giving their time to prayer and the ministry of the word. Today, that would include taking care of the physical and financial needs of the meeting house and grounds and seeing that the congregation helps the gospel ministers to be able to give more of their time to prayer and the ministry of the word.

“And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” In this we notice both a difference and a similarity between the office of deacon and the office of an elder. First the deacon is chosen by the church, while the elder is called by the Lord. However, they are both ordained to the office work in the church. In both cases the ordination by the presbytery consists of prayer and the laying on of hands.

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” The gospel message was going forth greatly after the apostles were beaten. The presence and work of the Holy Spirit was being greatly manifested. Persecution was sure to follow.

Acts 6.8-15

Acts 6:8 “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. 11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: 14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”

And now we see the persecution continue. We should understand that these people are like our corrupt political system today. They would do anything to maintain their power and control. This included lying and murder if it fulfilled their purpose. They didn't care about the welfare of the people nor did they have true compassion for them, even though they expressed compassion but it was not real. The one thing they wanted was to maintain their power and control.

“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.” This man, Stephen, who had just recently been ordained as a deacon in the church at Jerusalem, was now manifesting the spiritual gifts the Lord had given him. He was full of faith, as would soon become evident as he will make his defense against the false charges laid to him. The power he had was as a result of him being filled with the Holy Ghost. Going forth with the leadership and filling of the Holy Spirit he manifest

this power with great wonders and miracles among the people. One thing this shows us is that the gifts of wonders and miracles was not limited to the apostles, but also was present among those on whom the apostles laid hands.

“Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.” When you have and know and can defend the truth, then even if people dispute with you, they cannot resist the wisdom and spirit that the truth brings. I have experienced that when people have confront the truth and try to argue some false doctrine that when you show them by the scriptures the error of their belief system so that it cannot be sustain, that usually they will then make an attack against your character, even if they don’t know you personally. This has happened to me several times.

“Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.”

The word, suborned, means to collude with. Here we see collusion whereby these false religionists had colluded with liars to bring false charges against Stephen. They declared they had heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. These reports were fabricated lies designed to stir up the people against Stephen: “And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council...” Now the council has already shown their disdain and hatred toward the disciples of Christ and were altogether ready to hear false charges brought against a disciple of Christ.

“And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.” Again we see that these were false witnesses and were of course bearing false witness against Stephen.

“And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” It is truly amazing how that the Lord can show even his enemies the wickedness to which they plan and do. The very fact that Stephen’s face appeared as a face of an angel was a testimony to these wicked men that what they were about to do was against the very God in which they claimed to worship and serve.

Acts 7.1-60

In Acts chapter 7 Stephen gives his answer to the false accusations and trumped up charges made against him before the high priest and the council. He recounts the history of the Lord’s dealings with the children of Israel. In this review of the history of the Lord’s dealings with the children of Israel, he points out the manifest grace of God and manifest blessings of God toward the children of Israel. Those blessings he recounted are listed below:

1. “The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when

his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.” On the basis of God’s covenant with Abraham the nation of Israel was born.

2. “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.” The Lord through Joseph delivered the children of Israel from the famine that was in the land and thus saved them from starvation.

3. “And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:” The Lord raised up Moses to deliver the children of Israel out from under Egyptian bondage and to give them the lively oracles.

4. “Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the

God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house.” The Lord blessed Israel to have the tabernacle in which to worship God in the wilderness and the Lord also gave them the temple to worship God at the hands of Solomon.

In addition to the blessings Stephen recounted he also pointed out the faithful servants of the Lord including Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, and Solomon who all exhibited faith in the service of God. Now one might think that with all the blessings of God toward Israel and the examples of the faithful servants of God that the children of Israel would have reacted to be faithful to the service of God. However, as we list below that with each blessing above came great disobedience and rebellion by the children of Israel:

1. “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,”

2. “For he (*Moses*) supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?”

3. “To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.”

Next, Stephen laid the true charge against the high priest, the council and those who were persecuting the Lord’s church: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.” This is like the charge that Peter laid to the devout men and women who had gathered at the day of Pentecost. These to whom Peter spoke were **pricked in their hearts** and repented and were baptized and pressed into the church kingdom of God here on earth as the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, those to whom Stephen spoke had a different reaction: “When they heard these things, they were **cut to the heart**, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.” Those who were pricked in their hearts on the day of Pentecost were truly devoted to serve God, whereas, the high priest, the council, and those leaders of the people who were cut to the heart were only devoted to their own selfish self interest to maintain their own power and control over the people. They would not willingly let anything get in the way of their own wicked designs, even if it meant they would murder a godly disciple of the Lord.

Stephen in giving his defense was being led by the Holy Spirit and was filled with the Spirit. After he gave his defense his next action was: “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” What a glorious sight Stephen was permitted to see! The Lord no doubt was pleased with Stephen’s defense.

Next, these exceedingly wicked men reacted: “Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” From this we make the following observations:

1. Those wicked men were willing to commit murder against a godly man of God who plainly told them the truth.
2. We are introduced to a young man named Saul, who while not helping to stone Stephen to death was in agreement with their actions. This Saul would become the worse persecutor of the church until the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus.
3. The love of God was manifest by Stephen even in his dying breath as cried with a loud voice: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

Acts 8.1-4

Acts 8:1 “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. 4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

In the above passage we see that Saul was consenting to the death of Stephen and that he was leading a great persecution against the Lord’s church. As a result of the persecution the disciples at Jerusalem were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria except for the apostles. As a result of this persecution, the word of the Lord went forth to regions beyond Jerusalem. Persecution against the Lord’s church often results in the gospel going forth and as a result has the opposite effect than what the persecutors intended. The persecutors think they can stop the church and the gospel message through their persecution, but the effect is that the gospel often goes forth to many more people because of the persecutions.

The severity of Saul’s persecution is that he made havock of the church and entered into the members houses and haled men and women committing them to prison. Later we will see Saul breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Lord’s

disciples. Saul was determined that he would do away with the Lord's church and everyone who called upon the name of the Lord.

Acts 8.5-13

Acts 8:5 "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city. 9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." The very fact that Philip went down to Samaria is itself a remarkable thing because as the woman at the well said: John 4:9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? **for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.** The Holy Spirit is here removing the bounds of the gospel that it would not go only to the Jews but also to the Samaritans. The Samaritans were proselyte to a perverted form of the worship under the Law of Moses. Now the gospel is coming to them.

"And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." It is remarkable when people have not been exposed to a false gospel that they who are born again readily receive the gospel of the grace of Christ. This is in contrast to our experiences today in preaching the gospel to a people that have been brainwashed to believe a false gospel. In order for them to receive the gospel of the grace of Christ, they must first unlearn the false teachings of a perverted gospel.

"For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed." While Philip the evangelist was not an apostle, he was one on whom the apostles had laid hands and he was given the gift of physical healings. These gifts were used to demonstrate the power of God to a people who had no background in the worship of the God of heaven, but were before worshippers of idols.

"For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city." There was a double joy that the people of the city

had the privilege of experiencing. They rejoiced in the miracles that they saw and experienced and they rejoiced at the preaching of the gospel of the grace of Christ.

“But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:” Sorcery is defined as magic. Simon was a magician. The practice of magic is the art of deception to make a person believe something that is not real. Simon was using deception and through his deception he was deceiving people to believe that he was some great one. “To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.” Simon had greatly mastered the art of deception and had made the people believe that he is the great power of God. “And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.”

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” The people greatly responded to the preaching of Philip and believed the gospel message. Moreover, the preaching of the gospel delivered the people from the deception of Simon.

“Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” Simon believed the gospel of the kingdom of God and was baptized. Moreover he continued with Philip. However, Simon had not left everything behind as we shall soon see. He wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Apparently he still had a desire to be somebody in the eyes of the people.

Acts 8.14-17

Acts 8:14 “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”

What was taking place here was the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This baptism of the Holy Ghost first took place at Jerusalem and now among the Samaritans. This will happen again at the house of Cornelius. We notice that this baptism of the Holy Ghost was associated with the work of the Apostles. Philip could not lay hands on the people and the Holy Ghost fall on them. Thus it was necessary that the apostles come down and lay hands on the people.

Acts 8.18-25

Acts 8:18 “And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if

perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. 25 25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” While Simon had believed the gospel he was not yet repentant of the desire to be someone that people would look up to. He apparently thought that the ability to lay hands on someone and they receive the Holy Ghost was something that could be taught and was therefore something like the magic tricks he had before practiced. He offered the apostles money to be able to have the power to lay hands on people and they receive the Holy Ghost. Peter's response to him was that both his money and he perish because he had believed the gift of God could be purchased with money.

“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” The problem with Simon was his heart. His affections were for his own self-glorification and not for the glory of God.

“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” The advice Peter gave to Simon is applicable to us today. When we sin or err in our heart or otherwise, we need to repent and pray that God forgive us.

“For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” Certainly Simon's desire to be someone had been thwarted by the preaching of Peter and Simon's deception through the use of magic. Thus he was bitter and his desire to purchase the gift of God was a result of this bond of iniquity.

“Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.” While asking someone to pray for you is commendable, yet it was still dependant on Simon to repent and pray for forgiveness himself.

“And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” As a result of Philip's preaching in the city of Samaria and their receiving and responding to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the subsequent baptism of the Holy Ghost, the brethren went forth and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. Sometimes when a door opens and a preacher labors as a result of the door being opened of the Lord, then this leads to several other doors being opened. This happened in Samaria.

Acts 8.26-29

Acts 8:26 “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great

authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.”

“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” The true ministry of Jesus Christ needs the leadership of the Holy Spirit to direct them as to where they should go to preach the gospel and labor. This was true with Philip and it was true with Paul and Silas and Timothy as we read in Acts 16:6 “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” The Lord is the only door opener and if we go where the Lord has not opened the door then our labors will be in vain. Philip was being directed by the angel of the Lord as to where he was to go.

“And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.” We note here that Philip was being directed to go and see one man and to go a substantial distance to speak to a single individual. This shows us the great compassion that the Lord has for each of his children as they search for the truth. The man of Ethiopia was apparently an Israelite for he had gone up to Jerusalem to worship most likely at one of the three designated feasts days in the Old Testament where the children of Israel were commanded to go and observe the feast. Ethiopia is several hundred miles from Jerusalem so this man was extremely dedicated to worship as set forth in the Old Testament. To travel in a chariot for such a distance would have been an extremely arduous trip and likely filled with many dangers. Moreover, this man showed much evidence of having been born of the Spirit in that he not only had traveled great distance in obedience to the commandment of God, but also as he returned toward Ethiopia he was reading in the book of Isaiah and searching for the meaning of what he read.

“Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Here we see the Holy Spirit was working on both the preacher and the individual to prepare for this meeting and for the preaching of the gospel.

Acts 8.30-34

Acts 8:30 “And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his

humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?"

"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?" When Philip realized the purpose that the Spirit had led him to the dessert was to preach to the man in the chariot, he ran to meet the man. When the Lord opens a door for us we should be in a hurry to go through that door. Philip heard the man reading the prophet Esaias and this opened the door for him to ask the question: "understandest thou what thou readest."

"And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" Most of God's children need some guidance in reading the scriptures and this is one reason that God calls and sends the ministry to minister to His people. It has happened to me often that I have wondered about the meaning of some scripture and then hear a preacher preach on that very scripture and thus guide me into an understanding of the scripture.

"And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth." Notice when the Spirit opens the way that the person or persons to whom we speak or preach are open and prepared to hear what we have to say. The Eunuch was reading from the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. This chapter is a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ and his sufferings on the cross and what he accomplished in saving his people from their sins.

"And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" This question that the eunuch asked Philip opened the door for Philip to preach the gospel unto him.

Acts 8.35-40

Acts 8:35 "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea."

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." The Eunuch had been worshipping under the law covenant and had not heard of Jesus. This was good news to the Eunuch to realize that the Christ had come and that he had been prophesied in the Old Testament. Moreover, it was good news to hear that Jesus had redeemed him from his sins as this was taught in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah.

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” From this statement it is evident that Philip had preached to the eunuch the church kingdom of God and the need to press into that kingdom through water baptism. Thus the eunuch requested water baptism.

“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who saved his people from their sins is a prerequisite for water baptism. This belief should be a heart felt belief.

“And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”

“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” After the eunuch was baptized he saw Philip no more afterwards, but the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Certainly water baptism is a cause for rejoicing by the disciple of the Lord. One thing water baptism does is it gives the person baptized the opportunity to make a public expression of his belief that Jesus died for his sins and that he arose the 3rd day from the grave. Water baptism as a symbol shows forth the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.” Notice that the Spirit had caught away Philip to go and preach in all the cities from Azotus to Caesarea.

Acts 9.1-2

Acts 9:1 “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”

Saul of Tarsus became the worse persecutor of the Lord’s early church. When the scripture says he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. Saul explained just how serious was his persecutions in the following verses:

1. Acts 22:4 “And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”

2. Acts 26:11 “And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”

3. Gal. 1:13 “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:”

Saul had a murderous hatred toward the name of Jesus Christ and all that called upon his name. His persecutions were unto death or forced blasphemy against the name of Jesus Christ. He had an intense hatred for the name of Jesus and those who believed on him.

Damascus is a part of Syria and not a part of Israel. When Paul said he persecuted even unto strange cities, Damascus was one of the strange cities he was talking about. He was not satisfied in wiping out the mention of the name of Jesus in Israel only, but

anywhere the name of Jesus was worshipped he wanted to destroy those who called upon his name.

Paul had letters of authority from the high priest, so he was persecuting with the full approval of the high priest and the Sanhedrin Council. Saul was initially the worse persecutor of the Lord's early church.

Acts 9.3-6

Acts 9:3 "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:" Paul later described this light as follows: Acts 26:13 "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me." Thus the light Saul saw was above the brightness of the sun. To man on earth there is only one light that can shine brighter than the sun. That light is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saul was blinded by that light.

"And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me." The Lord is asking Saul why he persecuted him. It was the Lord Jesus Christ that Saul was persecuting. And Saul answered and he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" "And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Hence the Lord revealed himself to Saul. Being revealed unto Saul, the Lord said, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul was now strongly pricked in his conscience that he had persecuted the very Lord of glory. I am convinced that Saul was regenerated or born again with this series of events.

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Almost instantly Saul went from breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord to asking the Lord what He would have him to do. Only God can bring about such an instantaneous change in an individual. It was no wonder that Saul was trembling and astonished. He was trembling because of what he suddenly realized he had persecuted the Lord and yet astonished that God did not immediately struck him dead because of his wicked heart and actions.

"And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." The Lord did not immediately tell Saul what he must do, but he was instructed to go into the city and there it would be told him what he must do.

As a note, Saul was not regenerated because he had heard the gospel preached or because he accepted the Lord as his personal savior. Rather his regeneration was the immediate work of the Holy Spirit on him when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.

Acts 9.7-9

Acts 9:7 “And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”

“And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.” In Acts 22 Paul said: “And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.” Some would say this is a discrepancy. However, the men with Saul heard a voice, but heard not the distinction of words that were said. The Lord was talking to Saul only and not to the men that were with him. So what was said was to Saul alone and not to the men with him. The men having seen the bright light and hearing a sound were left speechless to explain what had just happened. Hearing a voice but seeing no man must have been somewhat frightening to the men with Saul.

“And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man:” Saul had been temporarily blinded by the exceeding bright light that he had seen. This blindness would last for three days.

“But they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.” We can ask ourselves “why were the men with Saul?” For the answer to this we need to understand the reason for Saul’s going to Damascus. The men were there to bind those who called upon the name of Jesus and bring them bound unto Jerusalem. Knowing their mission the men brought Saul into Damascus. At this point they would not have known that Saul’s purpose had been changed by the Lord.

“And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.” I have wondered why it was three days without sight? The number three is associated with the Godhead. Also, Jesus lay in the grave for three days and three nights. However, this length of time gave Saul plenty of time to reflect on all his wicked and sinful acts of persecuting the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and feel the guilty conviction of his sins. I suspect his heart-felt conviction is why he did neither eat or drink during that time. Also, the Lord had told him that in the city it would be told him what he ought to do.

Acts 9.10-16

Acts 9:10 “And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the

Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.”

“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.” The Lord has many ways in which he speaks to and instructs his people. Sometimes it is by vision, sometimes by dreams, one time by a bush burning with fire but not consumed, sometimes with impressions of mind, sometimes by a series of events or happenings, etc. Here the Lord used a vision to speak to Ananias.

“And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.” Here, of course, the Lord instructed Ananias to go and inquire for one called Saul, of Tarsus. As we will see the reputation of Saul was well known. It should not be unexpected that Ananias would be taken aback by these instructions of the Lord. The Lord knew that Ananias would be hesitant to go to speak to Saul so he told Ananias that “behold, he prayeth.”

“And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.” Not only had the Lord appeared in a vision to Ananias, but he also had appeared unto Saul in a vision as well. In Saul’s vision, the details of what would happen were plainly shown unto him so that Saul would know it was of the Lord when it happened.

“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.” Ananias was well aware of Saul’s reputation and all the evil that he had done to the saints at Jerusalem and of his purpose for coming to Damascus. Here Ananias needed the Lord’s reassurance and he was seeking for that reassurance when he said what he did. Sometimes, we, likewise, need the Lord’s reassurance in our lives.

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:” This is one of the great examples of the Lord’s sovereignty. Saul was perhaps the last person in the world that the disciples would think that the Lord would call to be an apostle. Yet, the Lord chose the church’s worst persecutor to be the apostle to the Gentiles. The Lord had laid out a great work for Saul.

“For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.” Along with that great work that the Lord had laid out for Saul was also the fact that he would suffer great things for the Lord’s name sake.”

Acts 9.17-19

Acts 9:17 “And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.”

From the above we make the following observations:

1. Ananias was faithful to obey the Lord and to do as the Lord had told him. Although he had initial questions about Saul based on Saul's history, yet he overcame his fears with the Lord's assurances.
2. Saul was blessed to see that the vision he had seen from the Lord came to pass just as he was told. No doubt this was a great reassurance to Saul that it indeed was God who had appeared unto him.
3. With the putting on of Ananias hands Saul immediately received his sight.
4. Saul was sealed with the Holy Ghost and immediately went forth and was baptized according to the commandment of God.
5. Saul, who had not eaten for three days, now received meat and was strengthened.
6. Saul spend certain days with the disciples at Damascus. They no doubt received Saul after Ananias spoke to them about the vision he had received of the Lord.

Acts 9.20-22

Acts 9:20 "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."

"And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." While Saul had spent days with the disciples at Damascus, when he preached in the synagogues, he was not preaching in the church, but to the Jews who heretofore, had not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ or else had not believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Saul was very familiar with the Old Testament scriptures and no doubt quickly picked up on the prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament. Through his knowledge of the Old Testament and the prophecies, he was able to prove that Christ is the Son of God.

"But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" Saul's reputation was well known among the Jews and the Jewish leaders persecution of the disciples was also well known. Those who heard Saul were amazed. The greatest persecutor of the disciples was now proving by the scriptures that Christ was the Son of God. No doubt they wondered why Saul who had been held in such high regard among the Jewish leaders would now join the disciples of Jesus Christ who were being persecuted to the death.

"But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." From the very beginning Saul was going to be a prominent witness to the Jews that Jesus is the very Christ. His background and conversion itself was a mighty testimony to the work of the Lord and the sovereignty of the Lord. His knowledge of the scriptures also provided him with the background he would need to preach and teach the word of God.

Acts 9.23-28

Acts 9:23 “And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. 26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.”

“And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.” The hatred of Christ and his disciples was greatly manifest in the events set forth here. The Jews could not surprise Saul as he knew their intent. He had previously been where the Jews were here. Damascus was a walled city. Normal ingress and egress to the city was through the gates of the city. Saul was trapped inside Damascus. No doubt the Jews thought they would just wait and capture and kill Saul when he tried to exit the city.

“Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.” This took place by night when the watchmen would not be able to observe the wall. Thus Saul had his escape from the intent of the Jews at Damascus.

“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.” It is easy to see why the disciples were afraid of Saul as they were well aware of his reputation. In their minds they probably thought that he was pretending to be a disciple that he might gain access to the disciples and persecute them to the death. At this point they knew nothing about what had happened to Saul on the road to Damascus and of his preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ at Damascus.

“But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.” Barnabas was a disciple who was held in very high regard by the apostles and disciples of Jerusalem. With his testimony concerning Saul and how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus, then the apostles and disciples accepted Saul.

“And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.”

Acts 9.29-31

Acts 9:29 “And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30 Which when the brethren knew,

they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”

“And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.” In this we see a pattern developing that in most places where Saul would preach there would follow a persecution against him. Saul was well aware of persecution and now the great persecutor became the persecuted. Yet, Saul was not afraid to lose his life as he had been guilty of taking the lives of many of the disciples before.

“Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.” In Tarsus Saul would spend a considerable time in meditation, prayer, and receiving revelation of God’s word that he would preach to the disciples and churches.

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” Now that the worst persecutor of the church at that time was now a disciple, for a period of time, the churches had rest from persecution. They grew in knowledge and were edified and comforted by the Holy Ghost and this led to them being multiplied.

Acts 9.32-35

Acts 9:32 “And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.”

“And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.” Our attention is drawn back to Peter and the work of the Lord through the ministry of Peter. It would appear that Peter was making his rounds throughout all of Judah, ministering the word of God to the disciple. Finally, he came down to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

“And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.” Even today, palsy is a devastating disease to anyone who has it. It basically renders the person mostly without strength for everyday functions. As disciples of Christ we should be compassionate towards those who have such a devastating disease. Aeneas had been in this condition for 8 years and was bedridden.

“And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed.” As an apostle Peter had been given the gift of physical healing and we see Peter exercising this gift as he spoke to Aeneas. Obviously Aeneas as a palsied individual could not arise and make his bed without a miracle of healing being performed on him. A miracle was performed on him as the scripture said: “And he arose immediately.” This power and its manifestation is not in the individual who exercises the

gift, but the power is of God and God manifested this power through Peter and applied it to Aeneas. Truly this was a mighty demonstration of both the power of God and of the compassion of God.

“And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.” The manifestation of the power of God in raising up Aeneas no doubt would have signaled to the people that Peter was sent of God and that they needed to take heed to the message he was preaching and turn to the Lord.

Acts 9.36-43

Acts 9:36 “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. 43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.”

“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” There are so many scriptures that describe how this woman was fulfilling what a disciple should be. I have listed just a few of those scriptures below:

1. John 15:8 “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”
2. James 1:27 “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”
3. John 15:13 “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”
4. Eph. 2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”
5. Mat. 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
6. Titus 2:14 “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”
7. Titus 3:8 “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”

Dorcas was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did and we read of some of the details later in this passage.

“And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.” That a person would become sick and die is certainly not unusual nor unexpected because that is what usually happens to people. However, the fact that the disciples sent for Peter to come without delay suggest that they believed in the great power of God and that a miracle was possible.

“Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.” What a very strong testimony to the compassion of Dorcas and to her love and discipleship and willingness to help the needy. There was also a great mourning for her by the widows who had been the beneficiaries of her love and compassion. They loved her deeply.

“But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.” There had been two miracles of raising the dead in the Old Testament by the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Now we see the first miracle of raising the dead by the apostles in the New Testament. We will see one later being administered by Paul.

“And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.” In this there could be no doubt by the saints and widows who had seen her dead before and were mourning her passing that a great miracle of raising the dead by the power of God had taken place.

“And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.” For the spirit born children of God in Joppa, this was great evidence that the Lord was the power behind this great miracle of raising the dead back to life and that the message of the apostle was to be believed.

“And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.” Peter’s tarrying in Joppa sets the stage for the gospel going to the Gentiles which will be addressed in Chapter 10.

Lessons from Cornelius

In Acts chapter 10, many lessons are taught to us about the utility of the gospel, both what it does and does not do. Cornelius the central character in this chapter was a Gentile, that is, he was not of the nation of the Jews. The Jews at that time had no dealings with the Gentiles and thought them to be unclean like dogs. It was generally thought by the Jews that the children of Israel were God's chosen race and that only they had a right to be called children of God. Even the Jewish church of that day had not reached out to the Gentiles, thinking that the gospel was intended for the Jews only.

Today, we are living in a world where the vast majority of those who profess to be Christians believe that the individual is at least partially responsible for his being saved from sin and being born of the Spirit of God. Most believe that the gospel is an

instrument to bring an offer of salvation to the individual and how that individual responds to the gospel will determine if he/she spends eternity in heaven or hell.

Before we examine the lessons learned from studying Cornelius and his response to the gospel, let us look at the attributes of someone who has not yet been born of the Spirit of God. Romans chapter 3 gives us a set of attributes of those who are under the law of sin and death and thus not yet born of the Spirit of God: Rom. 3:9-18 "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes."

From the above passage we conclude that some of the attributes of an individual before he is born of the Spirit include the following:

1. He is unrighteous.
2. He does not understand the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14).
3. He does not seek after God.
4. He does not do good.
5. He does not fear God.

Thus, if a man is righteous, or if he understands the things of the Spirit of God, or if he seeks after God, or if he does good, or if he fears God, then he has been born of the Spirit of God.

Moreover the formerly blind man whose eyes the Lord had opened gave this testimony in John chapter 9: John 9:31 "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." Thus, we conclude that God does not hear the prayers of those sinners that have not been born of the Spirit while he does hear the prayers of those who are worshippers of God and that doeth the will of God.

Now let us consider Cornelius and his condition prior to hearing the gospel. Prior to Peter ever coming to preach the gospel to Cornelius and his household we read the following statements about Cornelius that indicate to us whether he was born of the Spirit of God before the gospel was preached to him or was not born of the Spirit of God prior to the gospel being preached to him:

1. In Acts 10:2 Cornelius is described as a devout man. The Greek word translated devout in this passage is "eusebes." This word is found in the New Testament four times and three of those times it is translated devout and one time it is translated godly. The literal meaning of the word is godly. Thus, Cornelius is described by the Holy Spirit as a devout or godly man. No where in the scriptures is a person who has not been born of the Spirit described as being godly. The unregenerate are always described as being ungodly.

2. Also, in Acts 10:2 we are informed that Cornelius feared God. This is in contrast to the description of the unregenerate in Rom. 3:18 as having no fear of God before their eyes. Since the unregenerate do not fear God and Cornelius feared God, then Cornelius must have been regenerated or born again before he heard the gospel.

Likewise, Cornelius' entire household feared God. This teaches us that they also must have been born again before the gospel ever reached their ears!

3. Cornelius we are informed in Acts 10:2 went about doing good as he gave much alms to the people. Later we read that his alms came up for a memorial before God. No doubt, God was very pleased with the good that Cornelius was doing in helping the needy people. Again, this is in contrast to what we read about the unregenerate in Rom. 3:12: "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Since, the unregenerate do no good and Cornelius was doing much good, we must conclude that Cornelius was born of the Spirit prior to hearing the gospel.

4. Cornelius was a praying man according to Acts 10:2: "prayed to God alway." The word, "alway," means continuously. Thus, Cornelius was continuously praying to God. The question is "Did God hear his prayers?" If God heard his prayers then according to John chapter 9 Cornelius was a worshipper of God and one who did the will of God. The question is answered for us in verse 4: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Thus, both the prayers of Cornelius and the alms of Cornelius were accepted of God and even came up for a memorial before God. As was stated in John chapter 9 God does not hear the prayers of sinners (unregenerate). The only conclusion we can draw is that Cornelius was already born of the Spirit.

5. After that Cornelius obeyed God and sent three men to seek for Simon Peter and Peter had gone upon the housetop to pray and fell into a trance, God showed Peter that God had a people among the Gentiles that He had already cleansed: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." The Gentiles had not had the gospel preached unto them at this time. Yet God said that he had already cleansed them. They were clean through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Christ had died for them and his blood was effectual in cleansing them from their sins. This truth was illustrated to Peter when he went to visit with Cornelius and his household. Peter did not go to cleanse them or give them an opportunity to be cleansed, they were already cleansed.

6. Cornelius had a good report from those who knew him and the three men he sent to seek Simon Peter gave this report of him that he was "a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews." Only God's elect are just. Cornelius was more than legally just, having been justified on the cross through the shed blood of Christ. He was also effectually just, having been born of the Spirit of God, and it was recognized by those who knew him.

7. After Peter went to Cornelius house and met Cornelius and his household, but before he preached the gospel unto them, he made this observation: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Peter not only acknowledged that God does not respect the Jew over the Gentile, but he also stated that those who fear him and work righteousness are already accepted with God. Thus, Peter acknowledged that Cornelius and his household were already born of the Spirit of God and accepted with God before Peter preached to them.

Based on the seven undeniable proofs above, we are forced to the conclusion that the gospel cannot be the means by which one is born of the Spirit or saved from their sins. What then is the purpose of the gospel? This testimony about Cornelius in Acts chapters 10 and 11 tells us several things in which the gospel benefits God's born again people:

1. The gospel tells us about Jesus, both who he is and what he has done for us: Peter preached to Cornelius and his household and friends the following "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly." Thus, Peter preached the life, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter also preached of the things that Jesus did. Among the things that Jesus did are that he saved his people from their sins, established and built his church, and gave his people a kingdom here on earth.

2. The gospel instructs the Lord's people on the things that they ought to do: Acts 10:5, 6 "And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." The gospel tells us what we ought to do as children of God. It tells about our duty to repent, to press into the Lord's Kingdom church through water baptism, to live lives separate from the world. It also tells us how we ought to behave ourselves and save ourselves in an untoward world. It tells us how we are to behave ourselves as husbands, wives, children, servants, masters, etc. It tells us how we ought to worship and how we ought to conduct ourselves in the Lord's church.

3. While the gospel does not save us from our sins, or cause us to be born again, or give us a home in glory, yet it does save us here in time from an untoward generation and to a knowledge of the truth and to worship and serve God in Spirit and in truth in His church: Acts 11:12-14 "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."

4. Through the preaching of the gospel and belief of the gospel message we are informed that our sins have been remitted: Acts 10:43 "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

God instructs Peter about the Gentiles being cleansed

Acts 10:9 "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. 17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, 18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. 19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.”

In the above passage we make the following observations:

1. God has many ways to speak to His people. In the above God speaks to Peter in a trance.
2. God was also preparing Peter for the coming of three Gentiles seeking Peter to come unto the house of Cornelius. Before this the Jews would have no dealings with the Gentiles as they considered them to be unclean.
3. Peter was well informed as to the letter of the law. Under the law certain animals were designated as being unclean and some were designated as being clean. Under the law the Jews were forbidden to eat of unclean animals. That is why Peter objected to eating anything common or unclean.
4. What the Lord taught Peter is that the spiritual implication of the law was that everyone is unclean, both Jews and Gentiles, and only God could clean that which was before unclean. Thus, as the Lord told Peter, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.
5. After showing Peter the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament teaching on clean and unclean animals and that only God was able to clean the unclean, then the Lord gave direction to Peter to go with the three men (Gentiles) who came seeking Peter by the direction of the Lord.

Acts 10.21-23

Acts 10:21 “Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.”

Peter, knowing that the Lord had sent the men and that he was to go with them, knew that he would be called in questions concerning his going into the house of Cornelius a Gentile. Thus Peter brought certain brethren from Joppa to accompany him and thus he would have witnesses to whatever was to transpire at the house of Cornelius.

Acts 10.24-29

Acts 10:24 “And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. 26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?”

We make the following observations concerning the above:

1. Cornelius had called together his kinsmen and near friends to hear the words of the Lord. What a lessons that is for us today. When was the last time a believer in the Primitive Baptist Church in America has called together his kinsmen and near friends to come to their home and hear the words of the Lord proclaimed by a Primitive Baptist preacher? Really, this should be a common place happening.

2. Cornelius upon seeing Peter fell down at his feet to worship the preacher. Peter corrected him and told him that I also am a man. Only God is to be worshipped.

3. Peter explained to the gathered congregation that God had showed him that it was wrong to call any man common or unclean.

4. Peter made the journey not knowing for what intent that he had been sent. At times as gospel preachers we start on journeys not knowing the intent that God has for us in the journey. Abram journeyed to Canaan not knowing what would be befall him there. Likewise, Philip went to the desert not knowing that he was to preach to one man only (the Ethiopian eunuch).

Acts 10.30-33

Acts 10:30 “And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. 33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”

To the above we make the following observations:

1. Cornelius in responding to Peters question as to what reason he had sent for Peter recited to him the experience of the visitation of a man in bright clothing.

2. From this it is obvious that Cornelius did not know who Peter was before the man in bright clothing told him to send for Peter. We also notice that where Peter was lodging was known to the angel and this information given to Cornelius. Obviously the arrangement was of the Lord.

3. Cornelius finally revealed to Peter that those gathered were all present before God to hear 'all things' that are commanded thee of God.

Acts 10.34-43

Acts 10:34 “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) 37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” Here Peter acknowledges what no Jew before him had acknowledged or understood: that God has a people in every nation that fears him and works righteousness and is accepted with God.

“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.” Now it would have been common knowledge even among the Gentiles that Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. The great multitude of miracles would have been spoken about in that day and would have become common knowledge among the people whether they believed it or not.

“And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.” Here Peter speaks to those gathered concerning the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is of course a central message of the gospel. Without the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ there is no salvation from sin. Peter also related that God had chosen witnesses of these events to declare what they had seen to the people.

“And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the

prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Peter declared to the gathered congregation that it was Jesus Christ who was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. Quick indicated life and dead indicated absence of life. Now Jesus Christ is judge of both those who are alive spiritually and are dead spiritually. Moreover, he is judge of those who are alive naturally and those whose bodies lie in the grave. All are judged by Jesus Christ. Judgment was made of the elect at the cross of Calvary as Christ died for the sins of his elect people. Judgment will be meted out at the end of time to the non-elect as they will be judged for their sins and cast into the lake of fire forever.

“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Thus through the name of Jesus Christ whosoever believeth in him receives knowledge that their sins have been remitted at the cross of Calvary.

Acts 10.44-48

Acts 10:44 “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

What we have in this passage of scripture closely resembles what happened on the day of Pentecost when the church at Jerusalem was baptized of the Holy Ghost. Those same supernatural signs were manifested here as were manifested on the day of Pentecost. There was the Holy Ghost falling on them as He fell upon those present at the day of Pentecost. Moreover, there was speaking with tongues and magnifying God as was done on the day of Pentecost. Finally, those who believed were baptized in water as were those who believed on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 11.1-18

Acts 11:1 “And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. 4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9 But the voice answered

me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: 13 And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

“And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.” Peter had anticipated that he would be called into question for going in to speak with the uncircumcised (Gentiles). He had taken brethren with him to be witnesses of what was to take place. The reason of the contention was that at that time most Jews believed that God’s elect were only among the nation of Israel. Thus, they thought that the gospel was to go only to the nation of Israel.

Peter related in detail the experience of the vision of the great sheet and subsequent events that transpired by the direction of the Holy Spirit. He also related how that the Gentiles also experienced the baptism of the Holy Ghost as had the Jews on the day of Pentecost. This settled the matter with the church at Jerusalem as “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

Acts 11.19-24

Acts 11:19 “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. 20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.”

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none

but unto the Jews only.” We notice here that persecution did not hinder the word going forth, but rather it resulted in the word going to regions that it had not gone before. This pattern continues on in the book of Acts and history tells us that persecution has resulted in the gospel of the grace of Christ traveling to distant lands that had not heard it before. At first they were preaching the word to Jews only. But with Peter’s experience of going to the house of Cornelius that was about to change.

“And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” No doubt with the news of Peter being blessed to preach unto the Gentiles, this encouraged those of Cyprus and Cyrene to speak unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. Moreover, much fruit was born among the Grecians as a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.

“Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.” No doubt there were still doubters in the church at Jerusalem that it was appropriate for the gospel to go unto the Gentiles, so they sent forth Barnabas to go to Antioch.

“Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” Seeing the grace of God certainly settled the question that Barnabas was sent to witness. Moreover, having seen the grace of God, Barnabas was glad and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart that they would cleave unto the Lord.

“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.” Barnabas was first introduced to us in Acts chapter 4. The testimony concerning him is one that each of us should strive to live in such a way as to have such a testimony concerning us and our lives. Through the labors of Barnabas much people were added unto the Lord, that is, they were added unto the Lord as his disciples.

Acts 11.25-30

Acts 11:25 “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. 27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

“Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people.” Neither Barnabas nor Saul at this point in their ministry had been ordained. They were exercising the preaching gifts that God had given them. By all evidence, the Lord had given them by his grace wonderful

gifts of proclaiming the gospel of Christ and teaching the people. For a whole year they assembled themselves with the church at Antioch and taught much people.

“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” The disciples did not give themselves the title of Christians, but it was given them by others to identify them as the disciples of Jesus Christ. This title of Christians was first given to the disciples at Antioch.

“And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.” The word, dearth, signifies a scarcity of food, i.e., famine or hunger. This dearth was revealed unto the disciples of Antioch by the prophet Agabus and came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

“Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” Once again the love of God and of the people of God was manifest in the early church. Before, we had seen this manifestation of love in the church at Jerusalem in Acts chapters 2 and 4. Now it is being manifested by the disciples at Antioch as they according to their ability determined to send relief unto the brethren in Judaea. This ministry of love was sent to the elders in Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. This also signifies that the church at Antioch had great confidence in these two brethren.

Acts 12.1-4

Acts 12:1 “Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) 4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.”

Herod was appointed king over the realm of the Jews by Caesar. One of his responsibilities was to keep down any civil unrest. As such the leaders of the Jews no doubt were speaking against the disciples of Christ to Herod. With this background Herod killed the apostle James, the brother of John with the sword. Seeing this pleased the Jews he then proceeded to take Peter also intending to put him to death also.

A controversy exists concerning the use of the word, “Easter,” in this text. The word is translated from the same Greek word that is otherwise translated Passover in the New Testament. Now Easter was a pagan holiday and involved worship of the Greek goddess Estarte. However, the translator in my opinion got it right. This was not the Passover as the Passover was the day before the seven day feast of unleavened bread. The text indicates that the feast of unleavened bread was already begun, so therefore the Jewish Passover could not be what was intended, but rather the pagan holiday.

Peter was delivered into the hands of four quaternions of soldiers to be kept until his execution. A quarternion of soldiers is four soldiers, so four quarternion of soldiers would have been 16 soldiers.

One of the biggest takes from this passage is the joining together of the religious leaders and governmental authorities in persecuting the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has been the case throughout most of history since then.

Acts 12.5-10

The Miraculous Escape

Acts 12:5 “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. 6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. 7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.”

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” The church having heard of Peter’s imprisonment prayed to God for his deliverance without ceasing. This is exactly what the church should have done. Moreover, as we see in the rest of this passage, the Lord heard their prayers and answers their prayers.

“And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.” The situation was that the night before Peter was to be brought forth by Herod and executed, he was sleeping between two soldiers, he was bound with two chains and the rest of the soldiers kept the door of the prison. No doubt those who kept Peter felt confident that Peter would not be able to escape their custody.

“And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.” The Lord sent an angel to deliver Peter. Doors and prisons are no limitation for angels. They have the ability to just appear and also to cause chains to fall off of hands as they did with Peter.

“And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.” What took place was so surprising to Peter that it did not seem real. He thought what was taking place was a vision. God is not limited as we are. He can deliver in ways that we would never think about.

“When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.” From this we learn that angels can cause gates to open of their own accord. Once Peter was in the

city, the angel departed from him. The angels work was done. He had been sent by the Lord to deliver Peter from the situation he was in and he did that.

Acts 12.11-17

Acts 12:11 “And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. 12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. 14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. 15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. 16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. 17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.”

“And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.” It is amazing to me how things often work out. Beyond the obvious miraculous delivery of Peter from the prison, it just so happened that the place that Peter first came to was the very house that many of the church had gathered together to pray for his deliverance.

“And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.” When Rhoda heard the knock of Peter at the gate and heard his voice, she became so full of joy and gladness that she forgot to open the gate but went and told how that Peter stood without before the gate. Sometimes, God’s answer to prayers seems so improbable that when he answers it is almost too hard to believe. This was one of those times. When Rhoda told them, they were in disbelief.

“But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.” God’s miraculous deliveries can be astonishing at times, especially when they are so seemingly impossible.

“And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.” Peter seeing how astonished they were at his deliverance, told them to share the news with James and the brethren. Some things we need to be ready to share. Too often, we keep hidden things that we have witnessed or

experienced that the Lord has blessed us with in deliverances, when we ought to be sharing them with others.

Acts 12.18-19

Acts 12:18 “Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.”

“Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.” The soldiers saw nothing of what the angel had done in delivering Peter from the prison. Now, either their eyes were blinded or they were all asleep. “And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.” Here we see the ruthless nature of politics. Herod, who was guilty of wrongfully killing James and putting Peter in prison with the intent of killing him, now turns his wrath upon the soldiers who failed to keep Peter. The ungodly wrath of ruthless dictators has been evidenced throughout history.

Acts 12.20-23

Acts 12:20 “And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. 21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. 23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”

In this passage we see the ruthless king Herod make an oration and the people heaps much praise upon him and said it was the voice of a god, and not of a man. Rather than give God the glory for his ability to speak and make such a great oration, the King received it unto himself. Then immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory and was eaten of worms and died. In his death, the church would have had a short respite from the obvious persecution of the civil government against them.

Acts 12.24-25

Acts 12:24 “But the word of God grew and multiplied. 25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.”

As a backdrop to the persecution that had arisen against the church the word of God grew and multiplied. The history of the church tells us that during times of severe persecution, that the word of God has grown and the number of disciples has multiplied.

“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.” John Mark, of course, is the one who wrote the book of Mark. Barnabas and Saul had gone to Jerusalem from the church at Antioch carrying the relief goods to the church at Jerusalem. Having fulfilled their ministry they now departed to return to the church at Antioch.

Acts 13.1-3

Acts 13:1 “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

In this passage Saul and Barnabas were ordained to the office of elder. The following verses show that the brother that is to be ordained is to be ordained in the church:

1. Acts 13:1 “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

2. Acts 14:23 “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”

3. Acts 1:22 “Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”

Moreover, these verses show that a presbytery is to be formed for ordaining to the office of elder:

1. 1 Tim. 4:14 “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”

2. 1 Tim. 5:22 “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.”

3. Acts 13:1 “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and

Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

4. Heb. 6:2 “Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” In this verse the gifts of the gospel ministry in the church at Antioch were identified for us.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Before a man is ordained to the office of elder there should be evidence of that man’s calling of God. Moreover, there should be a leadership of the Holy Ghost in the church that leads them to ordain that man. Normally that leadership will be evidenced by an agreement within the body of the church that the man is called and that they believe he should be ordained for the work.

“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” This verse fits in with what I have seen and experienced in the ordination of a man to the office of bishop. The presbytery gathers together and among the activities of the ordination are to offer an ordination prayer and to lay hands on the brother being ordained.

Acts 13.4-12

Acts 13:4 “So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. 6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: 7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. 9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, 10 And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”

“So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.” The first thing we notice about this passage is that Saul and Barnabas were sent forth by the Holy Ghost. They were not sent forth by the church or by a committee of the church or by some missionary board. There were not missionary boards in that day just as there should not be missionary boards today. The ministry is to be led and directed by the Spirit of God as to their travels and as to their field of gospel labors. This is true both for

the evangelist and for the pastor and teacher. Next, we notice that in the above instance they preached in the synagogues of the Jews. Synagogues are not churches. Sometimes we try to put restrictions on where the gospel ministers can preach the gospel. But it is apparent that they should preach the gospel where ever the Spirit leads them. The third thing we notice is that they had John to their minister. This John is John Mark, the writer of the book of Mark. John Mark will later prove to be a source of contention between Paul and Barnabas.

“And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.” Sergius Paulus who was a deputy of the country had called for Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God. However, there was a sorcerer, a false prophet, and a Jew whose name was Barjesus who was going to oppose Barnabas and Saul. Ministers of the gospel when trying to teach and preach the word of God to a seeking individual will sometimes have opposition from others who are trying to keep the seeking individual from hearing and believing the truth.

“But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” Now we see that Saul was also called Paul and will be called Paul throughout most of the rest of the book of Acts was filled with the Spirit when he saw that Elymas was trying to turn away the deputy from the faith. Paul recognized that this Elymas was a child of the devil and identified his character as being full of all subtlety and all mischief and was an enemy of all righteousness and would not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord.

“And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.” Paul used the gift that God had given him as an apostle to cause blindness to Elymas for a season.

“Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” The deputy having seen what was done believed and was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. His belief was more in what he had heard (the doctrine of the Lord) than in being witness to the power of God in causing blindness of the man.

Acts 13.13

Acts 13:13 “Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”

We are not told why John Mark departed from the work. However, we find out later that this became a cause of contention between Barnabus and Paul.

Acts 13.14-23

Acts 13:14 “But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. 15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. 16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. 17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. 18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. 20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. 23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:”

“But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.” This Antioch in Pisidia is not to be confused with the Antioch in Syria where the church that Paul and Barnabas were members. Antioch in Pisidia is in that area of the world that today is known as Turkey. Also, we note that they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The Jews did not all dwell in the area around Jerusalem, but were very much scattered abroad throughout the Roman Empire. Where ever a group of them lived, they would establish a synagogue.

“And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” Apparently a service in the synagogue at that time would begin with the reading of the law and the prophets. Afterwards the rulers of the synagogue at their discretion could invite visiting Jews to speak, which is what happened here.

“Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.” Paul directed his remarks to those that fear God. Only those who fear God are capable of hearing God’s message.

In verses 17-22 Paul gives a brief history lesson to those gathered and of which they all should have been well versed to know. He started with Abraham and ended up with David. In verse 23 Paul refers to the promised God made to David in 2 Sam. 7:12 in which he promised of the seed of David there would be one to sit on an everlasting throne and reign forever: “Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:” Paul identifies this King and Saviour as being Jesus.

We also note that Paul tailored his message to the audience to which he was speaking. Had he been speaking to a Gentile audience he probably would not have recited this history as they at that time would have been mostly ignorant of the history of the Jews.

Acts 13.24-41

Acts 13:24 “When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. 26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. 28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. 30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. 35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. 38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; 41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”

“When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.” The Jews were also well familiar with John as he was believed to be a prophet by the people. So Paul begins his discourse by speaking of something that most of the people would have believed and that is the statements of John the Baptist. Next Paul addresses his comments to those that feareth God and tells them that the word of this salvation is sent to them.

“For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead:” Again these facts would have been well known among the people of the Jews except for the last part which is “God raised him from the dead. The rulers were

willingly ignorant of the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day and they fulfilled the scriptures in condemning him and desiring Pilate to slay him.

“And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” We notice that Paul is quoting from many Old Testament scriptures as he makes his argument unto the people. This teaches us that it is profitable and okay to quote many scriptures to prove the scriptural lessons of salvation by grace. Notice here that Paul cites the verse in the 2nd Psalm “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Thus Christ is the only begotten Son and the first born from the dead.

“And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.” Paul continues his scriptural proof of the resurrection of Christ from the dead in that God would not suffer his Holy One to see corruption. This is unlike David in that David died and saw corruption.

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Here Paul states the gospel message: that is; that we are justified by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and forgiven of our sins. Also, he states that the law of Moses could not justify anyone.

“Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.” Paul now gives a statement from the prophets which is a warning to that generation of Jews.

Acts 13.42-43

Acts 13:42 “And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.”

It is amazing to me how the Lord has a way of opening doors. I doubt that Paul and Barnabas knew that there would be Gentiles attending the synagogue at the time they were there. Yet, these Gentiles besought them that they come and preach these words to them the next Sabbath.

From this meeting in the synagogue there were also many of the Jews and religious proselytes who followed Paul and Barnabas. These ministers speaking to them persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 13.44-52

Acts 13:44 “And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. 50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.”

“And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.” This shows us the enthusiasm of those who had previously heard the gospel proclaimed by Paul and Barnabas. Their zeal was reflected by their having spread the word throughout the entire city and thus almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. I wonder what it would be like today, if the Lord’s people in the United States who have known the truth of salvation by grace had that same zeal and were willing to talk about it to their friends and neighbors.

“But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.” Again we note that the main persecution against the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ came from the religious people. They were filled with jealous envy against those things which were spoken by Paul. While they professed a belief in God, yet their actions contradicted what they claimed to believe. They were contradicting and blaspheming.

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” This pattern of speaking first to the Jews would continue wherever Paul and Barnabas would travel preaching the gospel. However, when the Jews rejected the gospel, they quickly turned to the Gentiles, who for the most part were rejoicing to hear the gospel.

“For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” They were referencing the passage in the book of Micah: Micah 5:2 “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. 3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. 4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the

earth.” Also Isaiah 42:6 “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” What a blessing this was that all that were ordained to eternal life believed. This is not teaching as some propose that those who hear and believed received eternal life by believing. Nor does it teach that all that are ordained to eternal life will hear the gospel and believe. Rather it teaches just what it said and that is that on that occasion all that were ordained to eternal life when they heard the gospel they believed.

“And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.” That does not say that Paul and Barnabas went throughout the whole region teaching and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. I suspect that many of those who originally heard the gospel began to publish what they heard throughout the whole region. Wouldn't it be wonderful if God's children who have heard and believed the gospel of the grace of Christ should do that today?

“But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.” This is an example of an exercise in religious hatred being turned into political hatred for the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

“But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.” This is consistent with what the Lord taught the disciples: Matt 10:14 “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.”

“And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.” Unlike those Jews who hated the gospel of Jesus Christ, the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 14.1-6

Acts 14:1 “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. 3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, 6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:”

After having been expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, Barnabas and Paul came to Iconium: “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.” As were there custom they went first unto the synagogue of the

Jews and spake. Their message was so received that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

“But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.” We are not told here how the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles by making their minds evil affected against the brethren. It has been my experience to have become acquainted with people whose minds have been evil affected against the Lord’s church. Usually this was done by telling lies about the beliefs of the Lord’s church. Moreover, like in the above instance this was done by unbelieving religious people. That is by those who did not believe the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. I have been told by those whose minds were stirred up by unbelievers that we believe in the absolute predestination of all things; that we believe in infant damnation; that we don’t believe in repenting from evil works; etc.

“Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” Notice that Paul and Barnabas’ testimony was accompanied by boldness in the Lord and that the Lord granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. The Lord himself was involved in the testimony of His grace.

“But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.” The gospel of the grace of Christ brings forth division between the believers in the gospel and those who do not believe the gospel. It has always been that way and continues to be that way even to this very time.

“And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,” The haters of the gospel of Jesus Christ had now become murderous in their thoughts and actions towards those who teach the truth of salvation by grace. “They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:”

Acts 14.7-18

Acts 14:7 “And there they preached the gospel. 8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: 9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, 10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave

us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. 18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.”

“And there they preached the gospel.” Going and preaching the gospel is the first work of a gospel minister.

“And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.” This man at Lystra heard Paul and Barnabas preaching the gospel and gave evidence that he believed what they preached. Paul steadfastly beholding him perceived he had faith and was blessed of God to heal the man who stood upright, leaped and walked. No doubt a great miracle happened here.

“And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.” The people, no doubt, had been taught to be idol worshippers. When they saw what was done to the impotent man, they declared that Barnabas and Paul were gods and the priest of Jupiter went about to make sacrifice with the people. Too often, even in our day, people want to exalt the ministers when they see a demonstration of the power of God.

Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.” Here we see that Paul and Barnabas refused the worship of the people. This is consistent with what Peter did at the house of Cornelius when Cornelius fell down to worship him. The Lord's true called ministers should refuse to receive the worship and exaltation of the Lord's people. The Lord himself told us not receive exalting titles from men: Matt. 23:8 “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.” By the same reasoning as above it is not appropriate for a true God called minister to allow someone to call him “Reverend.” God's name is Holy and Reverend.

Acts 14.19-20

Acts 14:19 “And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. 20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.” The persecutors

from Antioch and Iconium now came to Lystra with their vile persecution and persuaded the people against Paul and Barnabas. These persecutors were not content with just casting out Paul from their regions but were intent on wiping out the ministers of the gospel and thus attempting to destroy the preaching of salvation by grace. They thought they had accomplished their purpose when they stoned Paul and supposed him to be dead. However, as the disciples stood round about him, Paul rose up and came into the city. The next day Paul departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Acts 14.21-28

Acts 14:21 “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. 24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: 26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. 27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.”

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,” It is interesting that when they had preached the gospel to Derbe and had taught many, that they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch. These were the places where great persecution had been mounted against them. Here we learn that the cause of gospel truth and the edification of God’s people were more important to Paul and Barnabas than fear of mortal death.

“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” The things which they accomplished in returning to the cities in which they had been greatly persecuted was to confirm the souls of the disciples, and to exhort them to continue in the faith. Moreover, they taught them that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. This was a principle that not only did they teach with their words but also with their actions.

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.” From this we gather that they had constituted churches and had ordained elders in every church. A church needs a pastor who can preach and teach the children of God in that church. The fact that they ordained elders also teaches us that they had taught these men in the scriptures the things that they needed to preach, teach, and pastor a church. Much work had been done by Paul and Barnabas in those cities.

“And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia.” We are not given a time frame in which all of this took place. However, it must have been a considerable amount of time because of the sheer volume of the work that was accomplished in all these regions and cities.

“And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.” Paul and Barnabas with this had fulfilled their first evangelistic journey to which they were directed by the Spirit of God.

“And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.” I find it interesting that they rehearsed all that God had done with them rather than what they had done. They were properly giving God the praise for what was done. They also pointed out to the brethren that it was God who opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. I learned by experience that I cannot open a single door when it pertains to the going forth of the gospel. Only God can open those doors. It is therefore necessary that we pray that God opens the doors for us.

“And there they abode long time with the disciples.” You might think that after having returned from such a blessed journey in the gospel labors that they would have been ready to begin their next journey. However, it is necessary to wait upon the Lord for direction in our gospel labors.

Acts 15.1-6

Acts 15:1 “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. 3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. 5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. 6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.”

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” These men who came down from Judaea to the church at Antioch and taught a false doctrine. This brought a conflict between the church at Jerusalem and the church at Antioch. This chapter serves as a model for us on how churches in conflict should handle their conflict. Now this false teaching would ultimately infect other churches as Paul deals with this issue in the book of Galatians: Gal. 1:6 “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we,

or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” This is what I call the grace, but doctrine. In other words the false teaches teach that you are saved by grace, but you must do something in order for you to be saved.

“When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.” Paul and Barnabas immediately saw the error in the message of these false teachers from the church at Jerusalem. They first dissented and disputed with the false teachers. Then realizing the impact that this false teaching would have between the two churches, the church at Antioch determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them would go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders to resolve this question. Here we notice that they did not carry the conflict to other sister churches at this time. This issue was to be resolved between the two churches. How much better it would be if the churches of today would resolve their issues between the churches that have the conflict rather than exporting the trouble to the sister churches?

“And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.” We notice that Paul and Barnabas and those who went with them declared the conversion of the Gentiles but did not discuss the conflict with the sister churches to which they spoke.

“And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.” Paul and Barnabas continued to declare the blessings of God and God’s blessings upon the ministers and those to whom they preached.

“But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” In declaring the blessings of God upon the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel, the sect of the Pharisees that believed declared this false teaching: “That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” It was at this point that “the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.”

This matter was critical to be addressed as the conflicting views were totally in opposition to one another.

Acts 15.7-11

Acts 15:7 “And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

In this passage Peter weighs in using his experience in the Lord's leading him to declare the gospel to the household of Cornelius: "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." Peter declares this after their had been much disputing. The parties needed to be heard and the issues discussed.

"And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." In this statement Peter points out that God put no difference between the Jews and Gentiles and that he gave evidence of this when he gave them the Holy Ghost even as he had done to the Jews on the day of Pentecost.

"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" Peter goes on and points out that even the Jews of his day nor the fathers were able to bear such a burden as to keep the law of Moses. Therefore, to say that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses was to put a yoke upon them that they would not be able to bear.

"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Here Peter affirms that both the Jews and the Gentiles are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, he rejected the idea that circumcision and keep the law of Moses were requirements to salvation.

Acts 15.12-21

Acts 15:12 "Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. 19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."

"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." Here we see both Barnabas and Paul declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. This is the 2nd testimony concerning the salvation of the Gentiles that goes along with Peter's previous testimony which was well known. This testimony shows that God had validated that this was his work among the Gentiles by miracles and wonders.

“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” As the third testimony or witness, James, whom I assume was the pastor of the church at Jerusalem, quotes Old Testament scripture to prove that God had a people among the Gentiles.

“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.” James here declares the findings of this counsel in Jerusalem and the message to be sent to the Gentiles. Paul deals with the error of mixing law with grace extensively in the book of Galatians.

Acts 15.22-29

Acts 15:22 “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”

In the above passage we have the church at Jerusalem sending a letter to the church at Antioch and specifically to the Gentiles in that church as well as the Gentiles in the churches at Syria and Cilicia. In the letter it is shown that it includes the apostles and elders along with the whole church and their conclusions. Along with the letter the church at Jerusalem sent witnesses Judas and Silas who were to confirm the contents of the letter by mouth.

The letter was very clear that those who had gone out from the church at Jerusalem and taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses had not the authority of the church and that the church gave no such commandment. Moreover, they stated that by the leading of the Holy Ghost that no greater burden be laid

upon them than the necessary things: “That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”

Acts 15.30-34

Acts 15:30 “So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. 33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.”

This was the final step in resolving the issue between the church at Jerusalem and the church at Antioch. The deliverance of the letter to the church at Antioch and the exhortation by Judas and Silas confirmed that the two churches were the same in belief.

We read that Judas and Silas continued there at Antioch for a space and then were let by in peace from the brethren at Antioch to return to the apostles in Jerusalem. However, it pleased Silas to abide in Antioch and not return to Jerusalem.

Acts 15.35-41

Acts 15:35 “Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. 36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.”

“Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.” Paul and Barnabas were both members of the church at Antioch. This shows us that both the apostle and prophet were not always on the road in evangelistic efforts. Sometimes they were at home preaching and teaching the word of the Lord at their home church.

“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.” A minister engaged in the work of evangelism bonds with the people who he has spent time with in the work and desires to know how they are faring and if they are continuing in the faith that was once delivered unto the saints. They know that Satan has a way of subverting believers and thus desire to confirm that they are not being subverted

by Satan or false teachers. No doubt this was Paul's desire when he spoke those words to Barnabas.

“And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.” John Mark had departed from the work at Pamphylia. We are not told why he departed from the work. However, there was a disagreement between Barnabas and Paul about taking him on the trip. This did not mean that either was right or wrong, but that they just were not agreed in their thoughts. Later Paul would have a change of mind about John Mark as he wrote in 2 Tim. 4:11 “Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

“And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.” We can become so locked on our opinions that it brings contention between brethren and this was one of those occasions. Paul and Barnabas would no longer travel together in their gospel labors because of the contention. Later on in the letters we find that Paul wrote kindly concerning Barnabas.

“And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.” Here we see that Silas was recommended by the brethren to the work of preaching the grace of God. Thus Paul with Silas returned going through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches that God had blessed to be established in his previous evangelistic journey.

Acts 16.1-3

Acts 16:1 “Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: 2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.”

At first glance it might appear that Paul is being contradictory to the decision of the previous chapter. Paul took Timothy and circumcised him. This after arguing that to circumcise the Gentiles was not consistent with salvation by the grace of God. However, Timotheus' mother was a Jew even though his father was a Greek. Paul knew that Timothy would not be accepted by those Jews who had not yet heard and believed the gospel if they knew he was not circumcised. Thus for both Paul and Timothy's sake, circumcision was necessary for a door to be opened for the gospel to those Jews who had not yet heard and believed the gospel of the grace of Christ.

Here we are introduced to Timothy, whom Paul would later call a son in the faith: 1 Tim. 1:2 “Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” Thus Timothy traveling with Paul and Silas would be learning from Paul and Silas and growing in the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

Acts 16.4-10

Acts 16:4 “And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. 6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.”

“And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.” Paul along with Silas and Timothy were traveling back to the churches that Paul and Barnabas had constituted on their previous evangelistic trip. They went according to Paul’s desire to “visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.” Not only did they preach to these churches and confirmed them in the faith, but they also delivered to them the decrees to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. This would appear to be where the concept of “Articles of Faith,” “Church Covenant,” and “Rules of Decorum” originated. This is very beneficial to newly constituted churches so as to provide guidelines to help keep them in the faith that was once delivered to the saints. “And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.” Churches should be growing both in their service to God, but also in number. Looking back through the history of God’s dealings in the Old Testament days with the nation of Israel, it appears that they drew closer to God in times of hardship and trouble, but they turned from their service and closeness to God in times of material prosperity. That is one of the main problems we are faced with in the United States in this period of history.

“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.” Now after they had completed their journey to visit the brethren that they had previously preached to in the first journey, now it was time to go on another evangelistic trip. One of the differences between evangelism and missionism is the evangelist goes by the direction of the Holy Spirit, whereas the missionary goes by direction of the church body or by the direction of a missionary board. In the above verse Paul, and Silas, and Timothy were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. Now if the purpose of preaching the gospel was to save people into heaven, then this statement would seem to be a very strange statement indeed. However, the purpose of preaching the gospel is to bring the good news that Christ has saved his people from their sins by the grace of God and through his sacrificial atonement.

“After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.” Where we go in evangelistic work is not based on where we think we should go or what may seem best to us. The brethren assayed to go into Bithynia, but this is not where the Spirit was leading them to go, so the Spirit suffered them not. When it

comes to the opening of doors for the furtherance of the gospel, man cannot open a door. Only the Holy Spirit can open doors for the furtherance of the gospel.

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” The Lord has a way to communicate to His people. In this case he communicated to Paul in a vision by night. Paul recognized that this was the Lord’s communication to him and then immediately they endeavored to go into Macedonia, gathering that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel unto them.

Acts 16.11-15

Acts 16:11 “Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; 12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. 13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto

“Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.” Now the city Philippi in Macedonia was the site of the church that Paul would later send a letter to that we refer to as the book of Philippians. The details about the beginnings of that church are related to us in this passage of scripture.

“And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.” In this site by the river side where prayer was wont to be made there were women which resorted there. We are not given why the women resorted there, but often times women would go down to the river side to draw water. Regardless of the purpose that brought the women to resort there Paul and Silas and Timothy spoke to the women and no doubt taught them about Jesus Christ and the gospel of grace.

“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” The Lord opened Lydia’s heart that she heard and attended to the things which were spoken of Paul. A person will not attend to the gospel of Jesus Christ unless the Lord has opened their heart. There were other women there that the brethren spoke to but Lydia was the only one that attended to the things which were spoken of Paul.

“And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.” Not only was Lydia baptized, but her household as well. We are not told how her household came to hear the word but they did and they were baptized as well. Then Lydia invited the men to come into her house and abide there.

Acts 16.16-22

Acts 16:16 “And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. 18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. 19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.”

“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:” We read in the Old Testament what the Lord thinks about divination: Deu. 18:10 “There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, 11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. 12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.” Thus, the Lord says that divination is an abomination unto the Lord. This woman with the spirit of divination was a slave woman and brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. Thus the masters were invested in her divining ability.

“The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days.” I can see how that after a while that Paul must have become somewhat irritated by this unclean spirit in the woman.

“But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.” Paul, using the gift that the Lord had given him cast out the unclean spirit. Of course, this left the woman without the ability to divine any more.

“And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,” Paul’s action in casting out the unclean spirit from the woman upset her masters as it affected their pocketbook. They were no longer able to make money off of her. Because of their financial loss they caught Paul and Silas and brought them before the rulers “and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.” Here we notice that the charges are false and that they did not exceedingly trouble the city, just the woman’s masters. However, wicked men do not mind telling a few lies and making false charges. They were out for revenge.

“And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.” Paul and Silas being strangers to the city and Jews it probably wasn’t hard to get the multitude to rise up against them. Moreover, persecution and tribulation abide God’s faithful servants.

Acts 16.23-28

Acts 16:23 “And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. 25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.”

“And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely.” Paul and Silas must have been in excruciating pain and would have had open wounds. Moreover, the jailor had been charged to keep the men safely. Such a charge would have been taken very seriously by a Roman jailor. If the prisoners were to escape, the penalty would have been the jailor would have suffered an extremely painful death and often his family were put to death also.

“Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.” The jailor knowing the penalty for letting a prisoner escape under such a charge thrust Paul and Silas into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. It would have appeared that by nature, it would have been impossible for Paul and Silas to have escaped.

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” The love of God that Paul and Silas had was in full display as they prayed and sang praises unto God, even though they were in prison, probably in great pain and yet rejoiced in their Savior’s love for them by singing praises unto God. They were singing with joy in their hearts and thus singing loud enough that the prisoners heard them.

“And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.” A prison and prison doors and bands are not sufficient to hold the Lord’s prisoners if the Lord decides to loose them.

“And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.” The jailor seeing and hearing what had happened was ready to kill himself rather than to suffer the wrath of the Roman government. He counted death by the sword to be far better than what the Roman government would do to him.

“But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.” There are many under those circumstances would have allowed the jailor to kill

himself so that they could escape. However, Paul showed his great love for the Lord as he was not willing for the man to suffer death just because of Paul's circumstances. He spared the jailor's life, even though he did not know what lie ahead for himself.

Acts 16.29-34

Acts 16:29 "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

"Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Anytime we read the word, "saved," we should ask ourselves some questions:

1. "Saved from what?"
2. "Who is doing the saving?"
3. "What must be done to bring about the salvation."

If we don't have the answer to these questions it is extremely easy to misapply the meaning.

First we should ask ourselves what is it that the Jailor wanted to be saved from? If it were that he desired to be saved from his sins, then why did just the instant before that he was ready to kill himself? No the Jailor was in a dilemma. On the one hand he knew the wrath of the Roman Government towards a Jailor who under a charge let a prisoner escape. On the other hand the Jailor knew that it was an act of God that freed the prisoners, Paul and Silas, from their bonds. If he let the prisoners go, then he faced cruel execution upon himself and his family. On the other hand if he did not let the prisoners go, then he felt himself to be under the wrathful anger of God who had just loosed the prisoners from their bands. Thus we see the question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

The answer given him is: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Thus the answer to question 3 above is "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The answer to question 2 is "Christ will deliver you."

"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." In other words they preached the gospel to the Jailor and his household.

"And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." The jailor and his house believed the gospel message and showed that they believed it in that he washed the stripes of Paul and Silas and he and his house submitted to water baptism.

Afterwards, "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

Acts 16.35-40

Acts 16:35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. 36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. 37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. 38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. 39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. 40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.”

“And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.” The magistrates sent the sergeants to the jailor to tell him to let the prisoners go. The jailor informed Paul and Silas. Paul, being a Roman citizen knew that the magistrates had broken the Roman law by beating Roman citizens uncondemned. Thus, Paul insisted that the magistrates come themselves and fetch them out of prison.

“And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.” When the magistrates heard that Paul and Silas were Romans, they then feared the wrath of the Roman Government. They had beaten Roman citizens uncondemned. If they had not been Roman citizens they would not have feared in this manner.

“And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.” The attitude of the magistrates changed when they found out that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. Now instead of beating them uncondemned they are pleading with them to depart out of the city.

“And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.” We are not told what became of the jailor and his household. I believe it would be reasonable to assume that they joined up with the household of Lydia in the church at Philippi.

Acts 17.1-4

Acts 17:1 “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.”

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:” A definite pattern is established that

Paul when he came to a new city that he would first go to a synagogue. In a synagogue Paul would have a privilege as a Jew to speak to the people in the synagogue. Often times Gentiles also came to the synagogue to hear what was being taught. Paul was taking the opportunity to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to both Jews and Gentiles.

“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.” Paul knew that the Jews were waiting for the coming Messiah and Paul was preaching to them that according to the scriptures Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead and that the Jesus he was preaching to them was Christ. Notice that Paul’s reasoning was not based on man’s wisdom but was from the scriptures.

“And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” As we have previously seen that when Paul preached that a few of the Jews believed and a great multitude of the Greeks believed. The gospel was being received by the Gentiles a lot more than it was being received by the Jews.

Acts 17.5-9

Acts 17:5 “But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. 8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.”

“But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.” Notice what was driving these unbelieving Jews. They were moved with **envy**. They were envious of the response that Paul received from the people. Thus, their prideful envy moved them to persecute and seek to destroy those who differed from them. Notice that they took certain lewd fellows of the baser sort to set the city on an uproar and to assault the house of Jason, seeking to bring out Paul and his company.

“And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;” To the wicked the disciples turned the world upside down. That is they have upset their wicked beliefs. To the disciples they have turned the world as it should be by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and teaching the righteous living that God’s people should live by.

“Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.” While it was true that Paul and those with

him were preaching that there is another king and that is Jesus who is the king of the spiritual kingdom of God, yet it was of no threat to Caesar as those wicked Jews alleged.

“And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.” To these wicked religious Jews it is not enough that they disagree with the teachings of the God-called ministry of God, but they seek to silence the truth and those who teach it.

“And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.” The rulers were smart enough to know that they had nothing by which they could charge Jason and those with him in his house so they took security of Jason and of the others and let them go. No doubt they were disappointed that they failed to capture Paul and those in his company.

Acts 17.10-14

Acts 17:10 “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.”

“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.” Again we see the same pattern that Paul and Silas upon arrival in Berea went first into the synagogue of the Jews. However, this time there was a more favorable result.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” There are a couple of wonderful lessons for us today from this passage of scripture. First those of Berea were more noble in that they received the word with all readiness of mind. When we hear the word of God should we also go with a ready mind to receive it? Secondly, they searched the scriptures daily to see whether those things were so. This should also be our practice today. What the preacher says should not be the final say on what we believe. We should search the scriptures to see if what the preacher had to say is true and correct or not. We should hold fast to the truth and reject that which is not provable by the scriptures.

“Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.” The result of their receiving the word with all readiness of mind and searching the scriptures to see if they were so is that many of them believed. Likewise, if people were more like the Bereans were today, there would be a lot more who believe the gospel of the grace of Christ.

“But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.” These religious persecutors were not satisfied that Paul was no longer in Thessalonica, but when

they heard that Paul preached the word of God in Berea, they came to Berea to cause problems there and to stir up the people against Paul and the gospel of Jesus Christ. This has been the practice of religious disbelievers all down through the ages since the time of Christ.

“And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.” Since the religious Jewish unbelievers were primarily after Paul at that time, the brethren sent away Paul but Silas and Timothy continued there for a period of time. No doubt they continued to teach the disciples while they were there.

Acts 17.15-21

Acts 17:15 “And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed. 16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. 18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. 19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? 20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. 21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)”

“And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.” When Paul had arrived at Athens he gave commandment to those who conducted him to Athens to return and tell Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed.

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” Athens was then a city made up mostly of Gentiles who were wholly given to idolatry. When Paul waited for Silas and Timothy his spirit was stirred in him. It is not unusual for a minister to have his spirit stirred in him, especially when he sees things that are so grossly wrong. Paul could see that the city was utterly taken in idolatry.

“Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.” Again as was Paul’s custom he started with the Jews in the synagogue and then turned to the Gentiles. No doubt Paul’s dispute was to convince the hearers that they should be attentive to the true worship of God rather than to the idols to which they currently worshipped.

“Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.” First we notice that the philosophers thought Paul to be a babbler, while others thought that he

was a setter forth of strange gods and this because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. This was all very strange to the Athenians.

“And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.” These were so strange to the Athenians that they actually wanted to hear Paul out and to know what those things mean. To them what Paul was saying was indeed strange to their ears. “(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)” To them Paul was a story teller and of such they had plenty of story tellers all of which had something new to tell.

Acts 17.22-34

Acts 17:22 “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. 32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” One lesson we can learn from this is that Paul always considered the people to whom he addressed. He addressed his message based on the condition or understanding of the people to whom he was speaking. We ministers of the gospel should consider likewise that we address the message the Lord gives us to the condition or understanding of the people to whom we speak.

“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Paul knowing their superstitions and knowing that the inscription gave the message that they did not really have an understanding of God, so he declared to them what they did not know, i.e. the God that they did not know.

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;” The first thing Paul declared unto them is that God created all things. It followed this by declaring that God does not dwell in temples made with men’s hands.

“Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” Further Paul declared that God isn’t worshipped with men’s hands (graven images) as he doesn’t need any thing. Moreover, God gives to all life, and breath, and all things.

“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;” Next Paul declares that all men came from one source and therefore are all of one blood in all nations on the face of the earth. Moreover, God determined the times before appointed and the boundaries of man’s habitation.

“That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:” Here Paul declares that men of all nations should seek the Lord if they feel after him (only those who are born of the Spirit, of course, will feel after him). Moreover, those that seek after him can find him.

“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” Paul declares to these superstitious Athenians that we are children of God and that is the same that their own poets have said.

“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.” Here Paul strikes at the very heart of their erroneous worship, which is idolatry as they made idols of gold, silver, stone, and graven art. Paul reasons that since we are the offspring of God we ought not to think that the Godhead is like their graven images and idols.

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:” Previous to this time God allowed the Gentiles to attempt to worship idols, but now God has commanded that all men every where should repent from idolatry.

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;” Now Paul turns his attention to preaching Jesus Christ to them and that He is the one who will judge the world in righteousness. “Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Paul now declares assures these Athenians that God has raised Christ from the dead which assures their being made righteous.

“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.” As usual when preaching to a mixed congregation (some who believe and some who will not believe) there is a mixed reaction. Those who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead mocked Paul. Whereas others who weren’t so sure, said, “We will hear thee again of this matter. Thus, at that time they had a desire to hear more.

“So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.” The importance here is not that most of the people went away and did not believe, but that there were a few that did believe.

Acts 18.1-6

Acts 18:1 “After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; 2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. 3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. 5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. 6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.”

“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;” This Corinth was, of course, where the church was established to which Paul would later write two letters as we know today as 1st Corinthians and 2nd Corinthians.

“And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.” Here we are introduced to Aquila and Priscilla, who were read about four other times in the scriptures:

1. Acts 18:18 “And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.”
2. Acts 18:26 “And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”
3. Rom. 16:3 “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:”
4. 1 Cor. 16:19 “The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”

The occasion of Aquila and Priscilla coming to Corinth was because of Caesar Claudius persecution against the Jews. Sometimes we may be prone to forget that it is not only Christians that are persecuted, but also other groups of people who sometimes suffer persecution.

“And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.” Paul and Aquila and Priscilla were not only disciples of Christ, but were also of the same occupation and fastly became very close friends. It has been my personal experience that the Lord’s disciples that I have been blessed to be acquainted with are also some of my closest friends.

“And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.” As the reader will notice this is the same pattern of going first to the synagogue by the Apostle Paul. Also we notice that he uses reasoning to try to persuade the Jews and the Greeks. The truth is reasonable to the children of God.

“And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.” After

that the Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed, Paul declared to them that their blood be upon their own heads. This is a reference to that taught in Ezek. 33:2-4 “Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.” Paul had preached the truth unto them and they rejected it and now would have to suffer the consequences.

However, though Paul said that he would now go to the Gentiles, yet by all that followed including writing the book of Hebrews, Paul continued to try to convince the Jewish people of the truth of Jesus Christ.

Acts 18.7-11

Acts 18:7 “And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. 8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. 9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. 11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

“And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.” The implication here is that Justus, who worshipped God had invited Paul to come to his house and that he preached to those in his house. Moreover, it would appear that also in the house at that time was Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, who believed on the Lord with all his house and subsequently, many of the Corinthians hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ believed, and were baptized. One of the lessons here is that like Justus, we should invite the preacher to come to our homes and preach the gospel and at the same time invite our neighbors and friends to come and hear the gospel of the grace of Christ proclaimed. This principle seems to be lost in modern day America. If we are to see a revival in the belief of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ then the members of the church are going to have to start practicing gospel evangelism in this manner.

“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.” Here we find that Paul had the assurance that he would not have the same thing to happen to him (fierce persecution) that had happened in nearly every place he had been before coming to Corinth. Another lesson here is that the Lord had much people there in Corinth. Thus, if the Lord already had much people in Corinth, then the gospel could not be the way the Lord used to make children of God. They were already born again children of God before Paul came there. This refutes the idea that we must carry the gospel to people who have not heard it in order that they may believe and become born again. Rather the gospel is for those who are already born again. The

gospel brings knowledge of salvation to those who are already born of God and thus comforts them and assures them that heaven will be their home and encourages them to worship God in Spirit and truth and to worship and serve him as His disciples.

“And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

Acts 18.12-17

Acts 18:12 “And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, 13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: 15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. 16 And he drave them from the judgment seat. 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.”

In the above passage it appears that Gallio the deputy of Achaia had a better understanding of the proper design of government than most of the rulers in that day and that part of the world, who seemed to want to go along with what was popular in their realm. Gallio understood that government was for the punishment of wrong and wicked lewdness, not the arbitrator of religious thought. Gallio refused to be judge over Paul based on the false accusations of the Jews. Unfortunately it appears that government is beginning to invade more and more into the rights of people to worship in the way that their conscience dictates. In the United States we seem to be headed towards the day that if you speak out about what the bible says about homosexuality or abortion or fornication, you may soon be charged with committing a hate crime.

Acts 18.18-23

Acts 18:18 “And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; 21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. 22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. 23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.”

“And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.” I suspect the shearing of the head was a signification of being under a vow at that time. It does not seem to have any precedent in

the scriptures that I can find. The vow appears to be to go up to Jerusalem for the upcoming feast.

“And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.” Again this is according to the pattern of the Apostle Paul to go first to the synagogue and reason with the Jews concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, we note that he left Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus.

“When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will.” We note that Paul concluded his plans with “if God will.” Too often we try to make definite plans without considering whether they are according to the will of God. James also taught this lesson: James 4:13 “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

“And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.” Paul was not content with just making disciples, but he was concerned with their growth in the faith as he made trips back to where he had previously gone to strengthen the disciples. It has been my experience that often the missionaries in Africa have gone over and started churches or fellowships, but then leave and do not continue to teach or train those who they have established as leaders and left them. While I do not agree with much of the missionaries doctrines, I note that they leave a great burden on those pastors they leave behind who struggle to know what the bible teaches and what to teach their congregations.

Acts 18.24-28

Acts 18:24 “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. 27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”

“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.” In this verse we are told several things about Apollos, of which two stand out:

1. Apollos was an eloquent man. God had been him a talent to be able to speak in a very understandable and moving way.

2. Apollos was mighty in the scriptures. A person cannot be mighty in the scriptures unless he has spent a lot of time reading, studying, and meditating on the scriptures.

“This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.” This tells us that Apollos had been baptized by John the Baptist and was a disciple of John the Baptist. Moreover, he was devoted to knowing the way of the Lord. Moreover, Apollos had a great zeal for the things of the Lord as he was fervent in spirit. In addition he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord. Apollos was a good example to us in the ministry today.

“And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Since Apollos instruction was limited to that which John the Baptist had taught him, Aquila and Priscilla having heard him took him aside and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Notice that both the husband and wife instructed him privately. While neither Aquila nor Priscilla were considered to be public preachers of the gospel, yet they were teachers as they taught Apollos. They set a good example to God’s people in the church who are not called to preach the gospel publicly. When opportunity arises God people in the church should be willing and prepared to instruct others privately the way of the Lord more perfectly.

“And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” The brethren at Ephesus wrote to the brethren in Achaia, to receive Apollos. Sometimes when a brother who we are not familiar with comes among us it is helpful when those who are familiar with him recommend him to us. Here the church at Ephesus recommended Apollos to the church in Achaia. Apollos’ God given talents are manifest here as he mightily convinced the Jews publicly showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ. Additionally, Apollos through his knowledge of the scriptures was able to help the disciples in Achaia much which had believed through grace.

Acts 19.1-7

Acts 19:1 “And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And all the men were about twelve.”

In the above passage we make the following observations:

1. The 12 men when asked by Paul unto what they had been baptized, answered unto John's baptism. From this it is obvious that it was not John who baptized them but someone who baptized unto John's baptism. Generally the speculation is that Apollos had baptized them before he met with Aquila and Priscilla. It would have been a time when Apollos was not qualified to baptize into the Lord's church.

2. Since they had not heard of the Holy Ghost we gather also that John did not baptize them and that they were baptized without the knowledge of the Godhead or of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. After Paul spoke with them they willingly submitted unto being baptized again. This is an example of baptizing people who had previously been baptized by someone who did not have the authority to baptize and being previously baptized into an erroneous belief system.

Acts 19.8-10

Acts 19:8 "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

"And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." We see the same pattern for the Apostle Paul as he went into the synagogue. Moreover, we see that he was persistent in his efforts to preach the gospel of the grace of Christ and to attempt to persuade the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. He spent three whole months disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

"But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." Often times when preaching the gospel the preacher of grace comes across people whose hearts are hardened and do not believe and speak evil of the way before the multitudes. When this continued to happen, Paul separated the disciples from the synagogue and continued to dispute daily in the school of Tyrannus. Paul was using every opportunity that opened to him to declare the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." We note that Paul's efforts were such that all which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. This is a wonder when you compare to the great lack of knowledge of the grace of Christ that is present in the United States. We preachers of the gospel need to do a much better job of getting the word out to the masses of the people.

Acts 19.11-17

Acts 19:11 “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. 13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.”

“And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.” We note that these were special miracles that God wrought. No room for the apostle to boast here. It was God that wrought the miracles at his hand. Moreover, Paul wrote later about “signs of an apostle:” 2 Cor. 12:12 “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” Thus these miracles were the result of God giving special gifts of healing to the apostles.

“Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” Thus there were vagabond Jews who traveled around and were exorcists or ones who used spells to fool people and they tried to do what Paul had done. These exorcists were sons of a chief of the priests who were practicing what was forbidden in the Old Testament. This is a prime example of how far the Jewish people had gone astray from the Old Testament teachings in their practices. The evil spirit leaped upon them and they fled out of the house naked and wounded. Thus, we see that trying to emulate God’s gifts is not a wise course of action.

“And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” On the one hand Paul actions were under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, whereas the actions of the seven sons of Sceva were wicked actions and devil led actions. Of course, those seeing this would have known and this would have brought fear on them and they would have magnified the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19.18-20

Acts 19:18 “And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. 19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

“And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.” Even in the midst of all the oppositions and persecutions, we see the gospel being received by many who believed and confessed that they were sinners saved by the grace of God through the atoning blood of Christ. They showed their deeds which resulted from their belief and actions in pressing into the gospel kingdom on earth. There are many detractors who say that believing in grace leads to licentiousness, when in fact the very opposite is true. “Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” It is generally believed that this “curious art” was pornography. Note that the value of the books that were burned before all men was counted to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. Thus, we see that believing in the true gospel of the grace of Christ led these people to repent of their pornography and turn from those practices and showed their repentance by burning the curious books. Godly sorrow worketh repentance.

“So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.” God was richly blessing these people who believed and made great changes in their lives to live more godly lives.

Acts 19.21-22

Acts 19:21 “After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.”

From the above we can deduce that Paul had a burden from the Spirit to go both to Jerusalem and then to Rome. Also realizing that labor was still needed in Macedonia, Paul sent Timothy and Erastus who had ministered unto him.

Often times ministers of the gospel have a burden or desire for several things at one time and how to accomplish what they feel as a desire given them of the spirit can sometimes be a question in their mind. Here we see that Paul had a desire to go to Jerusalem and then he knew that there was a need for labor in Macedonia and at the same time he felt a burden that he needed to continue to help the brethren in Asia for a season.

Acts 19.23-27

Acts 19:23 “And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; 25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. 26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: 27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.”

“And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;” Making silver shrines for the pagan goddess Diana was a source of much income to Demetrius and the preaching of Paul was proving to be a financial loss as Paul persuaded people that it was wrong to worship idols, but that they should worship the true and living God that he preached. Persecution against the gospel of the grace of Christ and the Lord’s church can come from many sources. In this case persecution was about to arise because of a loss of revenue by merchantmen.

“Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:” To gather opposition to the preaching of the gospel of the grace of Christ, Demetrius called together the workmen of like occupation and convinced them that they were in danger of losing their source of wealth because of the preaching of Paul. The craftsmen’s source of wealth came from making shrines to the goddess Diana, so they were easy to persuade to move against Paul and against those who believed as Paul did.

“So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.” Apparently the worship of Diana was very prevalent throughout Asia and the craftsmen would lose their wealth if people stopped worshipping Diana. Of course, Diana was just an imaginary pagan goddess.

Acts 19.28-34

Acts 19:28 “And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. 29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. 30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. 31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. 32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. 33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. 34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”

From the above it is certain that the craftsmen had stirred up the city and caused the city to be filled with confusion. It is also of note that the disciples strongly urged Paul not to go into the theatre. That would have stirred up the people even more and would have been very dangerous for Paul to have gone into such a confused crowd that

could have very easily turned into wrath. When confusion reigns then it is best to stay away if you can. Confusion was reigning in the theatre.

Acts 19.35-41

Acts 19:35 “And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. 37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. 38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. 39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. 40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. 41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.”

The townclerk seemed to be the only one in the theatre who had any wisdom. He quieted the crowd down and then told them that if the craftsmen had any matter against any man that it should be determined in a lawful assembly. He also pointed out that the ones to whom they were demonstrating against had not robbed their churches nor blasphemed their goddess. He also knew that the Romans would not be pleased with their uproar. He used wisdom in quieting the assembly. Sometimes the laws of the land are a help to the true worshippers of God.

Acts 20.1-6

Acts 20:1 “And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. 2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, 3 And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. 4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These going before tarried for us at Troas. 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.”

“And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, And there abode three months.” Because of the uproar, Paul knew that the persecutors were after him and that he would be a distraction unto the growth of the church there, so he embraced the disciples and departed to go into Macedonia. Once he came to Macedonia he gave the disciples there much exhortation and then departed to go into Greece and abode there three months. I would guess that he spent the time with the few disciples who believed at Mars Hill.

“And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.” While we do not know how Paul knew that the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail unto Syria, we know that he knew it because he then purposed to return through Macedonia.

“And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. These going before tarried for us at Troas.” Paul had picked up a company from the different areas where he had gone and preached the gospel who had accompanied him in his travels to Asia and had gone before him in Troas and waited for him there.

“And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.”

Acts 20.7-12

Acts 20:7 “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. 9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. 11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.”

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” Apparently a sizeable number of people had gathered into what sounds like a barn to hear Paul’s last sermon to them. Without the Spirit of God it would be very hard to keep a congregation engaged in what you are speaking for such a long period of time. Even then, the human frame sometimes grows tired as it did with the young man in the third loft.

“And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.” I know people have fallen asleep when I have been speaking and I have never spoken near the length of time Paul did on that occasion. Unfortunately the young man who fell asleep was in a window of the 3rd loft and fell down from the third loft and taken up dead.

“And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.” We read of seven times in the scriptures where someone who had died was raised back to life through the miraculous power of God. Two times in the Old Testament the prophets Elijah and Elisha had each through the power of God raised a young lad from the dead.

Then in the gospels we read where the Lord raised three individuals who had died from the dead. Now in the book of Acts we read where first Peter raised a lady from the dead and now Paul raised the young lad from the dead. Now all seven of those individuals, having been raised from the dead, would later die again a natural death. This was unlike the death of Christ for when he arose from the dead he will never die again.

“And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.”

Acts 20.13-16

Acts 20:13 “And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. 14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. 15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.”

Most of this passage is details about Paul’s travels. A couple of things stand out to me:

1. Paul traveled by foot alone unto Assos. I know from personal experience that most of my best meditations and prayers have come when I was alone. It is obvious that Paul wanted to be alone during that time.

2. Paul hasted to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost if it were possible. This desire to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome had been previously presented to us earlier in the book of Acts. As we will later discover this desire was brought about by the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 20.17-27

Acts 20:17 “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. 18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: 20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.” Paul knowing they would see his face no more called for the elders of the church at Ephesus.

These are the same elders of which he had been the principal teacher. As a father in the ministry to his sons in the ministry he was giving to them final instructions, encouragement, and exhortation of their responsibilities as pastors and teachers.

“And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,” Paul knew that he had been the main example to these young preachers of how a minister of the gospel should conduct himself. This teaches us as older ministers we should consider ourselves as the main example for those younger ministers who are coming up under us.

“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:” Paul points out to the young ministers his example of serving the Lord with all humility of mind. First we are to be servants of the Lord. As we serve the Lord’s people we are serving the Lord. Moreover we are to serve Him and His people with all humility of mind. This principle is also taught us by the Lord’s example taught to us in Phil. 2:3-8: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

“And with many tears:” A gospel minister is invested emotionally to the people he serves. There are times when he will cry because of the conditions and failings of those he serves. Sometimes he will cry along with them in their losses of companions and family members and in their struggles of life. Other times he will have tears of joy when they respond to the teachings of the word of God.

“And temptations:” Testing to God’s children is a way of life. We are often put to the test by trials, troubles, tribulations, and persecutions in our lives. Paul went through a great number of these in his life and is a great example for us as he abided faithful to the Lord throughout it all.

“And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,” Paul’s teaching was a thorough teaching to the young ministers coming up under his preaching and teaching. Paul not only taught them publicly, but he also went to their homes and taught them privately as well. Thus he studied with them in their homes.

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul testified both to the Jews and to the Greeks. He didn’t single out special privileges or favoritism to nationality or ethnic group. Today we should not show favoritism based on background or skin color of the people we are to serve.

Moreover what we teach should include repentance toward God (we all come to serve the Lord as sinners and in need of changing our behavior) and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:” Paul spoke of going bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem. Paul knew that the Spirit had directed him to go to Jerusalem regardless of what might befall

him there. A bond means you are not free to do your own thing. This reminds me of my first experience of being called to pastor a church. At the time I had felt my labor might be at one or two other churches. But when I realized the Lord had another direction for me I knew that if I didn't do His bidding I would greatly regret it.

Moreover in responding to this leadership of the Spirit Paul did not know what would befall him there. Often times gospel ministers are to go not knowing what may await them as they go.

“Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.” Paul by the Holy Ghost witnessed the gospel of Jesus Christ in every city where he went. Along with that witness bonds and afflictions abode with Paul. A preacher should not let the prospect of bonds and afflictions deter him from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Paul refused to let the beatings, the stonings, the times he spent in jail or anything else he suffered to move him from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moreover, he did not count his own life dear unto himself so that he might finish his course with joy and preach that which he had received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

“And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.” Paul knew that he would see these young ministers any more to whom he had preached and taught the kingdom of God. Thus this final address to them was being directed like a father on his death bed might make to his children.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

Being pure from the blood of all men is a reference to the book of Ezekiel chapter 3:17-21: Ezek. 3:17 “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. 20 Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.” Up to this point Paul had related his own experiences and examples to the young ministers of the church at Ephesus. In the remaining verses of this chapter we have presented to us the final instruction Paul gave to the young ministers of the church at Ephesus.

Acts 20.28-38

Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. 36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, 38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” With this verse Paul begins to teach, admonish, encourage and exhort the young ministers of the church at Ephesus.

First he tells them to take heed unto themselves. The preaching and teaching of the word of God must first be applied to our own life. If we don't apply it to ourself how can we expect those to whom we preach and teach to apply it to their lives?

Second, we are to take heed to all the flock. We should avoid favoritism or only applying our ministry to those we feel the closest to. We need to concern ourselves with knowing the needs of each member of the flock so that we can minister to the needs of all the flock. We should remember that the Lord loves everyone of them.

Third, it is the Holy Ghost that makes us overseers. The church does not make us overseers without the leadership and direction of the Holy Ghost.

Fourth, we have a duty to feed the church of God. The food we feed them is the word of God. We must remember the Lord knows what each member needs and we need to preach and teach the messages the Lord gives us through the leadership of the Holy Ghost.

Fifth, we need to always remember that those to whom we are preaching are those which Christ has purchased with his own blood.

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” Here Paul describes some as grievous wolves. Wolves devour sheep for their own selfish pleasure. In other words they come in to make merchandise of the Lord's people for their selfish gain. He speaks of these as entering in amongst them. That is they join the church for selfish reasons to make merchandise of the church members.

The second group of people arise within the congregation and through pride want to have disciples or followers after themselves. Their means of doing this is to speak

perverse things. This has literally happened hundreds of times in the 2+ centuries sine the time of Christ. It is the reason there are so many denominations in the world today.

Therefore it is necessary for God's called ministers to be watchful. This was considered by Paul to be so important that he warned them night and day for three years with tears.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." First Paul commended these brethren to God. God is to be first in the gospel minister's life as well as in each of the disciples lives.

Second, Paul commended them to the word of his grace. The word of God's grace is something we need to be constantly mindful of. The word of God's grace is able to build us up in the faith. Moreover, the word of God's grace gives us an inheritance (possession) among all of them that are sanctified. Please note that the preaching and belief of God's grace does not give us an eternal inheritance, but rather it gives us through obedience to a possession (gospel kingdom) here in time with those through their obedience to the call to repentance, water baptism, and serving the Lord in his church kingdom on earth.

"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." With this statement Paul destroyed the message of those who preach a so-called prosperity gospel.

"Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." The true God called ministers are often confronted with whether to work to supply their needs and those that are with them (their family) or to depend on the supply of the church. Oftentimes those churches that many of God's ministers serve are small congregations with very limited means. In such circumstances it is necessary for God's ministers to follow the example and precept Paul gave to the elder at Ephesus.

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship." Before Paul departed he prayed with the brethren. This is a fitting end of Paul's time with them. Certainly the disciples sorrow to see Paul leave was clearly manifest here.

Acts 21.1-6

Acts 21:1 "And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: 2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. 3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. 4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. 5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children,

till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. 6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.”

Verses 1-3 gives us details of the travels of Paul and those with him as he continued his journey toward Jerusalem.

“And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.” This tells us that when they stopped at Tyre they found disciple and tarried there 7 days. These disciples said to Paul through the Spirit he should not go up to Jerusalem. However, this would seem to conflict with the Spirit leading Paul to go up to Jerusalem. However, this conflict is easily resolved when we consider that the Spirit was telling the disciples that bad things would happen to Paul at Jerusalem and thus they did not want Paul to go. Whereas, the Spirit was leading Paul to go to Jerusalem even though bad things were awaiting him there.

And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. 6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.” Similar to what we saw at Ephesus the disciples realized this was the last time they would see Paul and they were sad. They went with their families to see him off and prayed with him.

Acts 21.7-14

Acts 21:7 “And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. 8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. 9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. 10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.”

“And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.” One day was spent with the disciples at Ptolemais and the journey toward Jerusalem continued.

“And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.” The next leg of the journey was at Caesarea where Paul and the brethren with him visited in the house of Philip the evangelist. It is pointed out here that Philip had at one time been one of the seven deacons in Chapter 6. It is not unusual to see deacons to be later called to preach, though this is not a requirement. Philip was the one who had carried the gospel to Samaria and then to the eunuch of Ethiopia.

“And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.” Philip had four daughters who at that time were virgins and they did prophesy. It should be pointed out that the gift of prophecy is not limited to preachers only. There is a difference between one called to be a prophet and the gift of prophecy. A prophet of course will have the gift of prophecy, but they are not the only ones who have the gift of prophecy.

“And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.” The prophet Agabus came down from Jerusalem and declared though prophecy what would happen to Paul at Jerusalem. The disciples besought Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Moreover, they wept at the prospect of his going to Jerusalem.

“Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” Paul declared his willingness not only to be bound but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. What these disciples at that time failed to realize is that Paul's imprisonment would afford him the time and opportunity to write several of the letters that later would become a part of the holy scriptures and be a blessing to God's people throughout this New Testament age. “And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.”

Acts 21.15-17

Acts 21:15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. 16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. 17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”

This passage was the conclusion of Paul's journey to Jerusalem. It is clear from this passage there were two groups of Jews at Jerusalem. One group were the disciples and they gladly received Paul. While they numbered in the thousands, they were dwarfed by the second group of Jews who hated Paul and wanted to see him dead.

Acts 21.18-25

Acts 21:18 “And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: 21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. 22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will

hear that thou art come. 23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; 24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. 25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.”

“And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.” Here Paul went to see James the pastor of the church at Jerusalem and all the elders of the church at Jerusalem.

“And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.” Paul gives to the elders an account of what God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. We notice that Paul gives the praise to God just as we should give the praise to God for the fruit of our labors in the Kingdom of God.

“And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:” When the elders heard Paul’s account they glorified the Lord as they should have. They then related that there were thousands of Jews which now believed through their ministry. They also noted these Jews were also zealous of the law. While this may seem like a contradiction to us, we have to remember that the covenant of the law and the covenant of grace as covenants of worship ran parallel to one another for a period of time. Paul informed in Heb. 8:13 that the law covenant would soon disappear: “In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” With the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. worship under the law covenant effectively ceased.

“And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.” Apparently there was a general belief among the disciples that Paul was teaching the Jews which were among the Gentiles to forsake the law of Moses and not to circumcise their children and observe the Old Testament customs. However, Paul had not been teaching that and no doubt these were rumors started by the detractors of the gospel of grace.

“Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.” The elders requested Paul that he join with four men which had a vow and purify himself (an Old Testament custom) that it may prove that Paul was walking orderly and keeping the law.

“As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.” Here the elders affirmed the

conclusion of the counsel at Jerusalem that the Mosaical law did not apply to the Gentiles.

Acts 21.26-40

Acts 21:26 “Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. 27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, 28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. 29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) 30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. 33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. 34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. 35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. 37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? 38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? 39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. 40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,”

“Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.” This was being carried out in keeping with the ordinance of purification set forth in the Old Testament.

“And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)” The charges against Paul were all false, but the accusers didn’t care because of their hatred for Paul and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The very law that they accused Paul of breaking they

themselves were breaking as they brought false witness against him and plotted to murder him. This also teaches us that detractors will lie about us and bring false accusations against the believers and defenders of the truth.

“And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.” Now when the crowd got involved they completely ignored the law requiring a person be brought before the magistrates when such an accusation was made. While they claimed to be defenders of the law, in actuality, they were the worst breakers of the law.

“Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.” Because of the uproar the Roman chief captain took soldiers and centurions and ran down upon the crowd and when they saw the chief captain and soldiers they left beating Paul. Their beating Paul was against the Roman law. Then the chief Captain had Paul bound and demanded of Paul who he was and what he had done. He assumed Paul was guilty of malfeasance because of the uproar of the crowd.

“And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.” When people make up accusations, often their stories and accusations will not agree together. The captain at this time was uncertain of the charges against Paul. Consequently he commanded he be carried to the castle so as to get away from the tumult.

“And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.” As Paul was borne of the soldiers because of the violence of the people, the howling multitude cried out away with him, away with him.

“And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.” Paul requested to speak with the Captain who was surprised that he would speak Greek. The captain had assumed that Paul was an Egyptian who had led a band of four thousand murderers into the wilderness. It is interesting how people will often think the worst of you, especially if they don't know you. After Paul told the Captain who he was he requested of the Captain to speak to the people.

“And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,”

Acts 22.1-10

Acts 22:1 “Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. 2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) 3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. 4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. 6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. 10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.”

Paul in his defense before the Jews that were seeking to kill him spoke in the Hebrew language and related his experience on the Damascus road which was described for us in the 9th chapter of the book of Acts.

Acts 22.11-20

Acts 22:11 “And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. 17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.”

“And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now

why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” In the continuation of Paul’s defense he relates his experience in being led by the hand to Damascus and meeting with the gospel minister Ananias and receiving his sight and being baptized and given his ministerial charge as set forth in v. 14-16.

“And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.” The Lord tells Paul while he was in a trance that he should depart Jerusalem because the Jews of Jerusalem would not receive Paul’s testimony concerning the Lord.

“And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.” Paul responds to the Lord’s commandment to depart Jerusalem by speaking of his persecution against the Lord’s disciples.

Acts 22.21-30

Acts 22:21 “And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. 22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. 23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, 24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. 25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. 27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. 28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born. 29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. 30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.”

“And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. 22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. 23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air...” When Paul spoke of being sent to the Gentiles the angry mob who viewed the Gentiles as being dogs cried out and called for Paul to be put to death. To these Jews only the Israelites could be children of God and the very suggestion that God had a people among the Gentiles was blasphemy unto them. This also showed forth these Jews hatred of Christ as they sought a king who would make them the head and over all other kingdoms in the natural world. The idea that Christ has a spiritual kingdom was completely contrary to what they wanted.

“The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.” The chief captain still believing that Paul must be a malefactor and guilty of some great crime commanded he be brought to the castle and scourged.

“And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? Paul tells the centurion that he is a Roman and uncondemned and that it was unlawful to beat an uncondemned Roman.

When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. The centurion carries this information fo the chief captain who in turn inquires of Paul if this is true. Paul affirms that it is.

“And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.” The chief captain tells of how he paid a great price to be a Roman citizen, whereas Paul related that he was a Roman citizen by birth.

“Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.” The chief captain stopped the men from scourging Paul and furthermore was afraid because he had bound Paul.

“On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.” The chief captain called for the chief priests and all the council of the Jews to come and appear with Paul and lay out their charges against Paul.

Acts 23.1-5

Acts 23:1 “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. 3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? 4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? 5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.”

“And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Paul beholding the council testifies that he had lived in all good conscience before God until this day. A person knows whether he is living in good conscience before God or not. The fact that Paul knew that he was living with a good

conscience before God is a testimony that he had strived to do God's bidding since his conscience had been made good in the spiritual birth.

“And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?” The high priest commanding those who stood by Paul to smite him on the mouth was contrary to the law to which Paul reviled the high priest. Again we see another example of the Jews seeking to condemn Paul as a breaker of the law (which he wasn't) when they are themselves breaking the law.

“And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.” Paul states he was ignorant of this individual being the high priest and affirmed that it was wrong to speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Acts 23.6-10

Acts 23:6 “But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. 9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. 10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.”

“But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” Paul perceived the different religious sects of the Jews that were present in the council and set them at conflict with one another by stating he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee and that he had hope of the resurrection of the dead.

“And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.” Paul's statement caused a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees so much that they were divided. This was a division based on scriptural principle. The Pharisees believe the

truth of the resurrection of the dead and the Sadducees believe in no resurrection of the dead.

“And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.” This dissension was so great that the Pharisees sided with Paul and declared that they found no evil in him.

“And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.” Because of the great dissension the chief captain commanded the soldiers to go down and take Paul by force from among them and bring him back to the castle.

Acts 23.11-15

Acts 23:11 “And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. 12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. 15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.”

“And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” The Lord informed Paul that as he had borne witness of the Lord in Jerusalem he would also bear witness of the Lord at Rome also. This had to be an assurance to Paul as he was about to hear of a conspiracy to murder him.

“And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.” The conspiracy to murder Paul by more than forty men was approved by the chief priests and the council who became a part of the conspiracy. Now this was done under the guise of defending the law of Moses, when in fact those forty and the chief priest and the council were guilty of grossly breaking the law of Moses.

Acts 23.16-22

Acts 23:16 “And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. 18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. 19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly. 21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. 22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.”

God has a way of spoiling the wicked designs of men. In this case the nephew of Paul heard of the conspiracy to kill Paul and told Paul who called one of the centurions to take the young man to the chief captain who told of the conspiracy to the chief captain.

Acts 23.23-30

Acts 23:23 “And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; 24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. 25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. 27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.”

“And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.” The chief captain called two centurions with two hundred men to carry Paul safely to the Roman governor Felix, thus, spoiling the wicked designs of wicked men who conspired to murder Paul.

And he wrote a letter after this manner: Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave

commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.” The chief captain wrote a letter to Felix the governor relating the Jews plans to kill Paul. In the letter the chief captain stated he found nothing in the charges of the Jewish council whereby Paul was accused of anything whereby Paul was worthy of death or imprisonment.

Acts 23.31-35

Acts 23:31 “Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.”

Here Paul was brought to the governor who accepted jurisdiction of his case and told him that he would hear Paul and his accusers when they were come.

Acts 24.1-9

Acts 24:1 “And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. 2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. 7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, 8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. 9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.”

“And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.” Here we see the continued tactics of the persecutors of the Lord’s servants and of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While they have no real truthful charges to bring against Paul, they hired an orator who is gifted in political persuasion to attempt to convince the governor against Paul. The use of political persuasion and governmental pressure against the Lord’s church has been a tactic used throughout the ages.

“And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by

thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.” The orator began his persecution and accusation with great flattery of the governor to appeal to his pride as the governor. He uses such words and phrases as “great quietness;” “worthy deeds;” “providence;” and “most noble” all of which are to flatter the governor and to appeal to his pride.

“For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.” When describing Paul by contrast he uses words and phrases designed to denigrate Paul as “pestilent fellow;” “mover of seditions;” “ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes;” and “profaner of the temple.” By using these phrases he presented Paul and the Lord’s disciples in a negative light. We notice also that the orator presented no evidence for the charges he brought.

“But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,” In fact the accusation against Lysias of using great violence to deliver Paul out of their hands was just the opposite of the truth. The truth was that Lysias delivered Paul from the great violence of these wicked Jews.

“Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.” Using numbers of people to assert lies is another tactic of the persecutors.

Acts 24.10-21

Acts 24:10 “Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: 11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. 18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. 19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. 20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, 21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.”

“Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:” Unlike the orator Paul does not use flattery to influence the governor but simply states the truth concerning the governor.

“Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.” Paul refutes the charges made against him and states that they cannot prove the things of which they accuse him. The fact is all the charges were false. This is typical of persecutors to use false charges against the Lord, his disciples, and the church.

“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:” Paul’s proof of the way he worships which the persecutors call heresy is what is written in the law and the prophets. When charges are made today against the way the Lord’s church is supposed to worship our answer should be that it is the way that is written in the scriptures.

“And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” Paul brings in the fact that he is in agreement with his persecutors in his hope of the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust.

“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” Unlike the picture the persecutors presented, Paul maintained he exercised himself to have a conscience void of offense towards God and towards man. In this Paul is an example to us of how we should live even in the midst of persecutors. It is so easy to get angry and strike out against the persecutors the way that they treat us. However, to do so would put us on a very low level as they are.

“Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.” Here Paul states his purpose for coming to Jerusalem. It was not to cause trouble or to pollute the temple, but for the love that he had for his nation.

“Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.” Paul points out there are witnesses who can testify to his veracity.

“Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.” Paul affirms the reason behind the persecutors hatred of him is his preaching and teaching that the Lord had risen from the dead. Thus their hatred of Paul is just an extension of their hatred of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, when we are persecuted it is because of our allegiance to the Jesus as taught in the scriptures which is in direct contrast to their false Christ.

Acts 24.22-27

Acts 24:22 “And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. 23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. 24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. 26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.”

“And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.” Felix the governor deferred judgment until he had heard from the chief captain Lysias. It would appear that Felix was torn between showing favor to the Jews and actually declaring Paul not guilty of the charges, therefore, he deferred them.

“And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.” Felix showed favor to Paul the prisoner by giving him liberty and not forbidding any of his acquaintance to minister to him or come to him.

“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Felix having a wife which was Jewish sent for him and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Felix trembled having heard Paul as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. No doubt the governor was pricked in his heart concerning the teachings of the Apostle Paul.

“He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.” Even though Felix trembled at the preaching of Paul, his fleshly nature and corruption in his position as governor was made manifest by his desire to receive money from Paul in order to let him go.

“But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.” With a new governor coming Felix did the politically expedient thing by keeping Paul bound as a favor to the Jews.

Acts 25.1-5

Acts 25:1 “Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, 3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. 4 But Festus

answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. 5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.”

“Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.” Festus, being the new governor of the province came down from Caesarea to Jerusalem. This probably was a visit to get acquainted with the people and problems of the province.

“Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.” The Jewish persecutors who claimed to be upholders of the law of Moses but because of their hatred for Christ and his teachings informed the governor against Paul and requested he be sent to Jerusalem. In fact they had plotted to murder Paul. They certainly were no upholders of the law of Moses. They viewed Christ and his teachings to be a threat to their positions and authority. Similarly today the believers in the doctrines of grace are viewed by much of the religious world as being a threat to their man made religious systems. Moreover, their leaders see it as a threat to their pursuit of wealth and influence.

“But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.” Festus refused the Jewish persecutors request but told them to come to Caesarea to make their accusations against Paul.

Acts 25.6-8

Acts 25:6 “And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. 7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. 8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.”

As the Jewish persecutors had done with Felix, they did with Festus and laid out their false and unproven charges against Paul. Paul’s answer was very short and to the point that he had not in any thing offended either the law of Moses, the temple, or Caesar.

Acts 25.9-12

Acts 25:9 “But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.”

“But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?” Festus, having heard the charges and Paul’s answer knew that nothing had been proven against Paul, but wanting to do the Jews a favor asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem and be judged there.

“Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.” Paul refused the governors request saying he stood at Caesar’s judgment seat where, as a Roman citizen, he ought to be judged. Paul also affirmed that Festus knew he was not guilty.

“For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.” Paul confirming he had done nothing worthy of death appealed unto Caesar.

“Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.” Festus, having heard Paul’s appeal, granted his appeal that he would go unto Caesar.

Acts 25.13-21

Acts 25:13 “And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. 14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: 15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. 16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. 17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. 18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: 19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. 21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.”

“And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.” The king of the province, Agrippa, who was a direct descendent of the Herod’s came down with his wife Bernice to salute Felix the new governor.

“And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.” Festus informed the king about Paul and his accusers, the chief priest and the elders of the Jews, and that the accusers desired to have judgment against Paul.

“To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.” This principle of the Roman’s judicial procedures is basically the same principle of judicial procedures in the United States.

“Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” Festus related to the king the results of his hearing the Jews and Paul and his surprise of the nature of the charges made against Paul.

“And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.” Festus tells Agrippa of Paul’s refusal to go to Jerusalem and his appeal unto Caesar.

Acts 25.22-27

Acts 25:22 “Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. 23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. 24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. 27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.”

Paul is brought before the king that the king and his entourage may hear his defense and testimony. Festus also hoped that in doing so that he might discover something whereby he might signify to Augustus the crimes laid against Paul.

Acts 26.1-11

Acts 26:1 “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: 2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3 Especially because I know thee to be expert

in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. 4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? 9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”

In this passage Paul relates his manner of life, his hope of the resurrection, and his persecution of the disciples of Christ before his Damascus road experience.

Acts 26.12-18

Acts 26:12 “Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

In this passage Paul relates his Damascus road experience with the Lord Jesus Christ as previously detailed for us in Acts Chapters 9 and 22.

Acts 26.19-23

Acts 26:19 “Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. 22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That Christ should suffer, and that he

should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.”

“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” Paul relates to Agrippa his obedience to the heavenly vision. Next he outlines the course of his gospel labors going from Damascus to Jerusalem and then throughout all Judea and finally to the Gentiles. He also tells of the purpose of his teachings was to call the Lord’s people to repent and turn to God and to do works meet for repentance.

“For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.” Paul states his belief that because of his obedience to Christ and his teachings that the Jews caught him in the temple and went about trying to kill him.

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.” Paul recognized that through all the persecution that had come against him, that his help and deliverance had come from God. This was also true in his current circumstance as the Lord had told him that he would also be a witness of Him also at Rome. Paul was shortly to get a ride courtesy of the Roman government to Rome. Moreover, Paul stated that his witness was to both small and great. Paul was not a respecter of persons when it came to bearing witness of Christ. Paul gives his authority for the things he preached from what the Old Testament prophets and Moses had written. The Old Testament prophets and Moses had testified that Christ would be the first to rise from the dead and that he would show light to the people and to the Gentiles.

Acts 26.24-32

Acts 26:24 “And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. 29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. 30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: 31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.”

“And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.” Festus thought the problem with

Paul was that he had learned too much. However, we can spend a lifetime learning and we cannot learn too much of God's word that it would make us mad. Actually, it has the opposite effect upon us. Paul's reply sets forth this principle: "But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

"For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner." Paul tells Festus that the king already knew the things that he had previously related. Paul said those things were not done in a corner. This teaches us that we are not to be secret in declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ and the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Agrippa said that Paul almost persuaded him to be a Christian. Paul responded that he would that all there present with him were not almost but altogether totally persuaded as he was except for the bonds.

"And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar." In this private conversation Agrippa and Festus agreed that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or bonds and that he might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar. Here we must remember that the Lord had revealed to Paul that he would give testimony at Rome also. He is about to get a ride by ship to Rome courtesy of the Roman government.

Acts 27

This chapter details the ship ride across the sea to Rome that Paul and those with him made that was fraught with great troubles and difficulties. A casual reading of this chapter may not make one think that it is any more than just a detail account of the happenings on that ship and its journey. However, we can draw some practical lessons out of this chapter. We make the following observations and lessons:

1. The trip begins calmly with no apparent difficulties. Sometimes in the journey of life we also have periods when things seem to be going calmly with no apparent problems on the horizon. However, like the troubled waters of the sea, things can change in a hurry in our journey of life.

2. Next, the winds became contrary to obtaining the intended destination. Again we can make a parallel to our journey of life when we encounter troubled waters. They can come upon us rapidly.

3. Paul, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit informed the centurion of the dangers of proceeding on in the way and at the time they were going. However, his counsel was not heeded by the centurion who believed the counsel of others instead and continued the journey across the troubled waters. When we have the counsel and leadership of the God-called ministers delivered to them by the Holy Spirit we need to

take heed to that counsel. However, far too often we neglect the counsel and try to overcome the troubles in life by our own devices. This leads often to much destruction in our lives.

4. Great troubles to the ship and its occupants resulted from the failure to heed Paul's counsel. Likewise, often great troubles occur to us and those around us when we fail to heed the counsel of God's word.

5. Thankfully, God is a merciful God and we see the evidence of God's mercy as he revealed to Paul that no one would lose their life because of the tempest. However, there would be a loss of the ship. Likewise, God is merciful to us in our troubles as well as he remembers us in our troubles and sometimes grants us deliverance from the troubled sea of life.

6. God is able to use the tempest in the troubled waters to bring about a blessing to a people that those on the ship probably did not know existed. This happened when the occupants of the ship were cast upon a certain island.

7. In the occupants journey across the troubled sea, some were plotting to desert the journey to save themselves as the sailors were about to do to the detriment of the other occupants. Likewise, some who are traveling with us across our journey over troubled waters of life, will seek to desert the journey for their own selfish reasons. Even in our text, the Lord was merciful and revealed their evil intentions and stopped them to the deliverance of all the occupants on the ship.

8. There came a time on the ship that prayer and fasting needed to give way to action. Paul admonished the occupants to desert their fast and take food for their health and strength in the deliverance that they were about to undertake. While prayer and fasting are needful and necessary as we travel the troubled waters of life, there is also a need to take action when the time for action has come.

9. The occupants of the ship looked for a way of deliverance and the way was shown to them. Likewise, there are times when we need to be looking for a way of deliverance and asking the Lord to show us the way.

10. When the ship was broken up the occupants of the ship either swam to safety or else traveled to safety aboard the broken planks of the ship. Deliverance often comes to us in the troubled waters of our lives in different ways.

11. God kept his promise that no lives would be lost, but the ship would be destroyed. What a blessing it is when we may lose things, but our lives are spared.

Acts 28.1-6

Acts 28:1 "And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. 2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6

Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.”

“And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.” Having escaped the ravages of the sea by the grace of God, God’s grace and providence were once more made manifest by the loving kindness of the barbarous people. These people seeing the predicament of those who had been on the ship kindled a fire to provide warmth to them from the cold weather and kindly received them.

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.” When the viper attached to the hand of Paul, the people through their superstition supposed that Paul must have been a murderer who had escaped the sea but vengeance suffered not to live. Next, when no harm came to Paul, the superstitious people concluded that he was a god. There are a lot of God’s people who are superstitious and erroneously make their superstitious beliefs into a religion.

Acts 28.7-10

Acts 28:7 “In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. 8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. 9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: 10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.”

“In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.” The kindness of the barbarous people of the island was manifest by the chief man of the island. He was an example of what a leader should be. When a leader leads by kindness often the people he leads by kindness often also manifest kindness. This is an example that can apply to the work place. When the leader shows kindness to the people he leads then often the people who work for him will be more willing to joyfully work but will also show kindness to their fellows and others.

“And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.” Paul exercised the gift that God gave the apostles. This gift was in fully display when Publius father was healed of his sickness. Moreover, we see the teaching of the scriptures “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” made manifest. Publius had sown much kindness to the people of the sunken ship. The Lord rewarded him by kindness being manifested in the healing of his father.

“So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed.” Likewise, the kindness of the island’s people was rewarded by the Lord as Paul exercised his gift in the healing of the diseases of the people.

“Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.” The people of the island responded to the kindness of Paul and those with Paul by honoring them and lading them with the necessary things.

Acts 28.11-15

Acts 28:11 “And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. 12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. 13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: 14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. 15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.”

In this passage we notice the liberty that Paul and those with him were given. No doubt the centurion and the soldiers with him had seen what had happened in their deliverance from the sea and the miracles manifest on the island and gave much liberty to the prisoner Paul and those traveling with him. This was manifest when they were allowed to tarry seven days with the brethren before continuing the voyage to Rome. Moreover wherever they docked the brethren were allowed to meet with Paul and the brethren traveling with him.

Acts 28.16-20

Acts 28:16 “And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him. 17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. 20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”

“And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.” Once again the kindness of the Roman soldiers was manifest toward Paul as he was allowed to dwell by himself, separate and apart from the other prisoners.

“And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was

constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”

Paul called the chief of the Jews at Rome together to explain to them the charges the Jews at Jerusalem had made against him and to declare his innocence of those charges.

Acts 28.21-31

Acts 28:21 “And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. 22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. 23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. 25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. 30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

“And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee.” The Jews at Rome declared that they had not received any letters from the Jews of Judea or that any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of Paul.

“But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.” The Jews at Rome expressed their desire to hear from Paul his testimony as they knew this sect (the Lord’s church) was ever where spoken against. This is still true that every religious body that holds to some other system of salvation other than salvation by grace alone speaks against the believers in salvation by grace alone.

“And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.” When Paul expounded and testified the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ both out of the law and the prophets some believed and some believed not. This is truly no different than in our age as some believe and some believe not the gospel of the grace of Christ.

“And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and

not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” After that the Jews of Rome agreed not among themselves Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah: Isa. 42:18

“Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. 19 Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? 20 Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not. 21 The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. 22 But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. 23 Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come? 24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. 25 Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.”

“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.” Paul declares to the Jews that the message of the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles and that they will hear it. Subsequently the Jews departed with great reasoning among themselves.

“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” We are notified that after the Jews departed that Paul was allowed to dwell two whole years in his own hired house. Also we are told that he continued to preach the kingdom of God and to teach those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.